

THE CLAIMS OF

JESUS

liar lunatic

OR

Lord?

**TEN TEAM STUDIES ON THE CLAIMS
JESUS MADE ABOUT WHO HE IS**

**ATHLETES
INTERVARSITY**
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

The Claims of Jesus

“Who did Jesus say He is?”

(Written by Denny Brogan)

1. Discovering who Jesus said He is (John 1:1-18)
2. I am the Christ/Messiah (John 4:1-42)
3. I am the Bread of Life (John 6:1-51)
4. I am the Truth (John 8:12-30; 14:6)
5. I am the I AM (John 8:31-59)
6. I am the Light of the World (John 9:1-41)
7. I am the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-21)
8. I am the Son of God (John 10:22-39)
9. I am the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:1-46)
10. I am the Way (John 13:31-14:6)



The Claims of Jesus: Study 1

Discovering who Jesus said He is

John 1:1-18

Introduction: The people of Jesus' day who witnessed His ministry and heard His teaching—even those closest to him—were often found asking the question “Who is this man?” (Luke 4:36, 8:25). They also were found differing in their conclusions (John 7:12-13, 40-44; 10:19-21). At times, Jesus Himself raised the question about His true identity (Luke 9:20, “Who do you say that I am?”). However, because He wanted people to know who He really was, He constantly sought to reveal this through His encounters with them.

But Jesus didn't purpose to simply leave people guessing about who He was. In fact, throughout His life and ministry He made several very direct (and bold!) claims about who He was. And many of these claims were introduced by the preface “I am...”

In this Bible study series, we will be looking at 9 different “I am” statements of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John. Our hope is that—by looking at these direct claims of Jesus—we will come to a better understanding of who He really is. And, by better understanding who He is, respond and live in a way that better aligns our lives with that understanding.

Opening questions:

- How do you typically respond when someone makes some big claims about themselves?
- Why is it important for us to understand what Jesus claimed about Himself?

Note: Make sure to include the following three reasons:

1. A logical reason:

-What He claimed about Himself makes Him either a liar, a lunatic or Lord (i.e. rightful master and ruler of our lives)

There are only two alternatives: Either His claims were false or His claims were true.

If His claims were false, then He is either a liar (knowing that His claims were false) or a lunatic (not knowing that His claims were false).

If His claims were true, then He is who He says He is; He is Lord.

And if He is Lord, we have only two alternatives: We can accept this truth or reject it.

2. A spiritual reason:

-We must accept (believe) His claims to be true if we are to have eternal life

(John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life”)

(John 8:24 “If you do not believe that I am who I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins”)

3. A practical reason:

-Believing Jesus to be who He claimed to be ought to affect how we live

(Luke 6:46 “Why do you call me “Lord, Lord,’ and don't do what I say?”)

(Matt 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven”; see also Matt 25:41-46)

Turn to John 1:1-18

As mentioned earlier, we are going to look at the claims of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of John

[Note: John, who was one of Jesus' closest disciples, wrote in his gospel what he had heard first-hand from Jesus (I John 1:1) so that people might believe and have eternal life (John 20:31).]

Let's look at what John wrote in the prolog of his gospel about his own understanding of who Jesus is.

Read John 1:1-18

Ask: What claims does John make about who Jesus is in this passage?

Make a list, and make sure to include the following:

- God Himself (v.1)
- Pre-existent before the creation of the world (v.1, 2)
- Creator of all things (v.3)
- Life (v.4)
- Light (v.4-9)
- The way to becoming children of God (v.12-13)
- The Son of God (v.14, 18)
- The Christ/Messiah (v.17)

Note that many of these come from the direct claims that Jesus made about Himself, which are some of the same claims that we will be looking at in 9 different Bible studies over the next weeks.

1. I am the Christ/Messiah (4:26)
2. I am the Bread of Life (6:35, 48)
3. I am the Truth (14:6)
4. I am the I AM (8:58)
5. I am the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5)
6. I am the Good Shepherd (10:11)
7. I am the Son of God (10:36)
8. I am the Resurrection and the Life (11:25)
9. I am the Way (14:6)

Note that for each of these direct claims that Jesus made about Himself, we will be asking three important application questions:

- Do we believe that this claim is true? (And if not, are we willing to say that Jesus either was a liar (knowing that His claims were false) or a lunatic (not knowing that His claims were false).
- If we believe that this claim is true, what does it mean or what should it mean to us?
- If we believe that this claim is true, how has it affected or how should it affect our lives?

Express your excitement for the upcoming studies.

Close in prayer.

--Pray that God will give us open hearts and minds

--Pray that as some of us are reminded of things that we already "know", our understanding will be deepened

--Pray that we all will discover new things about who Jesus is

--Pray that what we learn will affect our lives and align them more to what we know and say we believe about Jesus



The Claims of Jesus: Study 2

“I am the Christ/Messiah”

John 4:1-42

Introduction: In our study today, Jesus engages in a conversation with a woman who most people (especially Jews) would not have talked to. As He talks with her, He makes a very important claim about Himself. This results not only in a change in her life, but in the lives of many others as well.

Opening question:

- Have you ever talked to someone very important while being totally unaware of who they were?

Read John 4:1-26

Discussion questions:

1. Describe the context: Where is Jesus? Who is there with Him? What are they doing?

Jesus is in Samaria, talking with a woman at a well where she has come to draw water.

2. What do we know about how Jews viewed Samaritans?

“Jews do not associate with Samaritans” (v.9). Samaritans were the descendants of Jewish people who intermarried with non-Jewish (Gentile) people. The Jews despised the Samaritans and treated them as “unclean”. Therefore, it would have been inappropriate for Jesus (a Jew) to have had contact with this Samaritan woman—let alone ask her for a drink!

What do we know about this woman?

She was most likely considered immoral because of her many past husbands and her current live-in boyfriend. She may have come to draw water at noon (an unusual time, for the custom was to draw water early in the morning or in the evening when it was cooler) in order to avoid contact and ridicule from others. In any case, according to Jewish culture, it would also have been inappropriate for Jesus (as a man) to address her (a woman) in public.

What does Jesus’ interaction with the woman reveal about Him?

Jesus—crossing over all kinds of barriers (religious, social, gender and moral barriers)—reveals in his actions and words his indiscriminating love and care for this woman.

It does seem, however, from what we see in this encounter, that not only did Jesus want to show her love and care, but also He wanted to tell her some things about Himself.

3. What claims does Jesus make about Himself to the woman?

He is the giver of “living water” (v. 10-14) [We’ll talk about this more in a future study.]

He is the Christ/Messiah (v. 26)

[Note: The Christ (Greek) = the Messiah (Hebrew) = the Anointed or Promised One. And while there were many different ideas in 1st century Palestine of what the Messiah would come and do, the pervasive understanding of that time was that he would be a deliverer.]

4. How might this claim of Jesus have been understood by the woman?

The coming of the Messiah was a universal hope for both Jews and Samaritans. For the Jews, their “messianic” hope was for a political deliverer—a king, like David—who would conquer and liberate them from those who ruled over them. However, because the Samaritans rejected all the OT scripture except for the Pentateuch (first 5 books of the OT), their “messianic” hope was for a religious deliverer—a prophet, like Moses (Deut 18:15-18)—who would reveal truth, restore true belief and renew true worship.

[Note how the woman responds to what Jesus said in vv. 21-24 and how this fits with the Samaritan’s understanding of the Christ/Messiah.]

Read v. 25-30 and 39-42

5. What ultimately was the reason for Jesus’ self-disclosure?

He wanted them to know more fully who He was and to believe in Him.

6. What were the two reasons/factors that led the townspeople to believe?

The woman’s testimony and the words of Jesus (what they had heard themselves from Him).

How did their understanding about who Jesus was change during the two days He stayed and taught them? Who did they now understand Him to be?

They came to understand Him to be “the Savior (i.e. Deliverer) of the world”. [Note: We really do not know all of what these Samaritans came to understand, but it does seem that they came to a greater and clearer understanding of Jesus as the Messiah.]

Why might the understanding of this truth have been especially meaningful to the Samaritans?

For centuries, they had been told that they were shut out from God’s mercy; and in the eyes of the Jewish people they were second-class people. But now, because they had experienced His love and acceptance—despite what others (or even they themselves) thought about them—and had heard his teaching, they realized that the Promised One had come for them as well. They now understood that He had come for the whole world—including them!

Summary:

Jesus claimed He is the Christ/Messiah, the One promised by God to come and to deliver/save. John believed and taught this to be true. (I John 4:14 “We have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.”) Other NT writers did the same. (I Tim 1:15 “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”) And as the whole of the NT teaches, the purpose of His coming and the object of His salvation were to save people from the consequences of their sins.

Application questions:

- Do you believe that Jesus’ claim that He is “the Christ/Messiah” is true? If not, are you willing to say that Jesus either was a liar (knowing that His claims were false) or a lunatic (not knowing that His claims were false)?
- If you believe that this claim is true, what does it mean or what should it mean to you?
- If you believe that this claim is true, how has it affected or how should it affect your life?



The Claims of Jesus: Study 3

“I am the Bread of Life”

John 6:1-51

Introduction: One day Jesus feeds a large group of people with enough food to fill them up, but the next day they are hungry again. This study will show us how Jesus addressed their felt need by giving people physical food, but also pointed them to their real need for spiritual food. In so doing, He makes a bold claim about Himself, stating that He is the answer to all spiritual hunger and satisfaction.

Opening questions:

- Have you ever been so hungry that you just couldn't get enough to eat to satisfy your hunger?

Turn to John chapter 6. Review the accounts in vv.1-24

On the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus miraculously feeds a large crowd (5000 men, plus women and children) with five small loaves of bread and two small fish. All the people get enough to eat and still there are twelve baskets full of left-overs! When evening came, Jesus and His disciples crossed over to the other side of the lake—His disciples by boat and Jesus by walking on the water!—and the crowd followed them there.

Read vv.25-51.

Discussion questions:

7. Why did the people follow Jesus to the other side of the lake? What were they looking for?

The wanted more physical food from Jesus!

What is Jesus' response to them for seeking Him out for more physical food?

He tells them instead to work for (seek after) “food that endures to eternal life” (v. 27)

8. In response the crowd asks what they must do to please God and do His will (v.28). What does this imply about how the people saw their relationship with God?

They thought that gaining God's approval and obtaining eternal life came through doing certain “works” that God required.

What does Jesus say is the “work” they must do (v.29)?

They must believe in the one that God has sent; i.e. believe in Him.

9. The peoples' response is to ask for a miracle, suggesting something like always having more than enough to eat, as their forefathers did in the desert (see Exodus 16 and Psalm 78: 23-29). How is their response surprising, given what has just happened?

He had just miraculously fed 5000 men (plus women and children) with five small loaves of bread and two small fish!

How does Jesus correct their understanding of the miracle of the manna (“bread from heaven”) and who it is that still gives them bread (“the true bread of heaven”)?

God was the giver of the manna and He is the giver of bread that gives life to the world.

[Note: the verb “gives” is in the present tense, thus meaning “still gives”]

10. How is the people's response in v.34 like that of the Samaritan women in John 4:15?

"Give us this bread" (so that we won't get hungry) = "Give me this water" (so that I won't get thirsty)

What do bread and water have in common?

They are the primary foods that give us physical life and sustenance.

11. In v. 35, Jesus makes the bold claim that He is "the bread of life". (Note: He makes explicit what He implied in vv. 27 and 33. He also repeats this claim in vv. 48 and 51). What does He mean by this?

When Jesus claims that "I am the bread of life", he is claiming to be the only true source and giver of spiritual life and sustenance. Like physical food provides what our physical bodies need, Jesus alone provides what our spiritual lives need.

12. What does Jesus promise to those who believe that He is "the bread of life" and who come to Him in faith for spiritual life and nourishment? (vv.35-40; cf. v.27 and v.33)

-He will satisfy their spiritual hunger and thirst

("He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty")

-He will never push away or ignore anyone who comes to Him in true belief

-He will "lose none" of those who believe in Him

-He will raise those who believe from the dead

-He will give eternal life to those who believe in Him.

13. "The Jews" didn't seem to understand what Jesus was saying (vv.41-43). Why not?

"The Jews" in this situation were those who were in opposition to Jesus. They knew Jesus for His earthly heritage and couldn't believe Him to be anything more—especially to be what the claims He made implied Him to be. In essence, they couldn't understand because they didn't want to.

What did they need in order to come to Jesus in belief?

They needed God's drawing (v.44) and enabling (v.65) to see (and believe) past the physical realm.

14. What does it mean to "eat" and "feed on" (vv.48-51) Jesus as "the bread of life"?

Come to Him (vv.35, 37, 44, 45)

Believe in Him (vv.29, 35, 40, 47)

Look to Him (v.40) and find in Him alone all that is needed for spiritual nourishment and eternal life.

Summary:

Jesus claimed to be "the Bread of Life"—the only true source and giver of spiritual life and sustenance. He called others to come to Him 1) to find in Him all that they needed for spiritual nourishment and 2) to receive from Him eternal life. In order for them to do so, however, they needed God's enabling to see past the physical realm in order to truly believe in Him.

Application questions:

- Do you believe that Jesus' claim that He is "the Bread of Life" is true? If not, are you willing to say that Jesus either was a liar (knowing that His claims were false) or a lunatic (not knowing that His claims were false)?
- If you believe that this claim is true, what does it mean or what should it mean to you?
- If you believe that this claim is true, how has it affected or how should it affect your life?



The Claims of Jesus: Study 4

“I am the Truth”

John 8:12-30

Introduction: The events of John 7:1-10:21 (and the teachings and works of Jesus recorded in them) all took place around a time when many Jews were gathered together in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Tabernacles, indicating that they all occurred within a few days of each other. In this setting, Jesus makes several bold claims about Himself. In this study, we will consider some clear statements Jesus makes about His claims and teachings, which will lead us to an important “truth” about Him.

Opening question:

- When someone tells you something, how do you typically decide if it is true or not?

Read John 8:12-30

Discussion questions:

1. In 8:12, Jesus makes the bold claim that He is “the light of the world” (a claim we will look at in a future study). How do the Pharisees challenge Jesus and His claim (v.13)?

The Law stated that in order for something like this to be valid, it needed to be established as true by two or more witnesses (Deut 19:15). In an earlier dialog in John 5:31-40, Jesus agrees with this and mentions four “others” besides Himself that testify on His behalf: John the Baptist, His works, the Father and the Scriptures.

How does Jesus respond in this passage (v.14-18) to the challenge put forth by the Pharisees?

He says that the witness of His Father validates what He says (“My other witness is the one who sent me—the Father.” v.18). However, He also states that His testimony alone is valid (“Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid.” v.14).

2. In the rest of the passage (especially vv.25-29), what does Jesus say are the reasons why His testimony alone is valid and why He needs no other testimony to validate the truthfulness of what He says/teaches?

“What I have heard from Him (the Father), I tell the world” (v.26)

“I speak just what the Father has taught me” (v.28)

[See also 7:16, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from Him who sent me”, and 12:50, “Whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say]

3. What bold claim is Jesus making here?

He is God’s spokesperson; telling/speaking the “truth” that He has heard from God (8:40)

4. Moses and the Old Testament prophets were also God’s spokespersons. But what does Jesus say in these verses about Himself that makes Him different from them?

First, He speaks of His divine origin:

–“I know where I have come from” (v.14)

–“I am not of this world”; “I am from above” (v.23)

–“I have been sent from the Father” (vv.16, 18, 26, 29)

[Note: Jesus mentioned 4 times in our last study that He had been “sent from the Father” (John 6:22, 38, 39, 44). He also mentioned 5 times in that same passage that He “came down from heaven” (John 6: 33, 38, 41, 50, 51). Both indicated His divine origin.]

Second, He implies His unique perfection:

–“I always do what pleases Him (the Father)” (v.29)

[Note: This is an indirect claim to being sinless (which others state more directly; see I John 3:5b, I Peter 2:22). It is also an indirect claim to Him always saying /teaching what is true.]

5. How does what John wrote in his prolog concerning Jesus (particularly in John 1:14 and 17b) parallel what Jesus is saying and implying here?

Jesus came from the Father full of truth; truth came through Jesus to the world.

What then can we say about Jesus?

Just as Jesus is the source and giver of true spiritual sustenance (“the bread of the life”), He is the source and giver of spiritual truth.

6. Turn to and read John 14:6. “I am...the truth”

What does it mean that Jesus is the truth; i.e. He is the source and giver of all spiritual truth and not just a source and a giver of some spiritual truth?

Seeking for spiritual truth from any other source than Jesus and His teachings is useless. He—and He alone—is the source and giver of spiritual truth, and all other “spiritual truths” need to be evaluated by His truth.

7. Turn to and read John 5:24 and John 8:51. What does Jesus tell us in these verses about what our response should be to the truth of His teachings and about what the results will be if we respond in these ways?

We need to hear His words, believe His words and obey His words. This leads to eternal life.

8. How does this relate to His claim of being the Christ/Messiah, His claim to be the “bread of life”, the “light of the world”, and all the other claims that we will look at in future studies?

“If you do not believe that I am who I claim to be (i.e. believe that what I say about myself is true), you will indeed die in your sins.” (8:34)

Summary:

Jesus claims to be “the truth”; the source and giver of all spiritual truth. Because of this, He claims that His teachings (including the claims that He makes about Himself) are true—and therefore should be heard, believed and acted upon. For those who do, it leads to eternal life. But for those who don’t, it brings eternal death (separation from God forever).

Application questions:

- Do you believe that Jesus’ claim that He is “the Truth” is true? If not, are you willing to say that Jesus either was a liar (knowing that His claims were false) or a lunatic (not knowing that His claims were false)?
- If you believe that this claim is true, what does it mean or what should it mean to you?
- If you believe that this claim is true, how has it affected or how should it affect your life?



The Claims of Jesus: Study 5

“I am the I AM”

John 8:31-59

Introduction: As mentioned in our last study, the events of John 7:1-10:21 all took place within a few days of each other. And although the Jewish leaders wanted to take Jesus’ life at this time (7:1) they had not yet attempted do so because “His time had not yet come” (8:20). This changes drastically in today’s passage, however, as Jesus makes the boldest claim yet about Himself.

Opening question:

- In what ways are you like your father (or someone else who has significantly shaped your life)?

Read John 8:31-59.

Discussion questions:

[Note: As Jesus had been speaking to the Jews in the preceding section, many had made some kind of profession of faith in Him (v.30). It is to these people that He begins to teach once more.]

1. In v.31, what does it mean to “hold to” Jesus’ teaching?

“hold to my teaching” = continue to believe them to be true and to live in accordance with them

2. Verses 32-36 have to do with slavery and freedom. What kind of freedom were the Jews thinking about? What kind was Jesus speaking about?

The Jews were thinking about political freedom, since they spoke of never being enslaved to other people (v.33). Jesus, however, was speaking about spiritual freedom.

What does Jesus say enslaves people spiritually and what does this slavery result in?
What does He say sets people “free” and allows them to become part of the family of God?

The Bible teaches that all people without Jesus are enslaved to sin (Gal 3:22). Continuing to sin reveals this enslavement and prevents people from becoming true children of God. Jesus (v.36) and His truth (v.32) are the only ways that people can be set free from sin and its affects.

3. Verses 37-40 speak about the difference between being descendants of Abraham and being true children of Abraham. Jesus does not deny that the Jews He is speaking to are Abraham’s descendants. However, what does He say are the reasons that they are not his true children?

They had “no room for His word” (v.37), which was evidenced by the fact that they wanted to kill Him (vv.37, 40). In essence, they truly did not believe what they had professed. (v.45)

[Note: Other NT teaching confirms that just because people are Abraham’s descendants that they are not necessarily his children (Rom 9:6-7). On the contrary, the true children of Abraham are those who believe (Gal 3:7)—i.e. who exercise the same faith that he did.]

4. Verses 41-47 Jesus contrasts having the devil as father and having God as Father. According to Jesus, how do the Jews show that the devil is their father (i.e. that they belong to him)?

They have the same characteristics: The devil is a “murderer” (they are seeking to kill Jesus) and he is a “liar” (they are rejecting the truth of Jesus)

According to Jesus, what would be different if God were their Father (i.e. if they belonged to Him)?

They would hear what God is saying through Him (v.47), believe Him (v.46) and love Him (v.42)

5. The words of Jesus declaring that the devil was their father cause the Jews to make two harsh accusations about Jesus in v. 48. What are they?

They said that Jesus was (like) a Samaritan and that He was demon-possessed.

What does Jesus say in response (convincing the Jews even more that their accusation is true) and what does He mean by this?

“if a man keeps my word, he will never die” (v.51)

Jesus is not saying that those who keep His word will never experience physical death, but rather that they will never experience “spiritual death” (the punishment of God due to them because of their sin). Instead, they will experience eternal life.

What to the Jews was the absurdity of what Jesus claimed?

Abraham died, and so did the prophets. Therefore, how can people not die?

6. In astonishment, the Jews ask Jesus point blank: “Who do you think you are?” (v.53). Before Jesus answers them, what does He say that further confuses and upsets them?

“Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day” (v.56)

What did Jesus mean by this?

Abraham, in faith, looked forward with joy to the fulfillment of God’s promise to him to bless all the peoples of the earth through his “seed” (Gen 22:18). This promise was fulfilled through Jesus (Gal 3:16).

7. What bold claim does Jesus make about Himself in v. 58? What does it mean and how does it relate to what John said about Jesus in his prolog (John 1:1)?

“I tell you the truth...before Abraham was born, I am”

“I am” implies continuous existence. Therefore, Jesus is asserting that before Abraham was born, He existed. “I AM” was also God’s covenant name with Israel, given to Moses in Ex 3:14. This would have clearly been recognized by the Jews as a claim to deity. In short, by claiming to be “I am”, Jesus was stating His pre-existence (“In the beginning was the Word”) and His equality with God (“and the word was God”).

8. How did the Jews respond and why?

They picked up stones to stone Jesus because His claim was blasphemous and punishable by death according to the Law (Lev 24:16 “Anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him.”)

Summary:

Jesus makes the bold claim to be the “I AM”—clearly stating His pre-existence and equality with God.

Application questions:

- Do you believe that Jesus’ claim that He is “the I AM” is true? If not, are you willing to say that Jesus either was a liar (knowing that His claims were false) or a lunatic (not knowing that His claims were false)?
- If you believe that this claim is true, what does it mean or what should it mean to you?
- If you believe that this claim is true, how has it affected or how should it affect your life?



The Claims of Jesus: Study 6

“I am the Light of the World”

John 9:1-41

Introduction: Jesus is still in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Tabernacles (7:1-10:21). In the passage that we will be looking at today, Jesus heals a man born blind. And in the context of this healing, He makes yet another bold claim about Himself and uses the incident as an illustration of some very important spiritual truths.

Opening question:

- What is your most vivid memory involving being in a dark place? How did you feel?

Read John 9:1-41

Discussion questions:

1. Describe the man who Jesus encounters in this incident

He was born blind (v.1); he used to sit and beg (v.8)

What caused his blindness?

We don't know; but we do know that (according to Jesus) it wasn't because he or his parents were being punished for their sins.

2. Why does Jesus heal the man? [Note that the blind man did not ask or beg Jesus to heal him.]

-“that the work of God might be displayed in his life” (v.3)

-healing the blind is part of “the work” that God had sent Him into the world to do (v.4)

3. What bold claim does Jesus make about Himself in v. 5?

“I am the light of the world”

[Note: This is not the first time that He makes this claim. Read John 8:12]

Why do you think that He reiterates this claim in the context of the healing of the blind man?

He used bringing physical light into physical darkness as an illustration of bringing spiritual light into spiritual darkness.

4. What do you think it means that Jesus is “the light of the world”?

This can mean many different things. One meaning can be that Jesus as light distinguishes what is good from what is evil or what is true from what is false (John 3:19-21). Another meaning can be that Jesus as light reveals sin/evil/falsehood and brings conviction (Isa 6:1-5 and Acts 9:1-5). And yet another meaning can be that Jesus as light gives guidance/direction to His people in times of darkness (like the pillar of fire that lighted the way for the Israelites (Ex 13:21). But none of these, it seems, is what Jesus is seeking to communicate here in this context.

What seems most likely is that Jesus is communicating that He is the giver of spiritual understanding that leads people out of “darkness” to belief in Him and into eternal life.

5. Let's look at how the incident that follows this claim of Jesus (vv.6-38) provides an illustration of this truth:

First of all, how is the man's physical condition (blind from birth) analogous to the spiritual condition of all people from birth?

Part of what it means to be born into a fallen world is that people have no understanding of spiritual truth and no way to understand spiritual truth (II Cor 4:4 "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see (understand) the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ"). The blind man represents fallen humanity living in spiritual darkness because of sin.

How does the progression of spiritual understanding for the blind man give a model of what happens when people respond to "light" that Jesus gives?

The key is how he responds in belief each time Jesus gives him "light". First in response to Jesus' words and command, the man believes and obeys Jesus, which leads to his physical healing (v.7). Then, when Jesus finds him later he responds by seeking for more understanding (v.36). Finally, to the "light" given that Jesus was the one who had healed him, the man believes in Jesus and worships Him (v.38). [Note: He has now come to understand that Jesus is not only "the man they call Jesus" (v.11) and the man who "opened his eyes" (v.30), but a man "from God" (v.33), the "Son of Man" (v.35) and "Lord" (v.38).]

6. How does Jesus contrast what happened spiritually to the blind man to the spiritual fate of the Pharisees because of their response (vv.39-41)?

The "light" that Jesus gives to the world brings salvation to those who acknowledge they are "blind" and therefore respond to the light and believe (like the blind man). However, Jesus pronounces judgment to those who think that they can "see" and therefore reject the light and don't believe (like the Pharisees). The later remain in "darkness".

John 12:46 "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness"

John 8:12 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me (responding to the light I give) will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of (that leads to) life (eternal)"

7. How does what we learn in this passage about Jesus' light and peoples' choices regarding it parallel what John wrote in his prologue (John 1:4-13)?

Although He gives light to everyone, we all have a choice about whether we will accept it or not.

John 1:11-12 "He came (and shined his light, see vv.4-5) to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him (accepted his light) and believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God"

Summary:

Jesus claims to be "the light of the world"; the source and giver of spiritual understanding. Not all people acknowledge that they need His light, and therefore reject it and remain in darkness. However, some do see their need for His light; they accept it and are led not only to a greater understanding of who Jesus is and to a greater belief in Him, but to eternal life in Him as well.

Application questions:

- Do you believe that Jesus' claim that He is "the Light of the World" is true? If not, are you willing to say that Jesus either was a liar (knowing that His claims were false) or a lunatic (not knowing that His claims were false)?
- If you believe that this claim is true, what does it mean or what should it mean to you?
- If you believe that this claim is true, how has it affected or how should it affect your life?



The Claims of Jesus: Study 7

“I am the Good Shepherd”

John 10:1-21

Introduction: Having just healed the man born blind, Jesus goes on to teach the Jews who were gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Tabernacles. In this passage He teaches them by using an analogy that would have been very familiar to the people of that time and culture. Using this figure of speech, Jesus makes further claims about Himself.

Opening questions:

- Describe a time in your childhood when you were with your family or a group of friends, but somehow got separated from them and became “lost”. How did you feel?

Read John 10:1-21

Discussion questions:

In this passage Jesus makes the claim twice to being “the good shepherd” (vv. 11, 14). He also speaks several times about those who are His sheep.

1. List all of the things that Jesus, “the good shepherd”, does for His sheep and/or that describes His relationship with them.

He owns His sheep (3, 4, 12)

He knows His sheep (14)

He speaks to His sheep (3)

He leads His sheep (3, 4)

He feeds His sheep (9)

He protects His sheep (12)

He cares for His sheep (13)

He pursues His sheep (16)

He lays down His life for His sheep (11, 15)

He gives fullness of life to His sheep (10)

[Note: For another look at what Jesus the good shepherd does for His sheep and/or how He describes His relationship with His sheep, encourage people to read Psalm 23.]

2. Jesus makes the statement twice in vv. 7-9 that He is “the gate”. What do you think this means?

There are two meanings here: One is that He stands or lies down in the entrance of the sheep pen to protect His sheep from anything/anybody coming in to steal or harm them. The other is that any sheep that wish to enter into His flock must enter through Him as well. We will look more at this later truth in a future study.

3. What things describe the relationship Jesus’ sheep have with Him and how they respond to Him?

They know Him (14)

They know His voice (4)

They listen to Him (3)

They follow Him (4)

4. What happens when His sheep don’t do these things?

They wander away from Him and move into danger. They also can become “lost”.

Read Luke 15:4-6. What does this passage tell us about Jesus’ response to His sheep when they wander away and get “lost”?

He goes after them. He rescues them. He brings them back into the flock. And He rejoices.

5. Read Luke 19:10. What does Jesus say is the purpose of His coming?

“The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost”

Read Isaiah 53:6a. What does this passage say about all human beings and their “lost-ness”?

“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way” All people have wandered from God and chosen to go their own way, and therefore all people are “lost” and are in need of being rescued/saved by Jesus.

What does John 10:16 say about Jesus’ relationship with sheep who have not been in His flock?

Some are His sheep, and therefore He goes after them and brings them into His flock.

What distinguishes those who will be brought in and those who won’t?

His sheep listen to His voice. They also believe His words and follow Him (John 10:26-27).

6. What do vv. 11-18 point to as the ultimate act and evidence of Jesus’ care for and commitment to His sheep?

He lays down His life for His sheep (vv. 11, 15, 17-18). [Note: It isn’t just that He is willing to lay down His life; He says that He actually does.]

What is the meaning of Jesus’ words about laying down His life and taking it up again?

He is referring to His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.

7. Jesus makes it clear in other statements of His that He came to this world to lay down His life (e.g. Mark 10:45) in order to rescue/save us from our “lost-ness”. What did we see earlier in this passage that was the ultimate reason for His coming—as well as the reason for Him laying down His life and taking it up again?

v.10 “I have come that they (His sheep) may have life, and have it to the full.” [Note: The “full life” spoken of here is eternal (John 10:28a), but isn’t just a reference to life after death. The “full life” is to be experienced now as well. And this life comes by knowing Jesus, listening to Him, believing in Him and following Him.]

8. What were the various responses to His teaching and why?

People were divided. Some still thought He was demon-possessed and raving mad (v. 20). Others disagreed with this because He was able to heal the man born blind (v.21)

Summary: Jesus claims to be “the good shepherd”, which has many implications for our lives.

Application questions:

- Do you believe that Jesus’ claim that He is “the Good Shepherd” is true? If not, are you willing to say that Jesus either was a liar (knowing that His claims were false) or a lunatic (not knowing that His claims were false)?
- If you believe that this claim is true, what does it mean or what should it mean to you?
 - Are you currently experiencing the “goodness” of Jesus’ care and leadership of your life?
 - If not, are you currently outside of His flock—either having never really been in it or having been in it but wandered away from it—and therefore are in need of His rescuing?
- If you believe that this claim is true, how has it affected or how should it affect your life?



The Claims of Jesus: Study 8

“I am the Son of God”

John 10:22-39

Introduction: In this passage, the Jews again initiate a conversation with Jesus. This conversation takes place 2-3 months after the previous section (7:1-10:21). In it, Jesus makes another bold claim about Himself, which again brings the Jews to the place of wanting to kill Him.

Opening questions:

- Has there ever been a time in your life when you said something that was only partially understood – and maybe even found yourself mistreated because of it? How did you feel? What did you do?

Read John 10:22-39

Discussion questions:

1. In this setting, the Jews gather around Jesus and initiate a conversation. What do they ask of Jesus? Why?

They want Jesus to “plainly” tell them if He is the Christ. The response of Jesus and the later action of the Jews seem to indicate that their request is not out of curiosity or a genuine interest in knowing, but rather out of hostility. They seem to have already made up their mind that He isn’t the Christ and most likely are simply looking for further grounds on which to accuse Him.

How does Jesus respond to their question?

Jesus says that He already has told them.

2. How has Jesus “told” them that He is the Christ?

Through what His miracles have revealed (v.25). Jesus also may be making an implication to His words as well (v.27) [Note: Although He accepted the proclamation of His disciples that He was the Christ (Matt 16:15-17), the only time up to this point that Jesus explicitly has said that He is the Christ is in private with the Samaritan woman (John 4:26)]

Why haven’t they understood?

They are unable to “hear” (like the Jews in John 8:43) because they don’t believe (10:25)

3. In vv.25-30, Jesus again uses the analogy of sheep. What does He say about the Jews who were questioning Him?

They were not His sheep

What does He say about His sheep and His relationship with them (and in contrast, about those who were questioning Him?)

His sheep listen to Him

His sheep follow Him

He knows His sheep

He gives them eternal life

4. What claim did Jesus make that made the Jews mad enough to pick up stones to kill Him?

Jesus said: “I and the Father are one” [Note: “one” = “one thing”, not “one person” (the Greek is neuter). i.e. Jesus and the Father are one or equal in essence or nature, but they are not identical persons.]

5. Read the following verses in John and see how Jesus goes on to say more about being “one” with the Father:

10:38; 14:11; 17:21 “the Father is in me and I am in the Father”
12:50 When you hear me, you hear the Father
12:45, 14:9 When you look at/see me, you see the Father
14:7; 8:19 When you really know me, you know the Father
13:20 When you accept me, you accept the Father
5:23 When you do not honor me, you do not honor the Father

6. Why did the Jews react the way they did? (Remember a similar reaction in John 8:56-59?; cf. John 5:16-18)

They picked up stones to stone Jesus because His claim was blasphemous (understood as claiming to be God) and therefore punishable by death according to the Law (Lev 24:16 “Anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him.”)

What did they correctly understand? What didn’t they understand and why?

They understood correctly that He was claiming equality with God. They didn’t understand, however, that He was more than just a “mere man”. Why?—because they didn’t believe Him, nor did they want to.

7. Although we’re not told how or when, Jesus mentions in v. 36 that He has told them that He is the Son of God (i.e. God Himself). Read John 5:16-18. What did the Jews in this situation understand about what Jesus was saying about Himself?

Jesus was calling God His own Father (and by corollary, saying that He was God’s Son); the Jews understood this comment as Jesus making Himself equal with God.

8. Finally, John records at least one more incident in which people understood Jesus claiming to be the Son of God—an incident that happened only 4 months after the one we just looked at.

Read John 19:7. (Note: The background to this statement is found in Mark 14:61-64) What happened as a result of Jesus making this claim?

Jesus was killed, not because of the claims of His accusers, but because He claimed to be the Son of God (i.e. God Himself)

[Note: No other recognized religious leader (Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, etc.) has ever claimed to be God; Jesus is the only one.]

Summary:

Jesus claimed to be the Son of God: equal with God the Father in essence and nature, Even those who didn’t believe this understood that by making this claim, Jesus was claiming to be God Himself. And this bold claim led those who didn’t believe to kill Him.

Application questions:

- Do you believe that Jesus’ claim that He is “the Son of God” is true? If not, are you willing to say that Jesus either was a liar (knowing that His claims were false) or a lunatic (not knowing that His claims were false)?
- If you believe that this claim is true, what does it mean or what should it mean to you?
- If you believe that this claim is true, how has it affected or how should it affect your life?



The Claims of Jesus: Study 9 **“I am the Resurrection and the Life”** **John 11:1-46**

Introduction: This account comes near the end of Jesus’ life and ministry. In it, Jesus’ compassion and power are questioned by not only the Jews, but by some of His closest friends as well. Jesus not only demonstrates His love and power by performing His greatest miracle yet, but He makes yet another bold claim about Himself. He also says some important things about life and death.

Opening questions:

- If you could get one answer from God about death or life after death, what question would you ask?

Read John 11:1-16

Discussion questions:

1. Who was Lazarus and how would you describe Jesus’ relationship with him?

Lazarus is only mentioned in John chapters 11 and 12. As this passage states (v.1), he was the brother of Martha and Mary. Other passages tell us that Jesus often spent time with them in their hometown of Bethany (Matt 21:17; Mark 11:11; Luke 10: 38-42; John 12:1-3). Jesus loved Lazarus as was spoken by his sisters (v.3), mentioned by John (v.5) and observed by those in this account (v.36).

2. What can be said about Jesus’ response to the news that Lazarus was sick?

(v.4) optimistic – “This sickness will not end in death”
(v.4) purposeful – “It is for God’s glory” (cf. John 9:3)
(v.6) surprising – “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.”

3. What happened during the time that Jesus waited?

Lazarus died (v.14). In fact, Lazarus must have died shortly after the messengers left Bethany, accounting for the “four days” he had been dead (v.17, 39): one day journey for the messengers, two days while Jesus stayed where He was, and one day for Jesus’ journey to Bethany.

4. Deciding to go where Lazarus was, what did Jesus purpose to do?

(v.11) “I’m going there to wake him up” (i.e. raise him from the dead)

Read John 11:17-27

5. What did Martha’s initial words express to Jesus?

(v.21) disappointment: “Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died”
(v.22) faith: “But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

6. When Jesus tells Martha that Lazarus will “rise again”, what is her response?

(v.24) She expresses her belief that Lazarus will be raised at the general resurrection at the end of time—a belief held by many Jews at this time.

7. What was Jesus seeking to communicate to Martha (and us) by making the claim: “I am the resurrection and the life”?

Jesus was communicating that He—and He alone—has the power to raise the dead back to life, and that He—and He alone—can give people life that is both “full” (10:10) and “eternal” (10:28). He wanted her to know that He could raise Lazarus from the dead and give him life.

[Note: Because Jesus is the Life, those who believe in Him are given life. The bible depicts people without belief/faith in Christ as spiritually “dead” (Eph 2:1). Because Jesus is the Resurrection, He alone can “resurrect” or make spiritually “dead” people “alive” (2:5). And this “resurrection” from death and giving of “life” comes through belief/faith in Him (2:8).]

To Martha, Jesus says that those who believe in Him and have been made spiritually alive (i.e. have full and eternal life) will never experience eternal death (i.e. separation from God forever). That’s why He says that they “will never die” (v.26). He also tells her that even though those who believe in Him will eventually experience physical death, because Jesus has the power over this kind of death as well, they will be “resurrected” and “will live” (v.25)

Read John 11:28-37

8. What responses here show Jesus’ true humanity?

(v. 33) “He was moved deeply...and was troubled”

(v. 35) “He wept” (i.e. He burst into tears)

9. What do the responses of the Jews reveal?

(v.36) recognition of Jesus’ love for Lazarus

(v.37) lack of faith (or at least wonderment) regarding Jesus’ apparent helplessness or inability to do anything.

Read John 11:38-46, 53

[Note: Because Lazarus had been dead for four days, and because of the hot Palestine climate, decay of his dead body would already have begun.]

10. What happened and how did people respond?

Jesus made a dead person alive! He seemingly even reversed the process of decay and made Lazarus’ body whole once again!

Many must have rejoiced and given thanks to God. Some, as this passage tells us, put their faith in Jesus. Others, however, went and reported what had happened to Jesus’ enemies, who in turn began to plot the taking of His life (and later made plans to kill Lazarus as well! 12:9-11)

Summary:

As “the resurrection and the life”, Jesus demonstrated in the raising of Lazarus His power to make physically dead people alive again. However, His teaching (and the teaching of the entire NT) also shows us that He—and He alone—has the power to make spiritually “dead” people “alive”, giving them true life that lasts beyond their physical death.

Application questions:

- Do you believe that Jesus’ claim that He is “the Resurrection and the Life” is true? If not, are you willing to say that Jesus either was a liar (knowing that His claims were false) or a lunatic (not knowing that His claims were false)?
- If you believe that this claim is true, what does it mean or what should it mean to you?
- If you believe that this claim is true, how has it affected or how should it affect your life?



The Claims of Jesus: Study 10

“I am the Way”

John 13:31-14:6

Introduction: Since this is the last study in our series, let’s review what we’ve learned so far:

While Jesus lived and ministered to people here on earth, He wanted people to know who He really was. Therefore, throughout His life and ministry He made several very direct (and bold!) claims about who He was. And many of these claims were introduced by the preface “I am...”

We’ve looked at 8 of these claims so far. What are they and what does each of them mean?

- I am the Christ/Messiah (4:1-42) - the One who would come to deliver/save from sin
- I am the Bread of Life (6:1-51) - the One and only source and giver of true spiritual sustenance
- I am the Truth (8:12-30; 14:6) - the One and only source and giver of all spiritual truth
- I am the I AM (8:31-59) - the pre-existent One who was before all things and is equal with God
- I am the Light of the World (9:1-41) - the One and only source and giver of true spiritual understanding
- I am the Good Shepherd (10:1-21) - the One who cares for His sheep and rescues those who aren’t
- I am the Son of God (10:22-39) - One who is equal with God the Father in essence and nature
- I am the Resurrection and the Life (11:1-46) - the One who has power to give life to the physically and spiritually dead –life that is both “full” and “eternal”

In this account, Jesus makes another claim—one that is especially important for people to know, but so very hard for people to believe and accept.

Opening questions:

- Share about a time when a good friend or close relative moved away from you. How did you feel?

Read John 13:31-14:6

Discussion questions:

1. Why were the disciples “troubled” in their hearts (14:1)?

-Jesus had announced that one of them would betray Him (13:21)

-He had told them that He was going away and that they would not be going with Him (vv.33, 36)

2. In verse 13:31-38, Jesus announced to His disciples two times that He was going away and that they could not come with Him (vv. 33 and 36). This was the same thing that He had told His adversaries, the Jews, in John 8:21. What news of hope, however, did Jesus give His disciples?

-They will follow Him later (13:36)

[Note: To the disciples He was saying that they would experience eternal life with Him. To

the Jews He made no such promise; instead, He told them that they would die in their sins (i.e. experience eternal death and separation from Him forever) because of their unbelief.]

3. In v. 14:1-4, what did Jesus tell His disciples about how they should respond to this troubling news?

-They were to trust (have faith in) in God and in Him.

4. Where is Jesus going and why is He going there?

Jesus is returning to the Father in heaven. The “route” He will take will be through death and resurrection. His going away would secure their final destiny—life with Him and the Father forever—and is ultimately for their good.

[Note: The image of heaven as a “house” with “rooms” is taken from the type of house common in that day, in which married sons and daughters would be given places to live under the same roof as their parents.]

5. What additional news of hope does Jesus give His disciples?

- He would come back and take them to be with Him (14:3). He would not leave them as “orphans” (14:18).

6. Jesus is going to where the Father is and tells them that they know the way there (14:4). What is the way, according to Jesus?

Jesus said: “I am the Way...No one comes to the Father except through me.” (14:6)

[Note: Jesus had already made reference to Him being the Way in His declaration in John 10:9 when He said “I am the Gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.” His disciples later understood and proclaimed this same truth; e.g. Peter in Acts 4:12—“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”.]

7. What does it mean that Jesus is the only way to the Father (i.e. to God)?

Because of sin (our choosing to rebel against God’s intended relationship with Him and to run our own lives), every human being (including us) is helplessly separated from God, guilty before Him and deserving His just punishment. However, out of His great love for us, God took the initiative and provided the way to be brought back into a right relationship with Himself, and His plan centered in the person and work of His Son, Jesus. For though Jesus lived a perfect life (and therefore was not deserving of God’s punishment), He died on the cross as a substitute for us by taking our sin upon Himself and suffering the punishment from God for it in our place. He thus provided the way for us to be forgiven of our sin and to be restored to a right relationship with God, now and forever. Jesus—and Jesus alone—is the only way to God. Therefore, as Gal 2:21 says, “If righteousness (i.e. a right relationship with God) could be gained through the law (i.e. the keeping of certain rules)”—or for that matter, through living a good life, through other religions or through any other way than through Jesus —“Jesus died for nothing.”

8. Why is this so hard for people to believe and except?

Our contemporary, pluralistic culture sees this claim as being too narrow and too intolerant. However, if Jesus is truly who He claimed to be (as seen in the claims He made about Himself in our previous studies), then His claim to being the way to God can be believed and accepted.

Application questions:

- Do you believe that Jesus’ claim that He is “the (only) Way” to God is true? If not, are you willing to say that Jesus either was a liar (knowing that His claims were false) or a lunatic (not knowing that His claims were false)?
- If you believe that this claim is true, what does it mean or what should it mean to you?
- If you believe that this claim is true, how has it affected or how should it affect your life?

