

THE CLAIMS OF

JESUS

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**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; 10:19-210). 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, through-out 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?

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

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

Application

- *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?*

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?

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

What do we know about this woman?

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

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

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

Read v. 25-30 and 39-42

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

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

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?

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

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

Read v. 25-51.

Discussion questions:

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

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

2. 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?

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

3. 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?

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

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

What do bread and water have in common?

5. 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?

6. 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)

7. “The Jews” didn’t seem to understand what Jesus was saying (vv.41-43). Why not?

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

8. What does it mean to “eat” and “feed on” (vv.48-51) Jesus as “the bread of 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)?

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

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?
3. What bold claim is Jesus making here?
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?

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?

What then can we say about Jesus?

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 a source and a giver of some spiritual 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?

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?

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 to 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:

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

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?

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?

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?

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)?

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

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?

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

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

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?

What did Jesus mean by this?

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)?

8. How did the Jews respond and why?

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. What caused his blindness?
2. Why does Jesus heal the man? [Note that the blind man did not ask or beg Jesus to heal him.]
3. What bold claim does Jesus make about Himself in v. 5?

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

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

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?

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?

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)?
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)?

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

What does John 10:16 say about Jesus’ relationship with sheep who have not been in His flock? What distinguishes those who will be brought in and those who won’t?

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

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

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?

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

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?

How does Jesus respond to their question?

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

Why haven't they understood?

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

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

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

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

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

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?

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?

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?
2. What can be said about Jesus’ response to the news that Lazarus was sick?
3. What happened during the time that Jesus waited?
4. Deciding to go where Lazarus was, what did Jesus purpose to do?

Read John 11:17-27

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)?

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?
3. In v. 14:1-4, what did Jesus tell His disciples about how they should respond to this troubling news?
4. Where is Jesus going and why is He going there?
5. What additional news of hope does Jesus give His disciples?
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?
7. What does it mean that Jesus is the only way to the Father (i.e. to God)?
8. Why is this so hard for people to believe and except?

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?