

STUDY 2: WHAT JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT HIMSELF

Taken and adapted from 'The Red Bits – A Study Guide' by Michael Button)

Introduction: Jesus calls us to believe in and to follow Him (John 3:16 & Matt 16:24). However, He does not expect us to do so blindly. He tells us enough about Himself to give us confidence that we are committing ourselves to someone we can trust. We shall examine what He taught about Himself as a Person, and of the work He came to do.

I Who Jesus is

1. **The Son of God.** Jesus frequently spoke of God as His Father (e.g. Matt 11:27, Luke 10:22, John 6:65) which was sufficient to cause the religiously pious of His day to accuse Him of blasphemy (John 10:32-33). This is probably why He did not say outright, 'I am the Son of God,' which would have immediately alienated many of His listeners. A true knowledge of His being God's Son is given by revelation from God to those who are ready and willing to receive it, such as the Apostle Peter (*read* Matt 16:15-17).

2. **Divine.** We have seen that Jesus is *The Son* in a unique sense. We learn this from references Jesus made to His origin and to His particular relationship to the Father, as we shall see in our next two activities:

Activity: In (a) to (e) below are five statements of Jesus about His divine origins. In which scriptures (1-5) are they found?

- (a) He existed from eternity []
 (b) He came from the Father []
 (c) To receive Him is to receive the Father. []
 (d) He is equal with the Father. []

- (e) He is one with the Father. []
 (There can be no greater claim to being God incarnate than this statement of Jesus.)

1. Matt 10:40 3. John 10:30 5. John 17:5
 2. John 5:18 4. John 16:28

The *I am* passages (*read* John 8:58). When Jesus spoke of His existence in the time of Abraham (who lived about 2,000 years earlier), He deliberately used the present tense (*I am*) rather than the past tense (*I was*), which one would normally use when referring to former times. His Jewish hearers immediately recognised that He was speaking of Himself as God, for *I am* was the way in which God told Moses He wished to be made known (*read* Exod 3:14).

On other occasions, Jesus followed *I am* with a description that indicated some characteristic of God.

Activity: Here are those passages. Find and match the meanings from the list numbered 1-8.

- (a) "I am the Bread of Life" (John 6:35). []
 (b) "I am the Light of the World" (John 8:12). []
 (c) "I am the Good Shepherd" (John 10:11). []
 (d) "I am the Door" (John 10:7 & 9). []
 (e) "I am the Resurrection and the Life" (John 11:25)[]
 & "I am the Life" (John 14:6).
 (f) "I am the Way" (John 14:6). []
 (g) "I am the Truth" (John 14:6). []
 (h) "I am the True Vine" (John 15:5). []

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. The way into heaven | 5. Brings eternal life |
| 2. The only route to God | 6. The source of a fruitful life |
| 3. Dependable | 7. Brings revelation |
| 4. Satisfies a spiritual need | 8. The guide and comforter of Psalm 23 |

When Thomas called him *My Lord and my God*, Jesus did not deny it, which surely He would have done had it not been true.

Activity: Jesus made several claims to authority that belongs only to God. Match the ways in which Jesus has authority to the verses in which He make those claims:

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----|--------------------------|
| (a) Matt 9:6 | [] | (1) to command |
| (b) John 5:22 | [] | (2) to give eternal life |
| (c) John 10:27-28 | [] | (3) to forgive sin |
| (d) John 15:10 | [] | (4) to judge |

3. **The Messiah.** The closest Jesus came to saying, "I am the Messiah," was when he told the Woman at the Well who was talking about the expected Messiah, "I who speak to you am He," and His reply of, "I am" to the High Priest's question, "Are you the Christ?" (John 4:26; Mark 14:61-62). Jesus avoided saying, "I am the Messiah," lest the Jews identified Him with their false expectation of someone who would deliver them from Roman occupation. Some Bible scholars have referred to this silence on the part of Jesus as the *Messianic Secret*. However, it was no secret. Jesus made several allusions to His fulfilling the role of Messiah as prophesied in the Old Testament.

Activity: Match the Messianic Prophecies with the Claims of Jesus (some verses might contain more than one):

- | | |
|--|-----|
| (a) Isaiah 53:7 (Delivered to death) | [] |
| (b) Isaiah 53:10-12 (The Atonement) | [] |
| (c) Isaiah 61:1-3 (His ministry) | [] |
| (d) Daniel 7:13 (What He often called Himself) | [] |
| (e) Micah 5:4 (The Good Shepherd) | [] |

- (1) Luke 4:16-21 (3) Matt 11:2-5 (5) Mark 10:45
 (2) Matt 24:30 (4) Mark 10:33-34 (6) John 10:14

4. The Son of Man. This is the title Jesus used of Himself more than any other title (on at least 30 occasions). Although, sometimes, the expression simply means a human being (as in Ezekiel), it was especially known to Jews as one of the Messiah's titles. The Old Testament prophet, Daniel, was given a prophecy in a dream in which he saw four beasts that would cause trouble on earth, followed by One sent from heaven to set up an everlasting kingdom. In contrast to the beasts, this king would be *like a son of man*. This was the Messiah. Read about Him in Daniel 7:13-14.

Activity: Read all of Psalm 8, then Hebrews 2:6-9, then answer the following questions:

- (a) Which verse in Psalm 8 includes a title of the Messiah? _____
 (b) To whom does the Hebrews passage refer? _____

5. One Prophesied in the Scriptures. Talking to His disciples after His resurrection, Jesus told them, *"These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me"* (Luke 24:44). The Hebrew Bible used by the Jews in the time of Jesus was divided into three sections, all of which Jesus mentions here, thereby indicating that all parts of the Old Testament speak of Him. We should always be on the lookout for references to Jesus when reading the Old Testament. It has been said "The New is in the Old concealed; the Old is in the New revealed."

6. A Prophet (*read* Matt 21:11 and Luke 13:33). Of course, Jesus was far more than a prophet, as we have seen, but people did recognise Him as a prophet and on at least one occasion He referred to His dying a prophet's death. Not all martyrdoms took place in Jerusalem but, since the responsibility for trying and sentencing false prophets lay with the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, it was the most likely place for prophets accused of being false (rightly or wrongly) to receive the death penalty according to Jewish law (Deut 18:20). Jesus knew that He would meet His death in Jerusalem at the hands of those leaders.

7. A sign from God (*read* Matt 12:38-42). Though Jesus performed many miracles, some still wanted Him to show a sign that He was sent from God. Jesus refused to show any specific sign, for His very presence and the things He did daily were sufficient signs as to who He was (Matt 11:1-6). Jonah's miraculous preservation had been a sign to the people of Nineveh that had brought about their repentance, and Solomon's wisdom had been a sign for the Queen of Sheba to call forth praise to the Lord God (Jonah 3:5 & . 1 Kings 10:9).

II The Mission of Jesus

By the *Mission of Jesus* we mean what He came to this world to do.

1. **To Reveal God** (*read* John 8:19, 14:9).
2. **To teach eternal truth** (*read* Matt 24:35).
3. **To bring the Kingdom of God to this world.** We shall learn about the Kingdom of God in a later study. For now we shall devote our next activity to looking at some of the benefits of the Kingdom that Jesus brought during His ministry, as prophesied in Isaiah 61.

Activity: In Luke 4:16-20 we learn that Jesus read from the Book of Isaiah and said that the prophecy He read was being fulfilled in His day. Read Isaiah 61:1-3 and fill in the gaps that tell us what the mission of Jesus was.

Preach to the poor; He has sent Me to the brokenhearted, To proclaim to the captives, And the of the prison to those who are bound. To proclaim the year of the LORD, And the of vengeance of our God; Toall who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give the for ashes, The for mourning, The for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of , The planting of , that He may be

4. To die to bring eternal life for mankind. Only the Messiah sent from God could speak of His death as a purpose of His mission. It has been put that He was born to die. It was hard for Jesus' disciples to take in what He was telling them about the certainty and necessity of His dying. Indeed they did not fully appreciate what He had been telling them until after His resurrection. He told us:

- (i) His death was predestined (*read* Mark 8:31 & Mark 14:21). Note the *must* in Mark 8:31. His death was written in the Scriptures, which must be fulfilled. Without it, His mission would not be accomplished. (ii) His death was for a purpose (*read* John 12:27). He died to bring forgiveness of sins and eternal life to mankind – *A ransom for many* (Mark 10:45. See also Matt 26:28 and John 6:51).
- (iii) He gave His life freely. It was not taken from Him by force (*read* John 10:18).
- (iv) How it would come about. He spoke of His betrayal, the timing and the method of His death – by crucifixion (*read* Matt 17:22 & 26:2).
- (v) His resurrection. He would rise again on the third day (*read* Matt 17:22-23).
- (vi) To remember His death by observing Communion. His disciples are to break bread and drink wine in Communion until He comes again (*read* Luke 22:14-20).

5. **To enable disciples to fulfil the Great Commission** (*read* Matt 28:19-20 & Acts 1:8). When Jesus told His disciples to go into all the world and make disciples, He said that He would be with them. He is not presently here in the flesh, but He is with us by His Spirit, by Whom He gives disciples the power to fulfil the commission.

6. **To give true rest** (*read* Matt 11:28-30). The Jews were burdened with the demands of the Law of Moses – not just the commands as they were given in Scripture but by the heavy demands added to them by their religious teachers. Many will have lived under constant worries, “Have I done enough to earn God’s favour? Have I inadvertently broken a law of God? Have I failed to do something I should have done?” Jesus brought to such the comfort of knowing their security lay in Him, not in the Law. Though commitment to Jesus and the Kingdom of God brought demands of their own, they were nothing like the constant strain of trying to live up to the Law’s demands.

7. **To prepare a place in heaven for believers** (*read* John 14:2-3). If we are undertaking a long and sometimes arduous journey, it is good to know that a place has already been prepared for us at our destination. It is not clear what preparations Jesus is making for believers to take their places in heaven when our life on earth is over but it is comforting to hear the promise of Jesus, “*I go to prepare a place for you.*”

8. **To rule** (*read* Matt 25:31). We shall study this when we look at the Kingdom of God and about things to come. Jesus promised that, following His death and resurrection, He will come to this world again and then He will rule. Since He is already here in Spirit (see Para. 5), this further coming must mean something more tangible. Indeed, angels said He will come in the same manner His disciples saw Him go into heaven, which was in bodily form (Acts 1:11). The second coming of Jesus and His righteous rule is something that Christians can look forward to with joyful anticipation.

Activity: Circle the letter before each true statement:

- (a) To see Jesus is to see God .
- (b) Jesus told us He would die but not by what means He would die.
- (c) The death of Jesus came as a great surprise to Him.
- (d) There is a burden to bear in following Jesus but it is lighter than the burden of the Law.
- (e) Jesus is no longer with us.
- (f) Jesus is with us but one day will be with us in greater measure.
- (g) Believers will celebrate the communion service forever.