

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Jesus once asked, “Who do you say that I am?” We can return the question and ask, “Who do you say you are?” In the Gospels, Jesus identified himself as Son of God, Messiah, and Savior. The Gospels are not word for word reports but present Jesus with the understanding and language that developed decades later. This theology flowed from Jesus’ words and actions that showed his unique relationship with God and his mission.

In Scripture Jesus referred to God as his Father who sent him (John 6:37-38): “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son” (Matthew 11:27). “The Father loves his Son and shows him everything that he himself does . . . Just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, so also does the Son give life to whomever he wishes. Nor does the Father judge anyone, but he has given all judgment to his Son, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father” (John 5:20-23). At the Last Supper Jesus explained, “The world must know that I love the Father and that I do just as the Father has commanded me” (John 14:31). He revealed that he was going back to the Father (John 16:28). Jesus prayed, “I glorified you on Earth by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do. Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began” (John 17:4).

Jesus declared himself to be Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8). Three times in chapter 8 of the Gospel of John, Jesus called himself I AM, a phrase that recalled God’s name. This provoked people to stone him. He hoped that they might realize that the Father is in him and he in the Father (John 10:36-38).

In the synagogue at Nazareth, after reading from Isaiah about God’s anointed one, Jesus claimed, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). Later he said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17). When the Samaritan woman stated that the Messiah was coming, Jesus answered, “I am he” (John 4:26). Later when the high priest asked, “Are you the Messiah, the son of the Blessed One?” Jesus answered, “I am” (Mark 14:61-62).

Jesus stated his purpose on Earth: “I did not come to call the righteous but sinners” (Matthew 9:13). “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

Jesus also revealed who he was through figures of speech:

- “I am the living bread that came down from heaven” (John 6:51).
- “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).
- “I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved” (John 10:9).
- “I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:14-15).
- “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25).

- “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6-7).
- “I am the vine, you are the branches” (John 15:5).

Those who profess that Jesus is Lord run the risk of rejection. That is sometimes the price of teaching the truth.

† Jesus, I believe in you! †

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