

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Genesis 3:15

Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.

C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

We saw in Week One that Jesus was no respecter of persons, refusing to “show favoritism” (Acts 10:34) when He said “If anyone!” In Week Two we saw the difference between the Law of Moses which says ‘GO’ and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which says ‘COME!’ This week we will take a look at who this “Me” that anyone who would come after truly is.

Before we see what Jesus has to say about Himself, let’s take a look at what some others have to say about Him, beginning with sources outside of sacred Scripture. This, of course, is a great starting point for a post-modern culture that dislikes authority, despises exclusivism, and doubts the existence of absolute truth. They view the Bible as a story book, like Aesop’s Fables, filled with moralistic stories designed to help us have our best life now.

What Do Non-Christian Sources Say He Is?

In the field of non-Christian sources that support the Christian faith, I am eternally grateful for my friend and Greek seminary professor, Dr. Sam Lamerson. Whether lecturing in seminary class, preaching from the pulpit, or teaching Sunday school class, Sam is quite fond of quoting extra-biblical sources to support biblical texts. He taught me there was much to be gleaned from

these texts that supported biblical texts. Regarding Jesus, extra-biblical texts confirm that Jesus was a real historical person who gathered followers, preached powerfully, worked

...extra-biblical texts confirm that Jesus was a real historical person who gathered followers, preached powerfully, worked wonders, and the number of followers grew after His death.

wonders, and the number of followers grew after His death. One of Sam’s often quoted writers is Flavius Josephus, arguably the greatest Jewish historian of his time.

In AD 62, the high priest Ananus was deposed because he had illegally convened the Sanhedrin [the highest Jewish religious court/governing body]. He had brought before them the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ, who was called James, and some other men, whom he accused of having broken the law, and handed them over to be stoned. 1

Here Josephus tells us that Jesus was a real historical person who had a brother named James. Josephus also confirms the many claims of Jesus being the Messiah in using the term “so-called Christ.” In *I Don’t Have Enough Faith To*

Be An Atheist, writers Geisler and Turek are in agreement with Dr. Lamerson in the value of examining extra-biblical texts in understanding the Christian faith.

What can we learn from non-Christian (even anti-Christian) sources? We can learn that they admit certain facts about early Christianity that help us piece together a storyline that is surprisingly congruent with the New Testament. 2

In God's providence, we have a variety of non-Christian, extra-biblical resources that can prove profitable in our pursuit of understanding every aspect of our Christian faith, including who this "Me" truly is.

Who Does God The Father Say He Is?

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." **Matthew 3:16-17**

As Jesus is preparing to launch out on His earthly ministry, God confirms His Sonship as soon as Jesus was baptized. And since God said it, that indeed settles it. Yet, there is something more I want you to consider. God did not stop there in confirming Jesus as His Beloved Son. He placed His Almighty stamp of approval on Jesus at the end of His earthly life...and three days in the grave. This stamp of approval is known as the Resurrection, first discovered by some of the women disciples, confirmed in a variety of other places in the Scriptures.

In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee." **Luke 24:5-6**

But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

Acts 2:24

Throughout His ministry, Jesus not only spoke about His coming death, He spoke about His resurrection too. When challenged to give some miraculous sign to prove He was who He said He was, He painted a picture of His resurrection (Matthew 12:38-40; John 2:19-22), which is why we view it as God's stamp of approval. Geisler and Turek wrote, *"If there was ever a place that a legendary resurrection could not occur it was Jerusalem, because the Jews and the Romans were all too eager to squash Christianity and could have easily done so by parading Jesus' body around the city."* 3 Paul tells us that this Jesus, confirmed by God the Father as His beloved Son "was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4).

As Jesus is preparing to begin His 3 ½ year ministry on earth, God the Father identifies Him as God the Son and at the end of His ministry on earth God the Father puts His supernatural stamp of approval on Him by raising Him from the dead.

Who Do The Prophets Say He Is

The power of Bible prophecy about a variety of different subjects was first impressed upon me by Dr. Kennedy. The number that sticks out in my mind is 333—an easy number to remember regarding the specific prophecies contained in the Old Testament about the birth, life, death, resurrection, and second coming of Jesus written

"Anyone can check up on them (prophecies), yet most people simply ignore them or are not even aware of the fact that they exist."

- Dr. Kennedy.

hundreds of years before they were fulfilled. As he would say, "Anyone can check up on them, yet most people simply ignore them or are not even aware of the fact that they exist." Let's take a look at just 3 of the 333.

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." **Genesis 3:15**

Here is the very first promise of the coming Messiah. The offspring of Eve will come from her "seed", but not from the man, which signifies the supernatural conception of Jesus, "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (Matthew 1:23).

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. **Isaiah 9:6-7**

A "child born" confirms the promise of the "seed" of the woman, born like any other child ever born. But as a "son given" Jesus was not born, but in fact, the very Son of the Everlasting God given to mankind. Because I can in no way improve upon the language used by the prince of preachers, Charles Spurgeon, let me quote him here that you might drink in this magnificent gospel truth.

The sentence is a double one, but it has in it no tautology. The careful reader will soon discover a distinction; and it is not a distinction without a difference. "Unto us a *child is born*, unto us a *Son is given*." As Jesus Christ is a child in his human nature, he is

born, begotten of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary. He is as truly-born, as certainly a child, as any other man that ever lived upon the face of the earth. He is thus in his humanity a child born. But as Jesus Christ is God's Son, he is not born; but given, begotten of his Father from before all worlds, begotten—not made, being of the same substance with the Father. The doctrine of the eternal affiliation of Christ is to be received as an undoubted truth of our holy religion. But as to any explanation of it, no man should venture thereon, for it remaineth among the deep things of God—one of those solemn mysteries indeed, into which the angels dare not look, nor do they desire to pry into it—a mystery which we must not attempt to fathom, for it is utterly beyond the grasp of any finite being. As well might a gnat seek to drink in the ocean, as a finite creature to comprehend the Eternal God. A God whom we could understand would be no God. If we could grasp him he could not be infinite: if we could understand him, then were he not divine. Jesus Christ then, I say, as a Son, is not born to us, but given. He is a boon bestowed on us, "For God so loved the world, that he *sent* his only begotten *Son* into the world." He was not born in this world as God's Son, but he was *sent*, or was *given*, so that you clearly perceive that the distinction is a suggestive one, and conveys much good truth to us. "Unto us a *child is born*, unto us a *Son is given*." **4**

A lifetime of contemplation and I could not come up with such language as beautiful as it is powerful in telling us about this "Me" we seek to know.

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." **Micah 5:2**

Here we see the exact location of the birth of Jesus. Micah tells us He will be born in Bethlehem as the eternally self-existent son of God. Make no mistake, The Holy Bible is a book unlike any other book ever written, where God has foretold the future through His prophets, and has, is, and will continue fulfilling every one of them until He brings history to its completion when Jesus consummates His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. To be sure, there are none so blind as those who simply refuse to see the power of the prophetic Word of God.

Who Do The Demons Say He Is?

In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God!"

Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ. **Luke 4:33-34, 41**

I find it assuring that both God and the demons are identical in their identification of who Jesus is. Light and darkness, goodness and evil, knew the exact same truth... that Jesus is the very Son of God.

Who Do The Religious Leaders Say He Is?

I find it amazing that the Pharisees are totally blinded to this truth by their self-righteousness, self-centered, self-absorbed hearts that only beat for the expansion of their own little kingdom.

Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." **John 9:16**

Here we have the "rule-keeping," "on-the-run-toward God," elder-brother-types refusing to

receive Jesus as the Son of God because He was working on the Sabbath. In their blindness they missed the truth that Jesus was the "Lord of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:8). They made a habit of doing this throughout His time here on earth.

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." **Luke 15:2**

Who is *This Man* who welcomes sinners and eats with them? He is of course, none other than God incarnate who left the throne room of heaven took on the flesh of man in the form a servant, and went to a cross to pay the penalty for our sin. *This Man* is Jesus Christ, fully divine and fully man... "Jesus is the Word who was God and was with God and was made flesh" (John 1:1, 14). In the words of Charles Spurgeon, "It needs an angel's tongue to describe such a mighty stoop of love." Yet, this "stoop of love" was done for you, a sinner in need of a Savior. How incredibly sad to see the Pharisees and the teachers of the law complain about this "stoop of Love," that they themselves so desperately needed. But blinded by their own sin-filled, self-absorbed, self-righteous hearts, they could not see themselves as they truly were... sinners in need of a Savior, who was none other than *This Man*!

It is ironic that those you would most expect to know Jesus (i.e., the men of faith), did not. The religious leaders paint for us the perfect picture of the problem in the contemporary church today. Many religious insiders know about Jesus, but don't actually "know" Him. Yet, how often we see the irreligious outsiders uncovering the truth of who God is. To be sure, the Samaritans were the irreligious outsiders in the eyes of the religious insiders. After Jesus ministers to the Samaritan woman at the well, her testimony to her people brings them to respond this way:

They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we

have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

John 4:42

Who Do The Disciples Say He Is?

While alone with His disciples praying one day, Jesus asked them what the people were saying about who He was. Their answers were rooted in the false notion of reincarnation. But when He asked His disciples for an answer, Peter hit the proverbial nail right on the head:

Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God." **Luke 9:18-20**

Now concerning the resurrection which is the lynchpin of Christianity, we have two wonderful and magnificent accounts, one from the one they called the doubter, and one from the apostle Paul. Let's take a look. It's really too bad that this title was attached to Thomas because I believe his doubt was simply rooted in a broken heart. What he believed about Jesus he saw die on that cross and his heart was crushed under the weight of the crucifixion. His doubt in what the other disciples said about seeing Jesus alive was his way of protecting his hurting heart from any more pain...until Jesus showed up to dispel his doubt and heal his hurting heart.

Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." A week later his disciples were in the house

again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." **John 20:24-29**

In my early years of searching for the truth of Christianity, many of my teachers would point me to what is called "the eyewitness" accounts, which are many from a number of New Testament writers. The one that I found most remarkable (the earliest and most authenticated testimony of the Resurrection) was from the pen of the apostle Paul, where he challenged the Corinthian readers to check out the truths of what he wrote about Jesus. You see, when you identify eyewitnesses by name who are known and still alive, one needs only to speak to these eyewitness to verify if what was said is actually true.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. **1 Corinthians 15:3-8**

The only reason for Paul to identify so many eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus is because it had to be true. Paul was challenging his readers to verify his claims by talking with the named eyewitnesses. If he was lying, all

If he (Paul) was lying, all credibility would have been lost in the eyes of the Corinthians and his ministry would have crumbled to the ground.

credibility would have been lost in the eyes of the Corinthians and his ministry would have crumbled to the ground. Paul made it clear that Jesus was the resurrected Messiah and he challenged anyone to disprove his claims.

We have seen that God, the demons, the disciples, and the irreligious outsiders identified Jesus for whom and what He was... the Son of the Living God and the Savior of the world. The crowds, including the religious insiders, did not. So now let's take a look at what Jesus has to say about Himself.

Who Does Jesus Say He Is?

Jesus confirms what God the Father, the prophets, the demons, the disciples, and the irreligious outsiders have to say about Him. And He does it in a variety of different ways to a number of different people from the beginning to the end of His earthly ministry. Perhaps there is no better place to start than Jesus' response to Caiaphas's questioning...

But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death.
Mark 14:61-64

Two simple words, "I am!" and Jesus answers the question, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" And if that wasn't enough, He continues with the promise that He will return

as the Judge of the world, fulfilling the prophecy of Daniel which those religious leaders were well acquainted with as serious students of the Scriptures, "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence" (Daniel 7:13). It's important to make note that only God is identified as the one who comes on the clouds of heaven as seen elsewhere in the Old Testament, "He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind" (Psalm 104:3). Let's take a brief look at a few more claims of Jesus regarding His identity.

► **Jesus Said He Is Eternally Self-Existent**

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" **John 8:58**

Here Jesus is making one thing perfectly clear to His Jewish audience who looked to Abraham as the father of their faith: I am eternally self-existent as the Son of the Living God. And by using the phrase "I am" it is intended to remind His audience of the encounter between God and Moses on Mount Sinai, God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you' " (Exodus 3:14).

► **Jesus Said He Was The Promised Messiah**

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he." **John 4:25-26**

The word "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew word *mashiach* meaning the "anointed" or "chosen" One. When Jesus responded to the woman at the well with "I...am he" He is identifying Himself as the promised deliverer and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the coming of God's "anointed and chosen" One.

► **Jesus Said He And God Were One In Essence**

"I and the Father are one." **John 10:30**

Here Jesus makes the claim that He was far more than a prophet and messenger sent from God. In saying He was "one" with the Father, He was making it clear that He was equal to the Father. Clearly His claim of being God was not lost on His Jewish audience who "Again picked up stones to stone him" (John 10:31). Notice their response to Jesus' claim, "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God" (John 10:33). To be sure His claim would have been blasphemous if He was a mere man. But He was not a mere man. He was and is God's Son.

► **Jesus Said To See Him Was The Same As Seeing God**

Then Jesus cried out, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me...So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say." **John 12:44-45, 50**

Here Jesus gives us three pillars of promise that point to His Divine nature. First He says to believe in Him is to believe in the One who sent Him (God the Father). Second He says to see Him is to see the One who sent Him (God the Father). Finally, He says to hear Him is to Hear the Father (the One who sent Him).

► **Jesus Said He Was The Only Way To The Father**

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." **John 14:6**

Here Jesus says there is only one way to eternal life and He is The Way! Another way of saying this is all roads do not lead to heaven and eternal

life; only the road paved by our Redeemer through His sinless life, sacrificial death, and supernatural resurrection.

► **Jesus Said He Would Judge Sins**

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. **John 5:22-23**

Here Jesus is telling us that on that Great Day of Judgment, He will pass judgment on all mankind as the Holy One to whom we all will give an account of the life we lived and what we did with Him. Again we see the equality of the Son and the Father.

► **Jesus Said He Could Forgive Sins**

Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." **Matthew 9:2**

Once again, another claim of divinity by Jesus was not lost on His Jewish audience. They knew that only God could forgive sin and cleans us from all unrighteousness, confirmed in these words from the prophet Isaiah, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more" (Isaiah 43:25).

► **Jesus Said He Could Give Eternal Life**

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. **John 10:27-28**

Here Jesus as the Good Shepherd makes it clear that He alone gives to His follower's eternal life and preserves them to the end. He is also claiming Omnipotent power in His ability to preserve them to the end. This is only a sampling of the claims of Jesus written throughout Scripture. He never claimed to be a

prophet. He never claimed to be a good teacher. He never claimed to be a good person. He never claimed to be anything less than God Himself.

Who Do You Say He Is?

There are many questions in life, some are silly... “Who is buried in Grant’s tomb?” ...some are strange... “Does the light in the refrigerator stay on when the door is closed?” ...and some questions are important. But of all the questions in this life, there is one question that is the most important of all asked of you by the most important person who ever lived. It is the same question Jesus asked His disciples, and to which Peter gave the appropriate response.

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God." **Luke 9:20**

So what is your final answer to the most important question in life? Sadly, for many, they receive Jesus as a prophet, teacher, a good man, and an example for living a good life, but He has not left any of these responses open for us to use. I will never forget the first time I was confronted with these profound words from the pen of C. S. Lewis.

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us

not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. **5**

The very first sermon I delivered at Cross Community Church was based on this teaching under the heading, “Madman, Monster, or Master.” Lewis gave us three different categories in which to place Jesus based on what He claimed about Himself... a liar who made false claims and knew it; a lunatic who made false claims and didn’t know it; or the Lord God Omnipotent. There were and are no other options.

CONCLUSION

So, who do you say this “Me” is? In which of the three categories C.S. Lewis offers do you put Him under... liar, lunatic, or Lord? Remember, it doesn’t matter what others say about the truth claims of Jesus. It only matters what you say. What you say with your mouth and believe in your heart makes all the difference in this world and the next!

"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven." **Matthew 10:32-33**

John MacArthur says these verses “are reminiscent of the awesome judgment scene in Matthew 7:21-23,” **6** which was the passage in our introduction that Dr. Sproul says are some of the most frightening words in all of sacred Scripture. Now, just acknowledging Jesus before men doesn’t make us His disciples. But make no mistake, every disciple of Jesus will, without pause or reservation, acknowledge Him before a watching world in desperate need of what only this “Me” can provide, regardless of cost or circumstance.

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4. Charles Spurgeon, *A Christmas Question*, Sermon delivered on December 25th, 1859 at Exeter Hall, Strand.
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Driving the Roots Deeper – Questions for Discussion

1. Who do the prophets say Jesus is? Take a look at **Isaiah 53** and note a few more predictions.

2. The prophet Jeremiah writes, *"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days, Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness."* **Jeremiah 23:5-6**. Can you identify Jesus in this messianic promise? What are the terms "a righteous Branch" and "The Lord Our Righteousness" referring to? Check **Zechariah 6:12** and **Romans 10:4**.

3. Why is the 1 Corinthians 15 passage from Paul about eyewitnesses such a powerful testimony to the truth claims of Jesus? _____

4. C. S. Lewis said, *"Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse."* Agree Disagree Please explain: _____

5. So who do you say this Jesus is? _____

6. John writes, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth"* **John 1:1-3, 14**. How does this passage strengthen our understanding of who Jesus is? _____

7. What is your most important take-away from this lesson? _____
