

# Who Is Jesus Christ?



## SABBATH—APRIL 11

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Luke 4:16–30; Luke 6:5; Ephesians 1:3–5; Luke 9:18–27; 2 Peter 1:16–18.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered and said, ‘The Christ of God’ ” (Luke 9:20, NKJV).

**WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?** This is not a trick question. It gets to the heart of who humans are. And, even more important, what the future will hold for them.

People can admire the works of Jesus, honor His words, praise His patience, support His idea of peace, respect His bold stand, and be impressed by His unselfishness and shocked by the cruel end to His life. Many may even be ready to accept Jesus as a good man who tried to set things right—to be fair to all people, to offer healing where there was sickness, and to bring comfort where there was only suffering.

Yes, Jesus could well earn the name of the best teacher, a rebel, an excellent leader, and a psychologist who can deeply explore a person's soul. He was all of these things and so much more.

But none of these things comes near to answering the all-important question that Jesus Himself asked: “ ‘Who do you say that I am?’ ” (Luke 9:20, NKJV).

It is a question that requires an answer. On that answer the future of all people depends.

**HOW PEOPLE FELT ABOUT JESUS (Luke 4:16–30)**

Read both the Gospels and the New Testament. All through these books incredible claims are made about what Jesus did and about who Jesus was. (Of course, what Jesus did was connected with who He was.) There are claims that He is God, that He is our Savior, and that He alone is the way to eternal life. These claims require our close attention because they are a matter of eternal life or death for every human person.

**Read Luke 4:16–30. What caused the people to act as they did? Read also John 3:19.**

The people from Jesus' hometown were thrilled at first to see Jesus. He had done many miracles and wonders and was now returning to Nazareth. They "were amazed [surprised] at the wonderful things he said" (Luke 4:22, CEV). But when He corrected them, they reacted toward Him with a negative spirit.

**Read Luke 7:17–22. What was John's question about Jesus? And why would he have asked it?**

Even John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus and who announced Jesus as "the Lamb of God," had doubts deep in his soul. John wanted to know: " 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' " (Luke 7:19, NKJV).

Notice, too, that Jesus does not answer John's question directly. Instead, He points to acts that cry out in witness: " 'The lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them' " (verse 22, NKJV). One could argue that Jesus did not need to answer John's question directly. Jesus' actions gave plenty of proof of who He was.

**In a sense, the answer that Jesus gave might have caused John even a bit more worry. John might wonder, *If Jesus has the power to do all these wonderful things, why am I rotting away here in jail? Who has not wondered something like this: If God has all this power, why is this happening to me? Why is the Cross, and all its promises, our only answer?***

## SON OF GOD (Luke 1:31, 32, 35)



**The angel announced that Jesus was the Savior of the world.**

“Son of man” and “Son of God” are two names used in the Gospels to describe who Jesus is. The first shows Jesus as God in human form. The second points to Him as the second Person of the Godhead.<sup>1</sup> Together, these two parts invite us to wonder about the miracle of Jesus Christ, who is both God and Man. It is a hard idea to understand. But this hard-to-understand idea does not take away from this wonderful truth about Jesus as God-Man and the great hope that it offers us.

**Read Luke 1:31, 32, 35 and Luke 2:11. What do these verses tell us about who Jesus really is?**

In Luke 1:31, 32, the angel connects the name “Jesus” with the “Son of the Highest” to whom the “Lord God will give” the throne of David (NKJV). Jesus is the Son of God. He is also the Christ, the Messiah (the Chosen One), who shall restore (establish again) David’s throne. He is not just an earthly king but the heavenly King who will totally defeat Satan in his attempt to steal the throne of God. To the shepherds the angel announced that the baby Jesus in the manger is the “‘Savior, who is Christ the Lord’ ” (Luke 2:11, NKJV).

At the same time, the title “Son of God” supports Christ’s position in the Godhead. The title also shows the very close relationship that Jesus had with God the Father while Jesus was on earth.

But the relationship between the Father and the Son is not the same as the relationship that we have with God. Our relationship is a result of the work of Christ both as Creator and Savior.

“When Jesus says, ‘My Father which is in heaven,’ He is reminding His disciples that while as a human, He is joined with them. He is a sharer in their trials, and sympathizing with them in their sufferings. But as part of the Godhead He is connected with the throne of the Eternal Father.”  
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 442.

**What does it mean to us that Jesus is God? This truth is filled with many possible meanings. However, the most surprising part is that Jesus Himself as God humbled Himself so that He could offer Himself as a human sacrifice for us. We are talking about God here! What wonderful hope does this truth have for us because of what it tells us about who God really is?**

### DEFINITIONS

1. Godhead—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make up the Godhead. Together they are One God.

## SON OF MAN (Luke 6:5)

Jesus fully knew that He was both the Son of man and the Son of God (Luke 22:67–70). But He liked to call Himself “Son of Man.” The other places where the title appears are in Daniel 7:13, in Stephen’s speech (Acts 7:56), in Revelation 1:13, and Revelation 14:14. The title appears more than eighty times in the Gospels and 25 times in Luke. Luke’s use of these words shows the author’s deep interest in Jesus as a human who was sent by God to preach the good news of salvation.

“The Son of God as a human is everything to us. It is the golden chain that unites [joins as one] our souls to Christ and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. Christ was a real man; He gave proof of His willingness to be humble in becoming a man. But He was also God in the flesh.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 244.

The use of “Son of man” in Luke gives us different ideas about the nature, mission, and future of Jesus in human form.

First, the title shows Him as a human (Luke 7:34), without worldly honors (Luke 9:58).

Second, Luke uses the title to point to Christ’s position as God. This is because the “ ‘Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath’ ” (Luke 6:5, NKJV). So, He is also the Creator, with the power to forgive sins (Luke 5:24).

Third, Jesus came to complete the saving work authorized by the Godhead before the beginning of the world (Ephesians 1:3–5). So, the Son of man came to seek and save the lost (Luke 9:56; Luke 19:10). But this saving work cannot be completed until “ ‘the Son of Man must suffer many things . . . and be killed, and be raised the third day’ ” (Luke 9:22, NKJV).

Fourth, note how complete a picture of the suffering Messiah that Luke shows in the following verses: His early knowledge of the Cross (Luke 18:31–33), betrayal (Luke 9:44), His death as a fulfillment of prophecy (special message from God) (Luke 22:22), His crucifixion and resurrection (return to life from the dead) (Luke 24:7; compare<sup>2</sup> with Luke 11:30), and His role as man’s Go-Between before the Father (Luke 12:8).

Fifth, Luke sees the Son of man in the world’s closing days as the Person who returns to earth to reward His saints and to wrap up the great controversy (war between Christ and Satan) (Luke 9:26; Luke 12:4; Luke 17:24, 26, 30; Luke 21:36; Luke 22:69).

In short, the title “Son of man” includes the many parts of who Christ was and of what He came to do for us.



**Jesus was fully human and fully God, with the power to forgive sins.**

## DEFINITIONS

2. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

## “THE CHRIST OF GOD” (Luke 9:18–27)



The question Jesus asked Peter, He asks each one of us, “Who do you say that I am?”

## DEFINITIONS

3. reformer—someone who brings about change for the better.

Read Luke 9:18–27. Why did Jesus ask the disciples a question when He already knew the answer? What lesson was He trying to teach them about Himself and about what it means to follow Him?

“ ‘Who do you say that I am?’ ” (Luke 9:20, NKJV). The question that Jesus asked 2,000 years ago still demands an answer throughout all history. People have given many different answers: a great teacher; an expert on social rules; a true representative of truth; an example of self-sacrifice; a fearless prophet (special messenger from God); a social reformer;<sup>3</sup> a great model of everything a person should be. But Peter’s answer is the only true answer to the question.

Jesus showed His authority over nature (Luke 8:22–25), His power over demons (verses 26–35), His control over diseases (Luke 5:12–15; Luke 8:43–48), His ability to feed the 5,000 from almost nothing (Luke 9:13–17), His power over death (Luke 8:51–56). Afterward, Jesus faced His disciples with two questions: First, He asked what others thought of Him. Next, what the disciples themselves thought.

“Our knowledge of Jesus must never be second hand. We might know every opinion ever made about Jesus. We might know all about Christian religion that human minds have ever thought out. We might be able to give a good summary of the teaching about Jesus by every great thinker and still not be Christians. Christianity never means just *knowing about* Jesus. It always means *knowing Jesus*. Jesus Christ requires a personal decision. Jesus did not ask only Peter. Jesus asks every one of us: ‘*You*—what do you think of me?’ ”—Adapted from William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2009), volume 2, page 161.

Our answer to the question Jesus asked cannot be anything short of Peter’s confession: Jesus is “the Christ of God” (Luke 9:20, NKJV). Christ means the “Anointed One,” the Messiah, whose mission is to be the Savior who will free people from the grip of Satan and sin and introduce the kingdom of righteousness (goodness and love).

**It is not enough to know about Jesus. Rather, we need to know Him personally. If you claim to know Jesus, what do you know about Him? What has your knowledge taught you about Him and who He really is?**

THE TRANSFIGURATION<sup>4</sup> (Luke 9:27–36)

Read all three Gospel stories of the Transfiguration (Luke 9:27–36; Matthew 17:1–9; and Mark 9:2–8). (Read also Peter’s firsthand story of the event, and note the truth he gives from his eyewitness experience; read 2 Peter 1:16–18.) What additional information does Luke give, and why is it important?

Luke begins the story with a detail that Matthew and Mark do not mention: Jesus took Peter, John, and James up the mountain *to pray*. Jesus set His eyes and mind toward Jerusalem and foretold the path of suffering that lay ahead of Him. Jesus wanted to be certain that what He was doing was what God wanted Him to do. At such moments, prayer is the only way of making sure of God’s will.

The glorified Jesus was talking with Moses and Elijah about “His coming death. He was going to die soon in Jerusalem” (verse 31, NIV). The word *decease* (to die) can be understood in two ways: First, His upcoming death in Jerusalem. But the Greek word used here, *exodus*,<sup>5</sup> is not often used for death. So, second, “decease” can also mean the great exodus Jesus was about to lead in Jerusalem, the mighty exodus that would free people from sin.

The meeting of the three (Jesus, Moses, and Elijah) closed with a voice of approval from heaven, “ ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’ ” (verse 35, NKJV). The Transfiguration blesses Jesus with glory, repeats His Sonship once again, and announces that salvation will cost the Son’s life. So, the heavenly command to the disciples: listen to Him. Without obedience and full loyalty to Him, there is no discipleship.<sup>6</sup>

**Ellen G. White wrote that these men, Moses and Elijah, had been “chosen above every angel around the throne to talk with Jesus about the scenes of His suffering. They also had come to comfort Him with the support and sympathy of heaven. The hope of the world, the salvation of every human person, was the subject of their conversation.”—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, page 425. Even Jesus Himself, who had comforted so many others, wanted comfort for Himself. What should that tell us about how even our strongest leaders, teachers, and guides can at times need comfort, encouragement, and help from others? In fact, whom do you know right now who could use comfort and encouragement?**



**Prayer is the only way of making sure of God’s will.**

## DEFINITIONS

4. Transfiguration—the process in which Jesus’ body became glorified (made full of power and majesty) with heavenly light.
5. exodus—the going out of a large crowd of people.
6. discipleship—the process of following and working for Jesus.

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “Avoid every question about Christ as a human that could cause misunderstanding. Truth lies close to guesswork. In talking about Christ as a human, you need to be very careful so that your words do not cause misunderstanding about Christ as a human and God. For example, His birth was a miracle of God. . . . Never, in any way, leave even the smallest idea in human minds that there was any sin in Christ, or that He had fallen into sin. Yes, He was tempted<sup>7</sup> in all points as man is tempted. But He is called ‘that holy thing.’ It is a mystery that is left unexplained to humans that Christ could be tempted in all points as we are, and yet be without sin. That Christ was a human has ever been, and will always remain, a mystery.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, pages 1128, 1129.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read the Ellen G. White quote above about the human nature of Christ. We must face the fact that Jesus’ nature as God and a human is a great truth that we will never fully understand. As she wrote: “That Christ was a human has ever been, and will always remain, a mystery.” Then why must we be very careful about making rough judgments on those who do not understand this “mystery” the same way that we do?
- ② Think about what happened on the mount of transfiguration. What were the chosen disciples who came with Him on the mountain doing at first? Sleeping! In what ways might we be sleeping right before another great event in salvation history: the second coming of Jesus?
- ③ Read some of the things that Jesus said about Himself. Why is the idea that Jesus was just a great man, a great prophet, or a great spiritual leader wrong? Why must we not accept that He was a crazy man who was greatly deceived about Himself? Why is there no other choice for us about who Jesus really is?

### DEFINITIONS

7. tempted—to be led to feel a desire to sin.