



# WHO IS JESUS?

## The Alpha Course week 1

### DID JESUS EXIST?

- Evidence outside the New Testament about Jesus includes Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius, and Jewish historian Josephus
- There are orders of magnitude more manuscripts of the New Testament than any other writing of a similar age
- These manuscripts are much closer to the original date of writing than for any other ancient manuscripts.

### WAS JESUS FULLY HUMAN?

- He had a human body: He was tired (*John 4:6*), hungry (*Matt 4:2*)
- He had human emotions: anger (*Mark 11:15-17*), love (*Mark 10:21*), sadness (*John 11:32-36*)
- He had human experiences: temptation (*Mark 1:13*), learning (*Luke 2:46-52*), work (*Mark 6:3*), obedience (*Luke 2:51*)
- Was he more than a great human, a religious teacher? (*Matt 16:13-16*)

### WHAT DID HE SAY ABOUT HIMSELF?

- “I am the bread of life.” (*John 6:35*)
- “If the Son sets you free, you are truly free.” (*John 8:36*)
- “I am the light of the world.” (*John 8:12*)
- “I am the way and the truth and the life.” (*John 14:6*)
- “Come to me....” (*Matt 11:28-29*)
- Receive me - receive God. (*Matt 10:40*)
- Welcome me - welcome God. (*Mark 9:37*)
- “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” (*John 14:9*)
- His indirect claims
  - To forgive sins (*Mark 2:5*)
  - To judge the world (*Matt 25:31, 32, 40, 45*)
- His direct claims – Messiah (*Mark 14:61-62*)
  - Son of God (*Mark 14:61*)
  - God the Son (*John 20:26-29*)
  - “I and the Father are one.” (*John 10:30*)

### WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE TO SUPPORT HIS CLAIMS?

- His teaching (*Mark 12:31; Luke 6:31; Matthew 5:44*)
- His life/works (*John 2:1-11; 10:37-38*)
- His character (*Luke 23:34*)
- His fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy
- His conquest of death

### EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION

- His absence from the tomb.
  - Theories:
    - Jesus did not die (*John 19:33-34*)
    - Disciples stole the body
    - Authorities stole the body
    - Robbers stole the body (*John 20:1-9*)
- His presence with the disciples
  - Did they hallucinate?
  - Number of appearances over a six-week period
- 11+ appearances
  - 500+ people
  - Nature of appearances (*Luke 24:36-43*)
- Immediate effect - birth and growth of Christian church
- Effect down the ages
  - Experience of Christians down the ages
  - Over 2,300 million Christians in the world today

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION IN GROUPS

1. What makes you happy?
2. What do you think about Jesus?
3. If you had a chance to meet Jesus, how would you feel and what would you say to him?
4. Before you heard today’s talk, what was your concept of Jesus? Has it changed? If so, in what way?
5. What aspects of the evidence presented today did you find convincing/ not convincing?

## WHY WAS JOHN CONVINCED THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD?

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. *John 1.1-3 (NIV)*

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. *John 3.16-17 (NIV)*

Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. *John 6.35 (NIV)*

Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'. *John 14.6 (NIV)*

John's Gospel is an excellent read. He starts with some beautiful poetic writing about the 'Word', who was with God before the beginning of time. John claims that this 'Word' is God and it is through him that the universe and everything in it was created.

John is convinced this 'Word' is Jesus. Through his Gospel, John unpacks who Jesus really is, and opens up what this means for each of us. It is telling that he quotes Jesus saying 'I am' – the bread of life, the way the truth and the life. For his Jewish listeners, this would have given a clear message. 'I Am who I Am' are the words God used when Moses asked his name (you can read the story in Genesis chapter 3). In using this exact phrase, Jesus certainly set the cat among the pigeons. Could this man from Nazareth actually be God?

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 (insane)... 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 (insane) or something worse... but let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

*C. S. Lewis, author of The Chronicles of Narnia and Oxford historian*



**Watch this week's video at**  
<https://vimeo.com/184825484>

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. John starts his Gospel speaking of the 'Word'. What might it mean if Jesus is The Word? How does this affect your view of who God is?
2. What might John mean when he writes 'For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him'?
3. If Jesus is the bread of life, how might we be fed by him? What does Jesus mean by 'Whoever comes to me will never go hungry'?
4. Has your view on who Jesus is changed following this week's Alpha? If so how, and what impact might this have on your life?

***Lord Jesus, I pray that you will show me who you are. Help me to understand what it means to trust in you and to follow you. Amen.***

### You might like to read...

**Mere Christianity** by C. S. Lewis  
**The Case for Christ** by Lee Strobel

**Orthodoxy** by G. K. Chesterton  
**Jesus Is** by Judah Smith