

# JESUS: The Greatest Life of All

## STUDY ONE

### The Identity of Deity

#### *Selected Scriptures*

*When the Son of God became a man, His divine nature and human nature came together. He became the God-man, the object of our affection and the subject of our praise.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**W**HAT makes Jesus the greatest life of all? Certainly, He performed astounding miracles. He touched untouchable lepers and made them whole. He cured the sick and restored the disabled. He even roused the dead as if waking them from a deep sleep. His deeds were unparalleled in power and goodness.

Likewise, no one in history has spoken with His authority or stirred hearts like He did. His sermons ushered people out of a world of conflict and fear into a kingdom of love and hope. In His parables, a wayward son returned to his father's open arms. Those deemed unworthy found welcome at a king's table. The proud and powerful got what was coming to them. Jesus' words set right all of humanity's wrongs and gave people a vision of life as God meant it to be—real life under God's rule and care.

But it wasn't just what Jesus did or what He said that make His life the greatest of all. It was who He was—indeed, who He is.

Jesus rules nature because He is its *creator*; He speaks truth because He is its *author*. He is God in the flesh, undiminished deity yet true humanity, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This *Searching the Scriptures* series is a biographical study of Jesus and so much more. It is a journey into the heart of God—the God of the universe in the person of Jesus.



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## **The Identity of Deity**

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### **PREPARE YOUR HEART**

The sharper our vision of Jesus, the stronger our hearts beat with adoration of Him. His beauty, goodness, and truth transcend this earthly existence and lift our souls in praise. Begin your study with worship.

*Father, all honor, glory, and praise belong to Your Son, the Prince of Peace, the eternal glory of heaven, my Savior. Open my eyes to new vistas of His beauty, to grander appreciation of His goodness, and to deeper understanding of His truth as I study Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.*



### **TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

The gospels portray Jesus clearly as the Son of God, and yet, few in His day recognized His divine nature simply by looking at Him. No halo hovered over His head, His face didn't glow with celestial light, and His voice didn't reverberate with an otherworldly pitch. Many could not see beyond Jesus' flesh-and-blood form, even when His words and deeds revealed divinity.

The blind, the poor, and the shunned to whom Jesus ministered were the quickest to recognize Jesus as the Son of God. For others, the pathway to faith was an uphill climb. Many who encountered Him walked away scratching their heads, struggling to comprehend divinity in sandals. Responses ranged from perplexed to amazed, curious to outraged. Let's take a brief tour of responses to Jesus in the gospels to see the ways people saw Him and the questions they asked.




#### ***Searching the Scriptures Method and Resources***

*Searching the Scriptures* is a four-step Bible-study method that includes observing the passage, interpreting the meaning, correlating with similar passages, and applying the principles. For helpful instruction, consult the Insight for Living Ministries online web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)." There, you can also follow the [link to purchase a copy](#) of Pastor Chuck's book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*.



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 **Observation: Questions about Jesus' Identity**

As you read the passages, simply observe what the author is saying. *Observation* is the foundational phase in *Searching the Scriptures*. Take your time. Notice the context, action, and dialogue. Observe commands, statements of truth, contrasts and comparisons, and cause-and-effect. Accurate interpretation depends on careful observation.

The charts below highlight how people responded to Jesus. You'll notice similarities in the responders' words, but their attitudes vary. Note the questions people asked as well as the tone, and whether their hearts were open or closed to Jesus.

Questions from Religious Leaders		
Verses	Summary of Jesus' Words and Actions	Response
Luke 5:17-21		
Luke 7:36-49		

Question from a Political Leader		
Verses	Summary of Jesus' Words and Actions	Response
Luke 9:7-9		



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Question from Jesus' Disciples		
Verses	Summary of Jesus' Words and Actions	Response
Mark 4:35-41		

Questions from People in Jesus' Hometown		
Verses	Summary of Jesus' Words and Actions	Response
Mark 6:1-3		

The central issue for people was Jesus' identity, not His methods for performing miracles or His techniques for preaching. They wanted to know who He was. When Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" (Matthew 16:13), what was their response in *Matthew 16:14*? Why might people in Jesus' day mistake Him for these men?



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Jesus asked His disciples, “But who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:15). What was Peter’s response in [16:16](#)? Why is Peter’s answer so crucial to the message of Matthew?

John filled in details about Jesus’ identity in [John 1:1–5, 14](#). Write down your observations of this passage, and in the next section we’ll explore its meaning.

*John’s purpose for writing was that people might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that, by believing, they might have life in His name.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### **Interpretation: Jesus as the Word**

In the *interpretation* phase, we seek the meaning that the author intended his readers to understand. John’s audience would have been familiar with the Greek concept of *logos*—“the Word” (John 1:1). According to Pastor Chuck Swindoll in his commentary on John, the term *logos*

had been a profoundly significant concept among philosophers for a least three centuries before Christ. It referred to an uncreated divine mind that gives meaning and order to the universe. John essentially co-opted the concept, saying in effect, “The concept pagan philosophers have theorized about actually exists; He is God, and Jesus Christ is He.”<sup>1</sup>



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In *John 1:1*, John stated three facts listed in the questions below about Jesus as the Word. To answer the questions, use your Bible-study resources, including Pastor Chuck's commentary, *Insights on John*, or the online commentary, *Constable's Notes*, at [netbible.org](http://netbible.org).

First, what does it mean that Jesus existed "in the beginning" (1:1)?

Second, what does it mean that Jesus was "with God" (1:1)?

Third, what does it mean that Jesus "was God" (1:1)?



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John was guiding us into the mystery of the Trinity—the co-eternal, co-existent, and co-equal innerworkings of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. What did John say that the Son did and continues to do in His role in the Trinity, according to [John 1:3–5](#)?

Jesus is the *Logos*—the creator and sustainer of all things. In addition, Jesus is the Savior who “became flesh, and dwelt among us” (1:14 NASB). Jesus gives life to those who are dead spiritually. To those in spiritual darkness, Jesus shines the light of His truth. What did John say is the requirement for salvation, according to [1:12–13](#)?

What is your answer to the question, “Who is Jesus?”

*Jesus has always been deity. When He became a man, His divine nature and human nature were put together, unmixed and distinct, but together. In bodily form, He became the God-man. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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#### **Correlation: The “Fullness of Deity” in Bodily Form**

Paul also referred to Jesus’ preexistence. What similar facts to John’s did Paul offer in *Colossians 1:15–17*? What insights did Paul add?

How did Paul state Jesus’ identity as God-man in *1:19* and *2:9*?

Does it make a difference what we think of Jesus’ identity? Yes, it makes *all the difference*! To reduce Jesus to the level of a great teacher, a gifted humanitarian, or an admirable religious leader cuts out the heart and substance of the gospel. Only the God-man can die for the sins of the world. Only Jesus is Lord and Savior.



#### **Application: Practical Significance of Jesus’ Identity**

What other points of significance are found in the deity of Christ? First, *we have a Bible we can trust*. The credibility of the Scriptures rests on Jesus’ deity. The biblical writers staked their lives on the truth about Jesus, whom they witnessed firsthand and whom the Holy Spirit revealed.

Second, *we have life that Jesus sustains*. Jesus “holds all creation together” (Colossians 1:17). He is in control, and we can fully depend on Him.

Third, *we have a church that He leads*. Jesus is the “head of the church” (1:18), and He has first place in everything. He is the focal point of history, the star of the show! He is preeminent in all things, and no one else can take His place.





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What is the significance of Jesus' deity for you?

As you move through your day, what difference does Jesus as God make regarding how you handle problems? Face fears? Deal with disappointments? Plan for the future?

In the coming *Searching the Scriptures* studies, we'll learn more about how Jesus shined heaven's light in our dark world, offered abundant life, died for sin, was raised from the dead, and promised to come again. But none of these studies will mean much if Jesus is not foremost in your heart. Today, put Jesus first above all others as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, I confess my faith in Jesus Christ as the One who bore my sin on the cross and was raised to life as my hope of future resurrection. He is the creator and sustainer of all things, including my life and all I have. He holds first place in my heart, my Redeemer, my Good Shepherd, and my Lord. All praise, honor, and glory go to Him! In His name, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on John* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 19.

