

Who is this Jesus?

*A prophet? A great teacher? A lunatic?
... Or someone else?*

E. M. Hicham



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Introduction

‘**W**hat’s so special about your Jesus? Why do you tell people to trust him to the exclusion of any other saviour?’ Big question—and a valid one.

Christianity is Christ. All that Christians hold dear is centred on Jesus Christ. If you take Jesus out of the picture, Christianity becomes an empty shell.

What do you think of Jesus?

The opinions about Jesus are countless in seemingly every area of culture. Some people do not reject all of Jesus’ work on earth, though they do reject his claim to deity. They say that Jesus was merely a good man to be respected solely for his teaching, love, justice and healing; but they are not clear about his being the God-Man. He was sent to earth as a great moral teacher rather than as a mediator.

Those who embrace atheism have a low view of Jesus. He is less than most people think he is. Bertrand Russell, a famous apologist of the atheistic viewpoint, said, ‘I cannot myself feel that either in the matter of wisdom or in the

matter of virtue Christ stands quite as high as some other people known to history.¹

Mormons teach that Jesus was a pre-existent spirit who became one of many gods; furthermore, they teach that he was a polygamist and a half-brother of Lucifer. The opinion of 'Jehovah's Witnesses' is that Jesus is a created being who was given the status of second-in-command. To them Jesus is 'a god, but not the Almighty God, who is Jehovah'.² Instead, they say that Jesus is 'a created individual' who 'is the second greatest personage of the universe'.³ New Age guru Deepak Chopra said, 'I see Christ as a state of consciousness we can all aspire to.'⁴ Sun Myung Moon teaches that Jesus' value is no greater than that of any other man. Those who follow Moon's teaching say that Jesus' work was a failure. Muslims believe that Jesus 'was only a messenger of Allah' (Qur'an, Surah 4:171). They also say he was a sinless prophet who never achieved the greatness of the prophet Muhammad. Buddhism teaches that Jesus was not God but rather an enlightened man like the Buddha. Hinduism, with its many views of Jesus, does not consider him to be the only God, but most likely a wise man or incarnation of God much like Krishna. The Dalai Lama said, '[Jesus] was either a fully enlightened being, or a bodhisvatta [a being who aids others to enlightenment] of a very high spiritual realization.'⁵ Indian Hindu leader Mahatma Gandhi said, 'I cannot ascribe exclusive divinity to Jesus. He is as divine as Krishna or Rama or Muhammad or Zoroaster.'⁶

Fidel Castro said, 'I never saw a contradiction between

the ideas that sustain me and the ideas of that symbol, of that extraordinary figure [Jesus Christ].⁷ Mikhail Gorbachev said, 'Jesus was the first socialist, the first to seek a better life for mankind.'⁸ There is even a Canadian nudist-arsonist cult that thinks that the word 'Jesus' in the Bible is a code word for hallucinogenic mushrooms that are to be eaten before stripping off their clothes and setting things on fire.

So which of the mentioned opinions about Jesus is yours? When Jesus asked his disciples what people thought about him, they answered, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' It was obvious to people who lived during Jesus' time on earth that he was a prophet. But Jesus insisted, 'Who do you say that I am?' The apostle Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God' (Bible, Matthew 16:14-16).

What a statement! In other words, Peter said, 'People say you are a prophet, but I say that you are more than a prophet; you are the Son of God.' True Christians, like the apostle Peter, believe that Jesus is actually fully human and fully divine at the same time.

One thing is for sure. Somebody is wrong! These people cannot all be right about Jesus. He cannot be exactly who all these people say he is. Many people who think they know, do not know in reality. If he is only a prophet or medium, then those who insist he is God are wrong. If on the other hand he is God, then those who insist that he is only an exceptional man are wrong. In science and

investigative journalism, we pursue truth passionately. Why should it be different in this important realm?

People often ask where the Bible says that Jesus claimed to be God. Suppose a man approached you and said, 'I am God, worship me.' Would you believe him, let alone worship him? Of course not! You would think he was a self-centred idiot, a blasphemer or a lunatic. It would be like someone saying, 'I'm a walnut.' We would say, 'No, you're just nuts!'

Jesus knew how people would respond if he claimed to be God in such a foolish way. Instead, he demonstrated his identity in numerous indirect, but clear ways. Jesus' opponents certainly understood what he meant. In fact, they tried to kill him because of it.

What matters in the end is not how Jesus made the claim, but whether there is clear evidence that he is indeed God. If we can find proof of his divine identity, then we must worship him. Do you wish to understand the biblical faith? Then please consider the evidence contained in this book honestly and with an open mind. The Christian faith rests on facts. We will examine them together and decide whether Jesus really is God.