



CAN I REALLY KNOW JESUS?

101 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT
JESUS, SALVATION, AND PRAYER

WRITTEN BY: *Carolyn Larsen*

ILLUSTRATED BY: *Amylee Weeks*



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Can I Really Know Jesus?: 101 Questions and Answers about Jesus, Salvation, and Prayer

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INTRODUCTION

FAITH IS BELIEF OR CONFIDENCE in something, even when the object of faith cannot be fully grasped in the physical realm. A relationship with God is based on faith in him. It's a growth process of learning to accept and appreciate his grace, mercy, and love. The “instruction manual” God has given us—the Bible—helps us understand who God is and shows us how to live for him, obey him, trust him, and love him. But even with this source of amazing help and the commitment to engage in life with God through faith, we sometimes have questions.

Questions aren't wrong. In fact, they're helpful because they express a desire to learn and understand. However, it's important to search for answers to your questions from a reliable source that is true to Scripture. *Can I Really Know Jesus?* answers 101 frequently asked questions that are common to those who are investigating faith in Jesus Christ.

Some questions are about Jesus and why he came, how he lived, and what he taught. Others explore God's wonderful plan of salvation, made possible by Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross. And some are about the great privilege and mystery of prayer—communicating with God. It is our hope that this book will help answer some of your questions and pave the way to a strong faith in God.

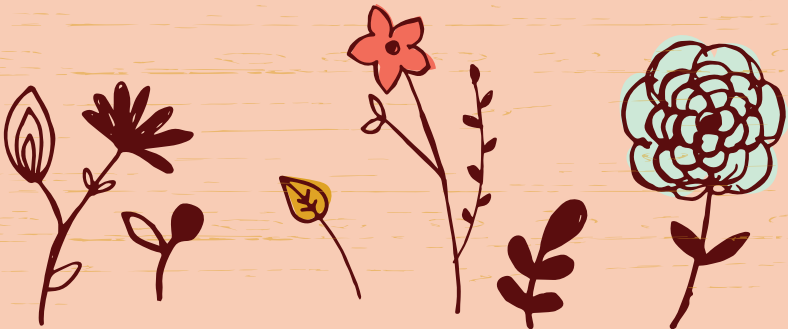


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Writing a book like this one carries with it the responsibility to be true to Scripture, to not mislead readers, and to honor and revere God. It is not something that can be accomplished alone. So I wish to thank the wonderful people at Tyndale House Publishers for their wisdom, input, and support. I appreciate Tyndale's standard of excellence and desire to honor God in every book they publish. Thank you, Anisa Baker and Becky Brandvik, for your vision for this book. Thank you to Anne Christian Buchanan for your attention to detail and "big picture" plan. It's been a privilege to work with all of you.

Carolyn Larsen





Part 1

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
ABOUT JESUS



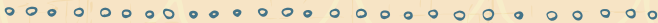
Q. CAN I REALLY KNOW JESUS?

I hear a lot of talk about Jesus, but who is he exactly?

A. The Bible states clearly that Jesus is the Son of God. In fact, he is God, one of the three “persons” of God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—that together are called the Trinity. Jesus was present from the very beginning of time. But a little more than two thousand years ago, God the Father called on Jesus to come to earth as a human—the culmination of God’s plan to rescue the world from the grip of sin.

On earth, Jesus taught about God and how to live. He also performed many miracles. But some political and religious leaders of the time were jealous of him, so he was arrested, condemned, and brutally executed on a cross.

But that’s not the end of the story! God raised Jesus back to life, breaking the power of sin and death in the world. You see, when Jesus died on the cross, he was taking upon himself the punishment that really belonged to us sinful humans. God offers forgiveness and eternal life to those who confess their sins and accept what Jesus did for them. They are given a new heart and enter into a relationship with him that is personal, like having a close friend. Yes, you can really know Jesus—and live with him forever !



All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. 1 JOHN 4:15



Q. HOW CAN WE KNOW JESUS REALLY EXISTED?

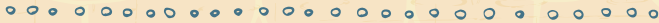
Was he an actual historical person or just a myth or legend?

A. The Bible, of course, tells us that Jesus existed as a human on earth. But there is also evidence from other respected sources that Jesus was a real historical person.

One of those sources was a Jewish historian named Josephus, who lived in the first century and wrote a history of the Jews from Adam to the time of the Roman emperor Nero. He mentioned Jesus three different times.

The Roman historian Tacitus, writing at about the same time, also mentioned Jesus, his crucifixion, and Nero's persecution of Christians. Tacitus's friend Pliny the Younger, a governor in Asia Minor, sent letters to the Roman emperor Trajan describing Pliny's treatment of early Christians. Neither of these Romans were Christian believers. They just reported what they had seen and heard.

Some people interpret comments in the Talmud, a compilation of Jewish doctrine, as coded references to Jesus and his followers, providing further evidence that Jesus existed.



[Paul] explained and testified about the Kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Scriptures. . . . Some were persuaded by the things he said, but others did not believe. ACTS 28:23-24



Q. WHY IS JESUS CALLED “CHRIST”?

Is “Christ” his last name?

A. While “Jesus” is the name the angel Gabriel told Mary to give her baby, “Christ” is a title—not a last name—that shows his position as the one God chose to deliver his people.

The word *Christ* comes from the Greek word *Christos*, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Mahshiach*, which is translated as *Messiah* in English. Both words mean “anointed one” or “chosen one.”

When kings came into power in Bible times, they were anointed with olive oil mixed with spices as a way of dedicating them to God’s service. Calling Jesus the “anointed one” shows his position and power. He is the anointed one who fulfills Old Testament prophecies foretelling the coming of a chosen one—the Messiah—who would deliver the Israelites from oppression. So using the name Christ for Jesus is the same as saying that he is the chosen one.

The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free. LUKE 4:18



Q. IS JESUS THE “SON OF GOD” OR THE “SON OF MAN”?

He couldn't be both at the same time, could he?

A. Jesus is called the “Son of God” because he came from God the Father. But he also often called himself the “Son of Man.” Matthew 8:20 and John 13:31 are just a few examples.

Jesus was born of a woman—Mary—so he is the “Son of Man.” But in becoming human, Jesus did not stop being God. He only left his place in heaven to live among the people he had created and to serve as an example of how they should live.

The people of Jesus’ day would have been familiar with the title “Son of Man” since the prophet Daniel used the term when he was clearly referring to the promised Messiah: “I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. . . . He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world. . . . His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14).

So when Jesus called himself the “Son of Man,” he was confirming his humanity but also signaling to his listeners his role as the Messianic judge, deliverer, savior, and vindicator described in the book of Daniel.

The high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah?” . . . Jesus said, “I AM. And you will see the Son of Man . . . coming on the clouds of heaven. MARK 14:61-62



Q. WHY IS JESUS CALLED “THE WORD”?

I thought the Bible was the Word of God.

A. The first chapter of the Gospel of John paints a beautiful picture of who Jesus is and how he came to earth to bring light to our darkness. But that beautiful passage doesn't refer to him as “Jesus.” Instead, it calls him “the Word.” Why?

Basically, “the Word” is a biblical term for God's communication with human beings. The Bible is the Word of God, but Jesus is a form of God's communication too—in fact, the most important form. By sending his Son to earth, God was telling people that he loved them, that despite their sin he hadn't given up on them, and that he was willing to do whatever it took to rescue the human race from its dark and fallen existence.

In Jesus, God was showing us himself—the best form of communication of all.

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. JOHN 1:1, 4-5



Q. WHAT IS “THE INCARNATION”?

And what does it have to do with Jesus?

A. The term *incarnation* is very important because it gets to the heart of what Jesus did for us. This word literally means “the act of becoming flesh” and refers to a spiritual being taking on human form. That’s what Jesus did when he was born and grew up to be a man. He ate and drank, walked and talked, taught others, and worked with his hands. He had parents, siblings, and friends. He knew what it felt like to be hungry, thirsty, lonely, and tempted—and eventually to suffer and die.

But Jesus was no ordinary man. Although fully human, he was also fully God. That double identity makes a huge difference. Because he lived as a human, Jesus understands our struggles. And because he is God, he lived a perfect human life without sin. When he died on the cross to take the penalty for our sins, he also conquered death. Jesus’ incarnation was a true game changer for the entire human race.

The Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son. JOHN 1:14

Q. IS JESUS MENTIONED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

Did people know Jesus was coming? Does the Old Testament say anything about him?

A. The people of Jesus' day did not know specifically that the coming Messiah would be named Jesus, but they did have Scriptures—now part of our Old Testament—that foretell the coming of a Savior, an anointed one called the Messiah.

Isaiah 7:14 says the Messiah would be born from a virgin and would be called Immanuel, which means “God is with us.” Isaiah 9:6-7 speaks about his birth and the power and influence he would have. This passage also predicts he would be called by names like “Mighty God” and “Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 53 prophesies the Messiah's suffering and death for our sins. And Micah 5:2 mentions the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

All of these prophecies were fulfilled in the life of Jesus. But many who eagerly awaited the Messiah were surprised by what he did and said. They were expecting a political leader who would lead them to independence from the Roman government. Instead, they encountered God in human flesh, who, true to prophecy, died to save them from their sins.

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A child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ISAIAH 9:6

Q. DID JESUS KNOW WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN TO HIM WHEN HE CAME TO EARTH?

Did he actually agree to come knowing that he would have to go through suffering?

A. It's hard to believe that someone would voluntarily go into a situation involving great pain and even death—through no fault of his or her own. But Jesus did that. He came knowing he would suffer and die for the sins of others. He also knew that first he would spend time teaching people about God and performing many miracles. He knew that some people would believe in him—and that others would not.

These people, including religious and political leaders of Jesus' day, looked for ways to turn against him. When they arrested him, he knew what was ahead—torturous beatings and a brutal death. Jesus could have called angels to rescue him, but he didn't.

He willingly went through it all because of his love for the people he had created . . . his love for you.

.....

Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward to meet them. "Who are you looking for?" he asked. JOHN 18:4