



Exploring Christianity:

Is Jesus a prophet or the Son of God?

Use the following space to take notes as you view the video in which Lee Strobel interviews Mike Licona, the founder of Risen Jesus, a Christian organization based in Virginia Beach, and Shabir Ally, the founder of the Islamic Information Center in Toronto, Canada.

Name: _____

Grade: _____



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1. As a group, take a few moments to list some of the common words or phrases you have heard used to describe or define Jesus Christ.
2. When you were growing up, what were you taught about Jesus?
3. What do you believe about Jesus today? Is he a good man? A prophet? The Messiah? The divine Son of God? What words or phrases do you think accurately describe him? On what do you base your beliefs about Jesus?

“Suppose, however, that God did give this law to the Jews, and did tell them that whenever a man preached a heresy, or proposed to worship any other God that they should kill him; and suppose that afterward this same God took upon himself flesh, and came to this very chosen people and taught a different religion, and that thereupon the Jews crucified him; I ask you, did he not reap exactly what he had sown? What right would this god have to complain of a crucifixion suffered in accordance with his own command?”

Robert Ingersoll, *Ingersoll's Works*, Vol. 2



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4. Shabir Ally considers Jesus to be a prophet born of a virgin, a miracle worker, and the Messiah who was raised from the dead. But he does not believe Jesus to be divine (or the “Son of God”) in any way. Does Ally’s conclusion make sense to you? Why or why not? Does his belief that Jesus is not divine contradict any of his other beliefs about Jesus? Explain.

5. Based on the following excerpts from the New Testament, who do you think Jesus believed himself to be? Give reasons from the text for your responses. (Refer to the next page for the excerpts)



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The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God." "You have said so," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Matthew 26:63–64)

[Jesus] said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. (John 9:35–38)

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:6–9)

[Jesus answered] "I and the Father are one. . . . Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said 'I am God's Son'?" (John 10:30, 36b)

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. (John 5:21–24)



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“‘Son of Man’ is often thought to indicate the humanity of Jesus, just as the reflex expression ‘Son of God’ indicates his divinity. In fact, just the opposite is true. The Son of Man was a divine figure in the Old Testament book of Daniel who would come at the end of the world to judge mankind and rule forever. Thus, the claim to be the Son of Man would be in effect a claim to divinity.”

William Lane Craig

6. Both Mike Licona and Shabir Ally agree that the Gospels provide the earliest historical record of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ (written by eyewitnesses during the lifetimes of many other eyewitnesses). How reliable do you think the Gospels are as an historical source of information about the life and ministry of Jesus? Explain.

“The Koran does not claim to be a better historical record. The Koran reaffirms earlier historical records, namely the Gospels themselves, and it calls upon people to judge by what God has revealed in the Gospels.”

Shabir Ally

7. Licona believes there is historical evidence that Jesus claimed divinity and rose from the dead. Ally suggests that Jesus’ divinity is really an idea that simply evolved over time. Who do you agree with most? Why? In what ways do the following early accounts from the Gospels impact what you believe about the true identity of Jesus?



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Then John [the Baptist] gave this testimony: ... I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One." (John 1:32, 34)

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him [Peter]. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God." (Matthew 14:31–33)

Jesus said to her [Martha], "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." (John 11:25–27)

Thomas said to him [Jesus], "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:28–31)



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8. Licona argues that Jesus had two natures --- a divine nature and a human nature. Conversely, Ally counters that “to be human means to have limitations and to be divine means to have no limitations. Jesus cannot be limited and unlimited at the same time unless he was schizophrenic.” Why or why not? Is it possible or impossible for Jesus to be both completely human and completely divine at the same time? Could theologians be right when they say, based on Philippians 2, that during Jesus’ earthly ministry he voluntarily emptied himself of the independent use of his divine attributes? Explain.

9. Read John 20:28 – 31 (see reference on previous page). What do you think it would take (or what did it take) for you to come to the same conclusion as Thomas and say – as he finally did – “[Jesus, you are] my Lord and my God!” (v.28)?



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10. What are some of the implications for all of humanity if Jesus really was the unique Son of God?

11. What are some implications for your life if Jesus really was God in human form? Which of these implications is most difficult or troublesome to you?

“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ ‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.’”

Matthew 16:13–17