

Vintage Jesus

Jesus Christ.

No one is more loved and hated than Jesus Christ.

Roughly two thousand years ago, Jesus was born in a dumpy, rural, hick town. Jesus' mom was a poor, unwed teenage girl who was often mocked for claiming she conceived via a miracle. Jesus was adopted by a simple carpenter named Joseph and spent the first thirty years of his life in obscurity, swinging a hammer with his dad.

Around the age of thirty, Jesus began a public ministry that included preaching, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and befriending social misfits such as perverts, drunks, and thieves. Jesus' ministry spanned only three short years before he was put to death for declaring himself to be God. He died by shameful crucifixion like tens of thousands of people before and after him.

At first glance, Jesus' résumé is rather simple. He never traveled more than a few hundred miles from his home. He never held a political office, never wrote a book, never married, never had sex, never attended college, never visited a big city, and never won a poker tournament. He died both homeless and poor.

Nonetheless, Jesus is the most famous person in all of human history. More songs have been sung to him, artwork created of him, and books written about him than anyone who has ever lived. In fact, Jesus looms so large over human history that we actually measure time by him; our calendar is divided into the years before and after his birth, noted as B.C. ("before Christ") and A.D. (anno Domini, meaning "in the year of the Lord"), respectively.

No army, nation, or person has changed human history to the degree that Jesus, the homeless man, has. Some two thousand years after he walked the earth, Jesus remains as hot as ever.

On television, Jesus often appears on the long-running animation hits *The Simpsons* and *South Park*. Dog the Bounty Hunter, the famous Christian bail bondsman, prays to Jesus on almost every episode of his hit television show.

In the world of fashion, Jesus appears on numerous t-shirts, including the popular “Jesus is my homeboy” shirt, worn by everyone from Madonna to Ashton Kutcher, Ben Affleck, Brad Pitt, and Pamela Anderson.

Roughly one hundred films have been made about Jesus, including top-grossing movies like *The Passion of the Christ* and *The Da Vinci Code*.

Musically, everyone from rapper Kanye West to rockers The Killers, punk rockers Green Day, American Idol country-crooner Kerri Underwood, and the world’s top band, U2, are singing about Jesus. The Beatles’ frontman John Lennon even once said, “We’re more popular than Jesus now.”

The question begs to be answered, who exactly is Jesus? So much has been said about Jesus that it only seems appropriate to let Jesus speak for himself. Therefore, we will examine five things that Jesus said about himself.

1. Jesus said he was God.

Jesus clearly, emphatically, and repeatedly said he was God. If his statements were untrue, it would have been a blasphemous violation of the First Commandment. In John 10:30–33 Jesus said, “*I and the Father are one.*” The Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father, for which of them are you going to stone me?” They replied, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.”

Throughout the history of the world, there is a surprisingly short list of people who have actually claimed to be God. For example, such religious leaders as Buddha, Krishna, Muhammad, and Gandhi did not claim to be God. Jesus, in contrast, clearly and repeatedly said he was God.

2. Jesus said he came down from heaven.

Jesus boldly claimed to be God who lived in heaven but who came down from his eternal home to visit the earth as a man, saying in John 6:38, *“I have come down from heaven.”* Jesus’ claim to be God in a human body has never been made by the founder of any other world religion, which means that Jesus is without peer among religious leaders.

3. Jesus said he was sinless.

In the history of the world, no one has claimed with any credibility that they are without sin, because to do so is to declare that one’s words, actions, thoughts, and motivations are continually perfect. However, Jesus declared that he was sinless. He further challenged anyone to prove him wrong: *“Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?”* (John 8:46).

4. Jesus forgave sin.

Sin is the human problem. All sin is ultimately committed against God. Subsequently, God alone has the power to forgive the sins of sinners.

In light of this, Jesus’ claims to forgive sin are simply astonishing. Luke 5:20–21 reports, *“And when he [Jesus] saw their faith, he said, ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you.’ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, ‘Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’”*

Because Jesus is God, our sins are against him. Only because Jesus died on the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sins can we be forgiven.

5. Jesus said he was the only way to heaven.

While there are many religious and spiritual teachers who claim that they can point us to heaven's path, they do not claim to be that path themselves. Jesus, in contrast, promised that he was the way to eternal life in heaven, saying in John 14:6, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

The question remains to be answered, how should you respond to the incredible person, work, and claims of Jesus? The answer is to turn from sin and trust in Jesus. Jesus is our loving God who came down from heaven to live without sin on the earth. Jesus is our God who died on the cross to forgive our sin. Jesus rose from death for our salvation. Jesus ascended into heaven where he is alive today and preparing an eternal home for you and waiting to hear from you in prayer as you begin your relationship with him.

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