

# 5 THE TRUTH

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## KEY POINTS

1. *If Jesus is the truth, and if what He said about himself is true, you and I must make a decision about what we will do with the truth.*
2. *If Jesus claimed to be God, and if His claim is true, we should accept Him as our Savior and Lord.*

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## IN THIS LESSON YOU WILL STUDY THESE QUESTIONS:

- How does truth work?
- In relation to truth, are you walking on thin ice?
- Is Jesus a legend, liar, lunatic or Lord?
- Did Jesus claim to be God?

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## HOW DOES TRUTH WORK?

The second thing that Jesus said was, “I am the truth.”<sup>38</sup> That’s pretty narrow, is it not? But the truth, by definition, is very narrow. You may say, “That may be true for you, but it is not true for me.” But that is not the way truth works. If Lenin was the first Party Secretary of the Communist Party, that is not only true for you, it is also true for me and the rest of the world. If George Washington was the first President of the United States, that is not only true for me, it is also true for you and for

the rest of the world. Therefore, if Jesus Christ is “The Truth,” then it is true not only for me but for the world.

You may say that as long as you just believe something to be true, then it will be true for you. That is not rational. Believing something does not make it truth. Not believing something does not make it false. Our belief does not establish truth or destroy truth. The key is what the truth is.

## **IN RELATION TO TRUTH, ARE YOU WALKING ON THIN ICE?**

Suppose there is only a thin sheet of ice over Moscow River, but I believe that the ice will hold me so I will be able to cross the river. I begin walking across the river with great faith in that ice. Nevertheless, I am believing a lie. No matter how strong my belief, if I walk on thin ice, it will break and I might drown. My faith in that ice will not establish that the ice will hold me up. Conversely, the person walking on thick river ice may have only a little faith but walk on the ice safely. It is not faith that creates the safety or a lack of it. The issue is whether my faith is in the truth or in a lie, the thick ice, or thin ice. If my faith, even though it is small, is in the thick ice, I will experience the reality of a safe walk. Moreover, even though I may have great faith in the thin ice, I will experience destruction. And so it is with Christ. If He alone is our way to a holy and righteous God and that is the truth of the universe and of God, all we need to do is trust in who He is and what He did. Then we will know God’s love and forgiveness for our lives.

## **IS JESUS A LEGEND, LIAR, LUNATIC OR LORD?**

**C. S. Lewis** lived part of his life as an atheist, but he came to grips with Christianity based upon the case of Christ and the truth of His claims. He was a tutor of medieval and renaissance literature at Oxford University and later a professor at Cambridge University. Commenting on Jesus’ claim to be God, he said either that statement was true or it was false. If Jesus is God, then you have a decision to make about what you want to do with His claims. However, suppose Jesus claimed to be God and that statement was really false. There would then be two options: Jesus knew that it was false, or He did not know that it was false. Lewis then said that if Jesus claimed to be God and the statement was false, and Jesus

knew that it was false, Jesus was a liar. Not only was He a liar, He was a fool because He got himself killed for it. And not only was He a fool, He was a demon of hell because He told people to put their faith in Him for eternal life. Lewis concluded that to consider the greatest influence for good the world has ever known could live such a colossal lie was not a rational position to hold.<sup>39</sup>

Commenting on the idea of Jesus being a liar and living a lie, the nineteenth-century Irish historian **W. Lecky**, who was certainly not a believer in revealed religion, nevertheless wrote of Jesus:

The character of Jesus has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exerted so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of the philosophers and all the exhortations of the moralists.<sup>40</sup>

However, we have another option. If Jesus' claim to be God was false, but He really thought that He was God, that claim would indicate He was mentally unbalanced, perhaps with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Yet none of Jesus' characteristics indicates schizophrenia.

Most psychiatrists tell us that if the world would just live by the teachings of Jesus, we would have no war or murder or hatred. That does not sound like schizophrenia. Psychiatrist **J. T. Fisher** summarized the problem well when he referred to Jesus Christ's sermon on the mount.

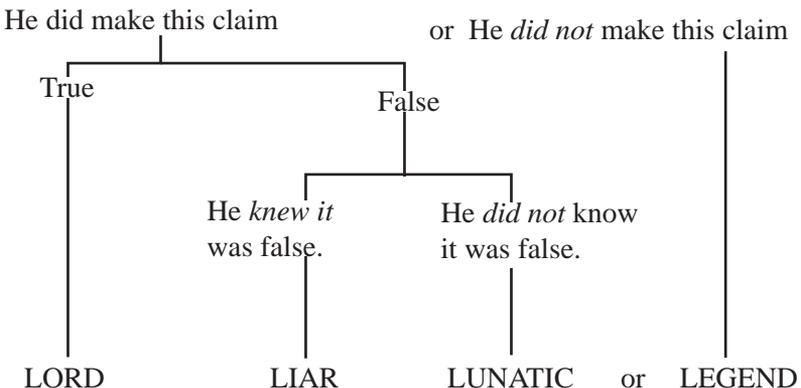
If you were to take the sum total of all the authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental hygiene, if you are to confine them and refine them and cleave out the excess verbiage, if you are to take the whole of the meat and none of the parsley, and if you are to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of a Sermon on the Mount. And it would suffer immeasurably through comparison. For nearly 2000 years the Christian world has been holding in its hand the complete answer to its restless and fruitless yearnings. Here rests the blueprint for successful human life with optimum mental health and contentment.<sup>41</sup>

**John Warwick Montgomery** is considered by many to be the foremost living apologist for biblical Christianity.<sup>42</sup> He argues that one cannot very well have it both ways. If the teachings of Jesus Christ provide the blueprint for successful human life with optimum mental health, then He cannot be a lunatic who totally misunderstands the nature of His own personality. Therefore, Professor C.S. Lewis concluded that neither of these options is rational. In response to the claims of Jesus Christ there are only four alternatives.

Other than being a legend (which historically is not factual), there are three other possibilities concerning the person of Jesus Christ: either He is a liar, or He is a lunatic, or He is the Lord. The question at issue here is this; which is the most probable of these three options?

## DID JESUS CLAIM TO BE GOD?

The following diagram refers to the question—did Jesus claim to be God? If He did make this claim, and if it is true, we should worship Him as our Lord and Savior. If He claimed to be God, but His claim is false and He knew it was false, He was a liar. If He made this claim and He did not know it was false, He was a lunatic. If He did not claim to be God, He was nothing more than a legend.



Lewis concluded that Jesus was not a legend, liar, or a lunatic. He is the Lord. The following statement needs to be repeated and considered

carefully. If Jesus is the truth, and if what He said about himself is true, you and I must make a decision about what we will do with the truth.

**A QUESTION FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:**

*“Based on the logical presentation of the scholars who are quoted in this lesson, what is your opinion? Is Jesus a legend, a liar, a lunatic, or Lord?”*