

Who Do You Say That I Am?

"But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "God's Messiah." Luke 9:20



Christians say **Chi Rho-Christ** (Chi Rho-Christ) "God's Messiah, the Savior, the Christ, Jesus." Christians also use King of Kings or **Lord** of Lords and **Lord** of the Hosts. Some Christians may say Father/Abba which is Hebrew, "Most High"

Jews say “**יהוה YHWH**” translated as **Jehovah** and **Yahweh**. Most English editions of the Bible write the name as "the **Lord**" owing to the Jewish tradition increasingly viewing the divine name as too sacred to be uttered.”¹ Jews traditionally do not pronounce it, and instead refer to God as HaShem, literally "the Name"²



Muslims say **Allah** “Allah”. In **Islam**, Allah is the God, the **absolute one**, the **all-powerful** and **all-knowing** ruler of the universe, and the creator of everything in existence. **Islam** emphasizes that God is strictly singular (*tawhīd*): unique (*wāhid*), inherently One (*ahad*), also all-merciful and omnipotent. God is neither a material nor a **spiritual** being. According to Islamic teachings, beyond the **Throne** and according to the **Quran**, "No vision can grasp him, but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things."

These short explanations are offered to acquaint you with who God is to the three Abrahamic religions of the world, in hopes you may come to understand we are born of the same root and each has unique names and ways of worshipping G_d.

Sadly, the answer to the question, **“Who do you say that I am?”** is getting more dangerous to answer for many around the world. The most recent massacre, on March 16, 2019, of 49 Muslims in New Zealand has shaken the (religious) world to the core, much like the murder of

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_God_in_Judaism

² https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_in_Judaism

11 Jews in Pittsburg on October 27, 2018 and the Charleston massacre, of 9 black Christians at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina on June 17, 2015.

All three of these violent acts of murder happened in sacred spaces. A mosque, a synagogue and a church were all violated and their people were violated in the worst possible way. Houses of worship are historically sanctuaries, safe places for people to gather where they are protected from undue harassment, freedom to worship the God of their choice and be assured they are sheltered from harm.

In the 21st century, it appears this is becoming more and more difficult, not just in the United States but around the world. Extremist groups, from every background, are popping up witnessing to a manifesto of human destruction because of differing beliefs. The use of blatant violence is the new weapon unlike the Nazi movement of Hitler's regime during World War II that was covert in its execution(s). Today's manifestation of "race cleansing" is horrifying. Ready access to media and communication as well as access to assault weapons allow this hate to grow exponentially. Humans cannot live, let alone thrive, under constant worry and threats to their safety and well-being.

"First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out-because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out-because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out-because I was not a Jew.

(Now they come for the Muslims and I did not speak out-because I am not a Muslim.)

"they came for me-there was no one left to speak for me."³ Martin Niemöller

New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, made a courageous statement in an effort to take away worldwide coverage of the events and the perpetrators saying "He may have sought notoriety, but we in New Zealand will give him nothing. Not even his name," she said. The prime minister also said her government "will look at the role social media played" in the publicizing the attacks." ⁴

Unfortunately, this is our reality in 2019. There is no going back to the way it was but there can be a new way forward. We must take a critical look at the way we live out our Christian faith. We need to ask ourselves and each other, what can I do to make a difference and shift the focus from violence and destruction to one of a way of peace and understanding? We only have our little corner of the world. I believe in the ripple effect. Toss a pebble into the pond and watch the ripples come forth in the calm waters. The ripples move out in concentric circles toward the shore picking up things along the way. You may ask, "What can we do?" We can toss the pebbles of prayer, civic and community involvement, we can donate to organizations who investigate and prosecute "hate crimes", you read articles and books about a group or a person different from you to gain deeper understanding. There are many ways to impact this culture of violence that is emerging.

³ Holocaust Encyclopedia

⁴ NPR. March 18, 2019 11:13 PM ET Richard Gonzales

There are no easy answers or solutions. We are called to be faithful and not judgmental, steadfast and not stuck, a witness not an avenger. Faithful to God who in God's infinite mercy and love will prevail. Steadfast to what is right in the eyes of the **Lord**, to stand up and speak truth to evil and power. A witness to the resilience of human beings and our ability to become one in the face of adversity and danger.

May we each seek to console, to understand and to stand up for all that is good and right in the world while staring down evil and destruction. We ask this in the name of the one who is Holy to each. God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Yahweh and Allah. ***Amen.***