

Who is Jesus?

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Preacher: Dan Paterson

[0 : 0 0] We'll look again at the passage we are reading and we're going to be asking the question tonight, who is Jesus? First of all, I'm going to ask you, what is the date today? Everybody always gets a bit cautious when someone asks them the day. They quickly check their watches.

But 24th, we agreed on that, 24th, 24th of June, we're okay with that. But more importantly, what year is it? 2012. But the question is, what happened 2012 years ago that was so significant that we've been counting how long since it happened? What happened 2012 years ago that we would start counting? I'll tell you, there was a man called Jesus. And today we're going to look at a time when this Jesus asked a very simple question. That's our first point.

We're going to look at the question. We're going to look at Mark chapter 8 where we were reading verse 27. It says, Jesus and his disciples went onto the villages around Caesarea Philippi on the way he asked them, who do people say I am? Now Jesus and his disciples, they're making their way to this place called Caesarea Philippi. And after a bit of a prayer time, which we know from some of the other gospels, Jesus asked them this very simple question, who do people say I am? You see, Jesus wants to know the disciples have been talking to all these people and they've been chatting away and Jesus wants to know, what do they think about me? What do they say about me? What's this word on the street? Because Jesus is curious. Now you see, at this time, Jesus has been performing miracles. He's been feeding 5,000 people from five loaves of bread and two fish. He's been healing people who were blind by rubbing his saliva onto their eyes. He's been turning water into wine at a wedding. You know, he went into the synagogue, which is like a church today, and he taught them with an authority and a power they had never experienced. You know, one time he went into the synagogue, this sort of church, and he sat down and he picked up this scroll, which was written hundreds of years before him. And he said, this scroll talks about me. I am the fulfillment of what was written a few hundred years ago. And after all these different things had been happening and all this gossip had been spreading about them, he says, in light of all this, who do all these people say I am? And friends, we have to answer that same question. We have to consider that question. Who do you say

Jesus is? When you hear his name being spoken about, or you read the Bible, or maybe you're visiting with us and you're thinking, who's this Jesus guy? When you hear that name, when you hear about this person performing miracles, who do you say he is? Oh, maybe you're saying, I don't know. I want to tell you, you're in the right place, because we're going to find out the answer to that. But maybe you're saying to yourself, to be honest, I don't care. Well, I want to ask you, why would you not want to know who the most important person ever to walk this planet is? If you could rank the people of the most important to ever live, Jesus is number one every time. If we had a Forbes list, Jesus hits the top. Friends, maybe you think Jesus has nothing to do with you today. Maybe you think he's completely irrelevant for your life. Maybe you think it was so long ago, nobody cares about that, nobody wants to know. Well, friends, this question that Jesus asked the disciples is as important today as it is when he asked it. Upon this question, the course of your life will be dramatically altered. Depending on how you answer that question, your life will change, not only up until you die, but after you die. That's how important this question is. So let's have a look at the response that Jesus received. If you look at the question, let's look at the world's opinion, verse 28 of our passage in Mark. They reply, that's the disciples, they reply to Jesus' question, they say, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others, one of the prophets. The disciples give this three opinions to

Jesus and they say, first of all, some people think you're John the Baptist. Who's John the Baptist? John the Baptist is the one who baptised Jesus. Now, apart from Jesus, he is considered to be the greatest prophet. Now, a prophet is somebody who reveals God's will to others. God reveals his will

to this person and they spread it to everybody else and they tell people, this is what God says, this is what God wants you to know. They're like God's spokesperson. And John is considered the greatest spokesperson for God, except from Jesus. And he was sent to tell everybody around him, he was sent to say to them, you need to get ready because the Messiah is coming. Now, the Messiah is the title who's given to the one who would come and save all of mankind, both then and now, from their sin. Now, the whole of the Old Testament looks forward to this one event. The one is coming to save mankind from their sin. And that one is called the Messiah. And it was John's task to go around telling everybody, you better get ready because the Messiah is coming.

[5 : 57] And the people loved John. They thought he was great, they loved him, but you know what? John was beheaded. A guy called Herod took off his head. And they looked at Jesus and they said, he must be John the Baptist, come back from the dead. Look at what he's doing.

But friends, they were wrong. They got it completely wrong. Jesus couldn't be John the Baptist, it was John who baptised Jesus. Some people knew that, however, so they said, no, no, he's not John the Baptist, he's Elijah. Now, Elijah was another prophet of God and he lived hundreds of years before Jesus and he's significant because Elijah's one of the very few people who never died. He was taken up to heaven before he died. But the reason they looked at Jesus and said it must be Elijah is there is a passage in the Old Testament in Malachi 4-5 which says, see, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. And many read this passage and said, see, Elijah's going to come back from heaven. He's going to miraculously return from heaven and he's going to prepare the way for the Messiah to come. And here these people saw Jesus and said, someone with his power, he has to be Elijah. Couldn't be anyone else.

Friends, they were completely wrong. You see, they had misunderstood what was going on. And we know from Mark 9.13 that Jesus explains to them that that wasn't the case. The disciples asked them, it says, why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?

And Jesus replied, to be sure Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come and they did not recognise him, but I've done to him everything they wished. Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

Friends, Elijah wasn't physically coming back from heaven. It was someone in the same spirit, the same power of Elijah was coming. Someone with that same message, someone who was coming to say, look out, the Messiah is coming. And we're told John the Baptist is that one.

[7 : 58] They both prepared the way for Jesus. So again, the people were wrong. And the third one we're told, maybe he's a prophet or Jeremiah, another person who's dead. The opinion of Jesus here that the disciples give is that Jesus, he's an amazing man. He's a man sent from God.

But you know, the disciples are quite nice to Jesus, really, because there were other opinions going on. You know, not everybody liked Jesus, believe it or not. Some said he was a sorcerer. Some thought he was an imposter, that he was just pretending to be someone. Some said, do you know what? He's a nobody from a town called Nazareth. Now that's like someone from Glasgow saying today, don't listen to that Derek Lamont in St.

Columbus. He lives in Edinburgh. And let's be honest, you can't trust anyone from Edinburgh, can you? That's what it was like. They looked at where he was from and said, Jesus, he's nothing special. Nothing good can come out of Nazareth. What's clear is the world had no idea who Jesus was. The response shows Jesus's true identity was not known to them.

Even after all these miracles, even after all this teaching, no one's even close to the mark. What about now? Think of what people would tell you now. What does the world say Jesus about Jesus?

They'll tell you Jesus, he never existed. Some will say he's a made-up person. At some point in history they made him up. They'll say the church just wanted to control people. So they made up this guy called Jesus and they make everybody worship him. And in about 300 AD they sort of made this Bible up and it was because this Christian emperor wanted to get all this power from himself. That's what they'll tell you. But friends, even non-Christian historians wrote about Jesus. The evidence for the physical life of Jesus is so compelling. To ignore it, really you would have to be quite ignorant and I don't mean to disrespect you and say that. But the evidence is so clear. It's very difficult to say Jesus never existed. But maybe the more common one you'll hear today is that Jesus is just a good man. Some say he's just a good man, a wise teacher. He was a nice guy a bit. But the miracles in that, forget that, that's not true. Yeah, he made a difference they'll tell you. Yeah, he was probably a good looking chap, nice to speak to. But don't believe any of that stuff about the loafs of bread and the feeding the 5,000 people, raising from the dead. Don't believe that, he was just a

good man, a wise man.

But friends, let me ask you this. What can a good and wise man tell those following him that when he was born his mother was still a virgin? What can a good and wise man tell those who are following him that he was going to die and after three days be raised to the dead? What can a good and wise man say if you want to have eternal life with me in heaven then give up your life, give up everything and put me first in everything you do. The opinion that Jesus is just a good man, just a wise man and nothing more, it doesn't make sense with what the Bible says. There has to be something more to Jesus than being just a good and wise man. So again we consider that question and we ask, who do you say Jesus is? Well we've looked at the world's opinion, let's go on in our passage now. Next point is we now look at the disciples opinion. We pick up in verse 29 of Mark 8, but what about you? He asked, who do you say I am? Peter answered, you are the Christ. Jesus turns the attention to the disciples thoughts. He's putting the spotlight on them. He's saying after all this time with me, after you've been living with me, we've been eating together, we've been talking, we've been teaching you, you are my closest companions, you have the inside look into my life. He says, I know what the world thinks about me, but I want to know what do you think about me? Who do you say I am? And Peter, Peter stands up in a typical Peter style, he gets there first and he says, you are the Christ. This is Peter's big moment friends. It's a huge point in his life. You know those moments when you realise, depending on how I answer this question, my life is going to change. Will you marry me?

[12:56] You know life's going to change if you say yes to that. Do you take so and so to be your lovely wedded husband or wife? Life's going to change after that. I can tell you it does.

When your wife asks you, have you done the dishes? I'm just joking about that one. But you know in these moments, when you are faced with a question, it's a big moment in life, you know this is a game changer. Here Peter looks at Jesus and he says to him, everyone else might think you're just a good guy. Everyone else might think you're a wise guy, well not a wise guy, but a wise person. And everyone else might think you're just a prophet from a long time ago. But Peter says, Jesus, I know something about you. I know something that the world hasn't figured out yet. I know something, there's something different about you and I know what it is. He says, Jesus, I know you are the Christ. You are much more than what the world thinks. You're something special. You're different. You're not just another prophet pointing to the Messiah to come. You're not just somebody else pointing to someone to come. You are the one. You are the Messiah. You are the Christ. You are the one who has come to save mankind from their sins. You know what, Peter had it bang on the mark. He was right. He had realized that there is something more to Jesus. There is something special about Jesus. But friends, before we jump in at the deep end and we say, well done, Peter, let's wrap it up at the end. Good night. See you next week. We can't do that because there's something else going on. Peter and his disciples, they knew Jesus was the Christ, but they didn't have the first clue what that meant. They were understood partially what was going on. They understood just a little bit. You see, what I asked them, what they thought was right, the Messiah will come and he's going to set up this kingdom.

He's going to be the king and he's going to establish his rule and he's going to be a big military force and he's going to defeat all the other nations and we're going to be the super nation. And Jesus says, that's not how it's going to be. If you look in Mark 8, 31, through to 33, it says, he then began to teach him. That's Jesus began to teach him that the Son of Man, that's Jesus' way of referring to himself, must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law. That's those who are in the church, those who are in positions like ministers and professors of college. These people were going to kill him and after three days, he would rise again. And he spoke plainly about this and who is it? Peter takes him aside and he begins to rebuke him. Just after Santa, through the Christ, he then begins to take him aside and he says, no, no, you've got that wrong about the dying part. Forget that.

Jesus turned around and he rebukes him back and he says, oh, you don't have it right here. You only get some of the story. You've not fully understood what's going to happen. Friends, do we know enough about Jesus? Or are we like the disciples that we only know so much? How do we make sense of who Jesus is? How can we understand everything Jesus did? How can we understand everything we read about Jesus in the Bible? How can we understand his claims that if we want to have eternity in heaven, we must follow him? How can we understand when he says, when I was born, my mother was still a virgin? That doesn't make sense to our logic.

Who is this Jesus? Who is this person who's making these claims? The world didn't know and the disciples didn't quite get it. Well, there is hope because the Bible understands.

[16 : 59] The Bible spells it out. Our last point tonight, we will look at the Bible's opinion. The only way, friends, we can make sense of who Jesus is, is if we understand and we read what the Bible says. And the Bible clearly tells us Jesus isn't just a prophet. He isn't just a good guy or a wise person. He is God. He is one part of the Trinity. Hopefully this picture helps. God is made up of three friends. God is the Father, God is the Son and God is the Holy Spirit. And these three are one. The Son is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the Father and the Father is not the Son. They are separate. But at the same time, these three are one. The Trinity is one of the greatest mysteries that God has ever revealed to us. In Jesus, the Son of God, one part of the Trinity came to this world and took upon himself humanity, leaving the Father's glory behind in heaven. And he came and took upon himself humanity. He took upon himself the same things we have. Our human nature, the ability to hunger, emotions, grief, he struggled in the same things we did. He was tempted to do wrong things. Everything we face in our life, Jesus understands because he himself has lived a human life. Philippians 2, 6 to 8 is a great verse that says, who being in very nature God, this is Jesus, the Son of God, did not consider equality with

God, something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant and being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man. He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death, on a cross. Here we have the Son of God, both human and divine. We have man and God in one. Jesus takes upon himself our human nature and he lived as we do, just as we do. He limit his power and his ability. He limited it.

He lived a human life. He didn't just sort of say, well, I'll have an easy life because whenever troubles come my way, I'll play the God card. He said, no, I'll leave that part of me behind. When temptation comes my way, I rely on God as a human, just like we should. He suffered just like we do in this world. Here we have the infinity of God dwindled to the infancy of humanity. This is the power of the gospel. God became man.

And the reason Jesus would tell these people, come follow me, give up everything in your life and put me first is because he's not the good and wise man only. He's God and God demands we put him first in everything in our lives. Mark 8.34, if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. The reason we can understand the Virgin birth is this is not an act of man. This is an act of God who is the creator of life. In Matthew's gospel, it tells us that Mary, when she was pledged to be married to Joseph before they came together, she was found to be with child. How? Through the Holy Spirit. Who's the Holy Spirit? Holy Spirit's God. The reason we believe in the resurrection is because we are not dealing with human abilities only. God is the creator of life. And Jesus lived a completely sinless life. And death is the wages of sin. And as a sinless man, death could not hold him and the Father who has God raised him from the dead. The world will tell us today, Jesus is not God. The world will tell us today, Jesus is just a good man who made some funny claims. But really, let's admire him because he did a lot of good. And you can't do that. You can't put that together. Someone who mistakenly claims to be God, you can't just say, oh well, they meant well and they're a nice guy. Really, they're wise and we should follow them. We'll have to knock that on its head. If you reject the Christ of faith, you can't accept the Jesus of history. The two don't go together.

Can you imagine if a politician stood up today and said, by the way, I'm God? Would we say, oh well, he meant well? Don't worry, we'll follow what he says anyways. No, we would say throw him in an insane asylum. He must have gone loopy. Well, Jesus says, I'm God.

[21 : 52] Now, you either accept him as God or you nail him to a cross like they did back then. Friends, whenever we hear the name of Jesus, our first thought should be, that's God we're talking about. When we read of Jesus in the Bible, we're talking about God. We're reading about God. Christ came and took the form of a man with a purpose to save sinners. John 3.16, such a well-known verse, but what about John 3.17? It's a great verse as well, for God did not send a son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world, to save the world through him. In Jesus at this point in Mark's Gospel begins to tell the disciples, I am God, but this is what's going to happen to me. He says in verse 31, he teaches them that he's going to suffer many things. He's going to be rejected by those in authority in the church, and now he's going to be killed, only to be raised to life. Jesus knew fine well when he came and took the form of man, that one of his closest friends was going to betray him for a bag full of money, for the price of a slave. He knew that, but he

still came, and he knew that he was going to be put up on the cross and accused of being a liar and someone who was out of their mind. He knew they were going to reject him.

He knew they were going to kill him, but he still came to save us, because he is making the way for us to come back to God. He's taking the sin out of our lives and he took it upon himself. What happened 2012 years ago that we've been counting ever since? The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who is God, died on a cross for your sin. Romans 5, 78 says, very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Not just a good and wise man dying, God died for us. We asked the question, who is Jesus? The world didn't know, the disciples didn't quite get it, but the Bible tells us Jesus is God. It's only when we accept him as God and worship him as God that the

Bible makes sense and that we have a real relationship with him. Do we say Jesus is just a good man? Or are we saying, no, he's the centre of my life. He is the one who saved me from my sin. Is he the one we are crying out to for forgiveness or is he the one we are saying, not now Jesus, it's not a good time? Is he the one we are saying, I can't do it on my own, but I know you've done it for me? Or is he the one we are saying, I'll speak to you tomorrow when it's a bit more convenient? Jesus spoke these words over 2,000 years ago, but friends they are as relevant today as they were then. Jesus Christ loves you and he loves you so much that he died for you. He gave up his place in heaven and took upon himself the nature of a man because he loves you. And there's nothing you have done in your life that will change that. And there's nothing you have done in your life that will stop him from loving you. You might need to take some time to think about this.

You might need to take some time to read through your Bible. You might need to ask for a Bible. You might need to take some time to ask questions. But I would urge you in that because Jesus is calling you this very moment, come to me. Come to me and have a relationship with me.

I am your God. I'm not in the grave. I'm in heaven because death couldn't hold me. I've been raised from the dead and I'm in heaven calling you. Come. Friends let's just close with a word of prayer before we sing. Let's pray. Jesus we glorify you and we lift you up in our hearts and our souls and we want to worship you because you have revealed to us in your word that you are God, that you are part of the Trinity and that you have loved us so much that you have taken upon yourself human nature and died for us. That the people thought that you were a liar. They thought that you were mad. But Lord you are God and you spoke the words of truth. You spoke the words of eternal life and you came to save us from our sin and you tell us that if we just call out to you you'll save us and we do that Father. We call out to you. We thank you so much for dying for us. We thank you so much for being our righteousness. We praise you that you are not just a good and wise man. That you are God and we would ask that you would cement that in our hearts and that in our lives we would glorify you and always remember you in that place of honour. We now just ask Lord that you would go with us as we close our service and into this week. In

[27 : 42] Jesus name we pray, our God. Amen.