

Who is this?

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[0 : 00] I would like you to come with me to the portion of God's Word read. The Gospel of Christ according to Matthew chapter 21. And let us read again the words of verse 10.

I'm reading from the authorized version, but it's almost the same in the NIV. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

If you've got an NIV then, it says, Oh, the city was stirred. The people in the city of Jerusalem, as Jesus came into it, in the way that the chapter sets out very vividly, the people of the city were stirred in their minds and their hearts.

And they asked this question, Who is this? And I want us to focus our thoughts around that this morning. Who is this? The ability to ask questions is one of the things that sets man off from all the rest of creation.

It's a sign that man is truly made in the image of God, the one who is alone wise. Because the ability to ask questions is a never-lasting sign to us of the intelligence of man.

[1 : 29] That man is a rational creature. And not only is it a great thing to be able to ask questions, it is a greater thing still to be able to ask the right kind of questions.

And in essence, that is what the gospel, whenever it is preached to us, asks us to do. It asks us to ask questions, And then it informs our minds about the kind of questions we must learn to ask.

Because the gospel, when it's preached to us, is all the time concerned with an answer. And it is only when we ask the right questions that we will ever get the right answer.

Now, that's true in every sphere of life. But it is specifically and especially true in the sphere of religion and of faith. Over the last almost 30 years since I became a Christian, I've been asked very many questions by people about religion.

All kinds of questions, of course. And wherever I meet people, really, they have questions about religion, and about God, and about the gospel, about churches, and all sorts of things.

[3 : 00] But most of them miss the most important question of all. And that's the one before us in the Old Testament. Who is this Jesus? Now, basically, there are only two possible answers to that question.

This Jesus, who is held out to us in the gospel, is either one of the most deceitful and deluded men that history has ever known.

Or he is the eternal Son of God and the only Savior of sinners. Ultimately, there are no other avenues open to us when we seek to answer this question.

Who is this Jesus? He is either one of the most deluded, and one of the most successfully deluded of all men. Because not only has he successfully deluded himself, but he has successfully deluded millions of people for the last two millennia.

For almost 2,000 years. At any one time, almost half the world has been deluded by a man who is himself deluded.

[4 : 26] If he is not, who he said he was. Now, answering that question, is it important? Well, of course it's important.

The second avenue of belief open to man about Jesus makes it important. If Jesus is who he claimed to be, if he is the only begotten and eternal Son of God, and if he is equal with God in all things, then it is very important that you and I should know that and have good reasons and grounds for believing it.

Reasons so good and so cordial and so compelling that we'll be willing to rest our souls on his work and his word for time and for eternity.

And I believe there's really, ultimately, again, only one avenue open to us for a real answering of the question, who is this Jesus?

And that avenue is the word of God and what the word of God says about him. That was a very wide avenue. There's the whole of Scripture from Genesis right through to Revelation.

[5 : 44] Revelation. I am going to confine myself this morning to the New Testament. And I want to go to the New Testament, to the age in which this Jesus lived and to people who knew him and who were influenced by him very powerfully.

And these people were just as you, just as I am. They were rational, thinking men and women. and they were as open to and as they were as close to evidence as we are.

And the assessing of evidence. We are not, 2,000 years later, more gigantic in intellect and more readily able to assess than these people were.

They were just as critical and just as unbelieving and just as difficult to persuade about who this man was as we are in our generation.

And we should keep that in mind too. And I want to go first of all to five people and ask them, who do you think this Jesus is? And first of all, these are people who knew him and who became absolutely persuaded that he was what he claimed to be, the Son of God who had come down from heaven.

[7 : 15] The first one, you all know very well, John the Baptist, preacher of righteousness, a preacher who seemed to fear the face of no man, a preacher who didn't shape his message to suit the age in which he lived or to please the people who came to hear him.

When he spoke to the theologians and professors of his day, he used quite harsh language. He said, you're a generation of vipers.

When he preached, he said to men, you must repent, look at yourself and know your sin and humble yourself before God. When we asked John the Baptist, who is this Jesus?

He gives us a hush-like what might seem to be a rather unusual answer. He says, this Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Now he could have said this Jesus is the Son of God but he did not. And we remember that John the Baptist was a man who was steeped in the Old Testament scriptures. And that his answer was dictated by the Old Testament.

[8 : 29] His understanding of who Jesus was and why Jesus had come was all shaped by his knowledge of God's word. He had lived with it. And when he said, this is the Lamb of God, he was using what we would say a sort of specialist language.

He was talking about sacrifice and atonement and the cleansing a way of sin and he was remembering perhaps the story of Abraham when God asked him to go to Mount Moriah and sacrifice his son, Isaac.

And when Isaac said, Father, we've got the fire and the wood and the knife and all the things we need for our sacrifice, there's just one thing missing. Father, where is the Lamb?

And Abraham answered, my son God will provide himself with Allah. And now, all these centuries later, John the Baptist is saying to his age and to ours, God has provided Islam.

Here he is. John's testimony about Jesus is our testimony that he is the one that God had promised to take away sin and that he spoke the fulfillment of prophecy.

[9 : 56] We could go to Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a professor in his day too of the Theological College of Pharisees in Jerusalem. Now, you can read about him in John chapter 3 was a very significant and key chapter to the understanding of the New Testament.

When you ask Nicodemus, Nicodemus, who is this Jesus? He says to us, well, I was very puzzled about it myself. And at first, the best answer I could give was this, he was our teacher come from God.

Now, Nicodemus eventually was able to give a better answer than that. But that one itself, going no higher than that, is very significant. He was a man who was used to assessing theological, religious teaching.

And he confesses, he tells us that in Jesus he found one who taught as no other theologian or professor had ever taught. He was a teacher come straight from God.

And he is. Jesus claimed to be able to manifest, to reveal the Father to us as no other one could.

[11 : 13] We could take Peter. We heard a sermon last night from Reverend Ferguson MacDonald about Peter's confession of Christ and what Christ said about that.

Let's take that testimony of Peter's. you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I'm not going to repeat what Mr. MacDonald said last night, but I want to emphasize the significance of that for

Peter.

He was confessing that Jesus was the Promised Messiah God. And that he was the Son of God. Peter had lived with Jesus then for three years.

He had been with him almost all the time, day and night. Now you cannot, the students in the college will bear this out, you cannot live and work with people for three years without getting to know them very well.

And the sad thing is that because of the way sin works in every one of us, by the time we have known a person for three years all too often, an estimate of the person is far lower than it was at the beginning of the three years.

[12:31] That's sad, but it's true in most cases. We can esteem people often until we get to know them. And here was Peter, lived with, worked with, dear night, this Jesus.

And when you put the question to him, who is this Jesus Peter? He says, he's the Christ, the Son of God, I think, not to him. There was something that Peter saw in Jesus.

And there was something that God from heaven said to Peter about Jesus. And the two things could coincide exactly. Felix Madonah brought out to us how it was a special enlightenment from God.

And yet there was nothing in the knowledge that Peter had of Jesus that denied that special work from heaven. Peter could say, yes, he is.

There's three, John the Baptist. He's the man of God, testimony to the sacrificial thing that Jesus had come to do. There's Nicodemus, testimony to Jesus as a great prophet of God.

[13:44] There's Peter, a testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus on the Sonship. There's Thomas. Thomas, I'm sure, agreed with Peter when Peter made his testimony at Caesarea Philippi.

Because as Fergus said, last night, Peter really spoke for them all. and yet that day came when Thomas said, unless I see the wounds in his hands and can put my fingers into them and can thrust my hand if I won't believe, the cross had doubled Thomas' faith and he had become like many people.

I don't believe that, he said, I don't believe that men rise from the dead. Once they're dead, they're dead. If you've asked Thomas, today, who is this Jesus?

Do you know what he says? This Jesus, he says, is my Lord and my God. Is he huge? The evidence was incontrovertible and it took an unbelieving, skeptical mind and it wrote the last word into that mind and into that heart.

This could be none other than God. He was risen from the dead. You know, when you get to know Jesus as Mr. McDonald was talking about last night in a living, personal way as the risen Savior who lives with you and walks with you every day, all the skepticism and unbelief goes.

[15:32] And then you could take Paul, a man who persecuted anything that had anything to do with Jesus of Nazareth and then who became such a fanatical follower of Jesus that there are men today who tried to tell us that in fact it was Paul who worked out the whole system of the gospel.

And if we asked Paul, Paul, who is this Jesus? Paul says so many lovely things about him that it's difficult to pick out one testimony.

But I think his own would be this. he is my Lord, I know him, I have believed him and he will never put to shame what I have committed to his task.

He is our Savior who saves to the others. Now all these, as I said, were followers of Jesus and it may be that we can sometimes think that well they were all a bit prejudiced.

Their view of Jesus really became far too enlarged and too distorted. Well we could go to the New Testament and find people whose view was not enlarged and not distorted in the same way.

[17:02] We could go for example to the Pharisees, the men ultimately who were responsible for his crucifixion. and we ask them and the Pharisees and we say who is this Jesus and you know the confession is very sad.

They say Abraham we know and Moses we know but this man we don't know who he is. We're baffled. We can't understand him.

And then they say this strange thing. But he doeth, he does many miracles. And the world is full of Pharisees today.

They say we don't know this Jesus, we can't understand him but he's certainly a good man and we're very glad he's been in the world. And they are pharisaical enough to make that kind of confession and yet live as though Jesus had never been in the world.

We could take the officers of the temple guard who were sent to bring Jesus in for questioning and they came back without him. We could say to them who is this Jesus and they too would say we don't know but we know this never was there a man who spoke like this man.

[18:19] That's why they came back without him. Never a man who could speak like this man and say the things that this man. And my friend there never was. I suppose you've heard some preachers that you're very fond of that your heart's attached to you've been blessed through them and you go a long way to hear them and yet you've never yet heard the preacher who can speak to your heart and your need as Jesus does.

Jesus says what no preacher can say. Jesus says come unto me and find rest for your souls. Jesus stands over against the need of our lost world and he says look unto me and be saved. And somebody who speaks like that is either God or is a fearful and fearsome fanatic. No two ways about it.

you could take Pilate a man whose mind was tuned into the finest legal system that the world has ever known.

Roman law. The governor under Caesar of Judea. And he examined Jesus. And when he said to Pilate who is this Jesus he says I don't really know.

[19:42] I'm baffled can't understand but I must say this I find no fault in him. I think it's lovely that God made Jesus pass under the scrutiny not only of the Pharisee and the religious law of the Old Testament but made him pass under the system of Roman law too and could find no fault in him at all.

And again there are multitudes of Pilates in the world today. Yes Jesus was a good man. Yes we do wish people would follow his teaching. Yes he's to be admired. Yes he was a prophet of some kind. And yet there lies denied and there lies proclaim that they seem to find some fault in him. you could take the Roman soldier the centurion who was at the cross in charge of the party of soldiers who nailed him to the tree and supervised the whole murderous enochment and when it was all over this centurion a hard bitten Roman soldier when it was all over if you had asked him who is this do you know what he would have said he would have said this man is the son of God because strange things had happened there had been an earthquake and there was a randing of rocks and an opening of graves as this man cried out to his father and yielded up his soul there were there was phenomena that convinced a Roman soldier that this man was the son of

God you could take Judas who again followed him for three years and then sold him for 30 pieces of silver Judas who is this Jesus Judas gives us a terrible answer Judas says he's the one son of innocent blood for I have sinned in betraying the innocent blood and every gospel hearer who puts the blood of Jesus Christ under his or her foot feet will also do the same thing be a betrayer of the crucifixion of the blood of Christ you could go through so many more we're just picking a note at random almost these are the testimony of the men who put Jesus to death and when you take it it's not very different from the testimony of his friends the

Pharisees he performs many miracles there's something about him that rationality human intelligence cannot explain take the officers there's something about his words that enlighten to mind and draw the heart and win the soul in power and blamelessness and on you could go it's almost exactly the same kind of testimony as we heard from the followers of Jesus you could take the angels ask the angels of glory who is this Jesus and they say this Jesus his name is Jesus because he is savior he saves his people from the sins he says savior you could take the demons and the demons say this Jesus is the son of God and he came home to me last night when Mr.

[23:32] McDonald was preaching that long before Jesus was confessed by his own disciples he was confessed by the demons from hell recorded in Luke 4 41 thou art the Christ thou art Christ the son of God on another occasion demon said we know who he is the holy one of God hell believes what earth refuses to believe you could take God the father who is this Jesus and he tells us this Jesus is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased hear him listen to him and of course we must take Jesus himself this is the sad thing about the present day generation of Lund it will not go to Jesus and ask him who are you it refuses to assess even look at the evidence for

Jesus who is this Jesus and he gives us again a very multiple answer I want to take two things that Jesus said one of them before his crucifixion one of them after his ascension he stood us so often we have to stand he stood once at an open grave at the grave side of someone he loved and he said this I am the resurrection and the life he that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live but he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die that's either true or it's false there's no grey

land in between and then to one of the disciples to the disciple that he knew best and on a human level loved best he appeared in his risen glory and he said to him
I am Alpha and Omega the first and the last I am he that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive forever more amen even so and I have the keys of hell and of death and again my friend that is either true or false no two ways no third way only these two who is this Jesus this Jesus on the testimony of the word of God is the son of God and the savior of sinners more he is the only son of God and he is the only savior of sinners he's one who could reach out with more than human help to the men and women of his own day and he's one who can reach out still with more than human help to you and to me and to the people round about this church and he can reach out and transform the whole of life and the whole of destiny and the whole of eternity for everyone who puts his or her trust in you don't have to be older than even the littlest boy or girl that was in here this morning to put your faith in the

Lord Jesus and to be saved with an everlasting salvation most important question in the whole world who is this Jesus I want to leave you with a scripture from John chapter 8 verse 24 this is a word of this Jesus if you do not believe believe that I am the authorized version inserts that he if you do not believe that I am he but it's not in the Greek and the NIV inserts this if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be they put it in brackets it's not in the Greek either if you do not believe that I am and he is laying hold of the Old Testament name of God I am that I am if you do not believe that I am then he said you will indeed die in your sins that is the solemn thing about old belief or disbelief in

Jesus as the Son of God and he said himself to this is in John chapter 3 verse 18 he that believeth on the Son is not condemned but he that believeth not is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God and the most important question for every one of us here this morning is this have we believed in the name have we rested in the what have we given our soul into the hands of the only begotten Son of God then if we have my friend it is well with the soul if we have not it is ill what to pray our gracious

[29 : 49] God we thank thee for thy word we thank thee for the one who is at its very heart and centre our Lord Jesus Christ and we praise thee oh God that he is all that he claimed to be the eternal son of God and yet come so near to us that he is in our very nature and that he has suffered and borne our sins and their guilt and paid the price and we thank thee that today his invitation to each one of us still is this come unto me and I will give you rest bless each one of us bless the children and in the in the church and in the Sunday school and the young people present here in the church be with each one of them may they come to know and love the Lord Jesus and may Jesus in the days to come in all his kingly power and yet tender grace be often known in this place granted for his glory and our salvation

Amen gave Him to to Eve he came his owe