

# April 7, 2019

## Who is Jesus?

### John 18:28-19:16

If you were to describe yourself to someone else, what would you say? Your occupation? Your relationships? Who are you? Would other people agree with your synopsis of yourself?

Who is Jesus? It's an important question. Jesus claims to be God. If that's true, we need to take His words very seriously. If it isn't true, He's got problems. And, if we can't believe Jesus about who He thinks He is, why would we trust Him about anything else? We ought to throw out all of his teachings completely.

*"There is no parallel in other religions," writes Oxford professor, C.S. Lewis. "If you had gone to Buddha and asked him, 'Are you the some of Bramah?' he would have said, 'My son, you are still in the vale of illusion.' If you had gone to Socrates and asked, 'Are you Zeus?' he would have laughed at you. If you had gone to Mohammed and asked, 'Are you Allah?' he would first have rent his clothes and then cut your head off. If you had asked Confucius, 'Are you the way to heaven?' I think he would probably have replied, 'Remarks which are not in accordance with nature are in bad taste.'*

*"The idea of a great moral teacher saying what Christ said is out of the question. In my opinion, the only person who can say that sort of thing is either God or a complete lunatic suffering from that form of delusion which undermines the whole mind of a man. If you think you're a poached egg and you are looking for a piece of toast to suit you, you may be sane. But if you think you are God, there is no chance for you.*

*"We may note that Jesus was never regarded as mere moral teacher. He did not produce that effect on any of the people who actually met Him. He produced mainly three effects – hatred – terror – adoration. There was no trace of people expressing mild approval."*

#### ***What is so different about Jesus?***

Jesus' trial before Pilate highlights some key characteristics about who Jesus is ...

##### *1. Jesus' kingdom is not from this world (18:36).*

Jesus is establishing a kingdom. Unlike other great leaders in history, Jesus is not establishing a kingdom through military might or political power. His kingdom does not come **from** this world and in not **of** this world, but He has come **for** this world. He is establishing a kingdom of love, compassion, justice, equality, peace, and hope written in people's hearts and lived out in people's lives.

A kingdom is defined as the territory over which the king has control. So Jesus' kingdom is not a geographic territory, but is the world of His people: the hearts, minds, and souls of those who welcome Him as King and seek to follow Him. His Kingdom comes when the Spirit

of God – the will of God, the mind of God – fill and control the lives of His subjects so His will is done here, among us.

We are His Kingdom, not **from** or **of** this world, but **for** this world. His goal is that all people become part of His Kingdom, knowing and living God's love, mercy, and grace.

### *2. Jesus is the truth (18:37).*

Pilate muses out loud, "What is truth?" It's a good question. The Jewish authorities had their "truth" – twisted truth that Jesus was a heretic and a threat to Rome. Pilate had his "truth" – Jesus was an irritant, but basically innocent. Judaism claimed to be "truth." The Roman religion claimed to be "truth." Other religions say they are "truth."

Jesus – and only Jesus – claims that He, personally, is the truth and embodies the truth: I am the way, the truth, and the life (14:6). Jesus deliberately distinguishes Himself from other teachers of His day – and throughout history – by claiming to be God, truth personified in Himself. He was not merely the "mouthpiece" of God; He said He was God. Was He lying? Was He insane? Or is this true?

If Jesus is correct that He is in fact truly God, then we can trust all His words. If He is deluded on a basic issue like His own identity, we should throw all His teaching out.

### *3. Jesus is God (19:7).*

In Scripture, the Son of God is God (just as the son of any king has the same authority as the king himself). They are one and the same. Jesus explicitly claims He is one with the Father (John 10:30, John 14:15-16:15). He claims directly to be God (John 18:5-8). No one else has made that kind of claim and been considered sane.

It's a huge claim. First of all, it gives His words authority. If it is true we do need to take His words – all His words – very seriously. They are truth. (Do we read them?)

Second, because only God can forgive sin, it means He can forgive sin (Luke 5:21-24). If Jesus is God, He can forgive us completely and set us free. He really can change our lives. If He is not God, He can't. We are stuck in our sin and guilt. Forever.

Third, Jesus can open the door to God and His love. Our greatest human need is unconditional love. Love from other people **and** love from God. The only way we can relate to a pure and holy God is if we are made pure and holy. Through His forgiveness, Jesus brings us back into perfect relationship with God, our loving Father.

### *4. Jesus is the source of power (19:11).*

On the one hand, Pilate seems to have all the power (19:10). He is governor. But Pilate has his hands tied. He is bound to do what is best for Rome, which means doing what the crowd wants, and sacrificing his conscience and good judgment.

On the other hand, Jesus will demonstrate that He, in fact, has all the power (19:11). His power is not shown in his ability to command great armies or enforce an iron will. There are enemies no army can conquer, but Jesus has the power to destroy them:

- a. Our sense of guilt, shame, and sinfulness. Jesus, through His death, takes upon Himself all our sin, all our evil, all our darkness, and gives us freedom. By allowing Himself to be crucified, He overcomes our sin and sets us free. *"Free at last. Free at last. Thank God Almighty we are free at last"* (Martin Luther King Jr).
- b. Our sense of separation from God. When Jesus died, the huge veil hiding the Holy of Holies – God's Presence – from the people was torn down the middle. There is no longer any veil or barrier between us and God. As His forgiven children, we are welcome into His presence. We can come directly to Him.
- c. Death itself. Pilate and his legions can dish out death; they cannot defeat it. On the third day, Jesus will rise from the dead to demonstrate His power even over death itself. *"Death is swallowed up in victory ... Thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

5. *Jesus dies for **us** (18:40, 19:16).*

There is a subplot running beneath the story of Jesus and Pilate. There is another man involved in these deliberations – a convicted murderer/revolutionary name Barabbas. Through a twist of irony, Barabbas – guilty as he is of treason and murder – is set free. While Jesus, innocent as He is, will be sent to die the death Barabbas deserves to die.

Barabbas does nothing. He can do nothing. It is a gift of grace that he is pardoned.

We all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). *"The wages of sin is death"*; we all deserve to die (Romans 6:23). At a spiritual level "death" is separation from God. None of us is as bad as Barabbas, but we all have a bit of rebel in us.

We can't do anything about it. But Jesus takes our place. He dies so we may be forgiven and have a new start. It's gift of grace. God's amazing grace.

Every other philosophy or religion teaches you that being right with God or achieving the ultimate prize (whatever that might be) is something you strive for on our your own. And if you are good enough – if you follow the five pillars, if you do enough good deeds, if you become enlightened enough – then, and only then, you MIGHT possibly have a chance at being welcomed by God or achieving true consciousness. All other religions and philosophies, except Jesus, teach us to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, then, maybe, we can earn our way to God. It's all up to us.

The problem is, none of us can be "good enough." We may be good people, but we are not perfect. We come with our checkered pasts. We come with our good intentions, and

frequent failures. Like Barabbas, we're caught. And we can't free ourselves.

Only Jesus realistically deals with our problem. He takes our sin upon Himself so that, by His grace, we are forgiven. By His grace we are reunited with God.

### ***So What?***

C.S. Lewis writes, *"Jesus told people their sins were forgiven. This make sense only if He really was the God whose laws are broken and whose love is wounded in every sin."*

*"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with a man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell.*

*"You can shut Him up for fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that option open to us. He did not intend to."*

Who is Jesus? Jesus is the truth, God among us. If that's true, His promise is your sin is forgiven. You are free. You know God. You truly have life.

Our prayer is, *"Your Kingdom come, your will be done ..."* His kingdom is not **from/of** this world, but He has come **for** this world. Right here, right now, He is establishing a kingdom of love, compassion, justice, equality, and hope written in our hearts and lived out in our lives. His Kingdom comes when the Spirit of God – the will of God, the mind of God – fill and control the lives of His subjects so His will is done here, among us. We are His people.

His goal is all people know God's love and grace. How can we share/be good news?

We are His Kingdom, not **from/of** this world, but **for** this world. Would the key way you describe yourself be as a follower of Jesus? A citizen of His Kingdom? This is who we are. How do we live as God's beloved people? As God's forgiven people? As God's hopeful people? As God's risen people?

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