

## Anointed John 1 and 12

Jesus asked a simple, direct, profound question nearly 2000 years ago, "Who do you say that I am?" That is the most important question any person will ever answer for it determines what we do in this life and where we go in the next life. As we study how the disciples and how Jesus' enemies answered that question, we discover that there is no middle ground with Jesus. He is either a liar who deserved to die, or He is the Word, the Lamb, the Messiah, and the King who deserves our unending worship and absolute devotion.

### Turn to Matthew 21

#### Begin series leading up to Easter

- Goal: better understand significance of Jesus' death & resurrection
- So we'll be more grateful to Him and love Him more
- All 3 messages will focus on last week of Jesus' life – often called the Passion Week

#### Jesus' final week:

- **Begins in Triumph – READ Matthew 21:6-10 – Triumphal Entry**
  - o This is **Monday**
  - o His disciples and followers praising Him, celebrating
  - o Like a ticker-tape parade!
    - = Astros returning to Houston after winning game 7
    - Everyone's watching, celebrating, craning to see
  - o Whole city stirred by the disciples' adoration of Jesus
- **Ends in Tragedy – READ Matthew 27:20-23**
  - o This is **Friday**
  - o Complete reversal: now despised, condemned, and crucified.
  - o You know the good news – rises from the dead 3 days later
  - o But that doesn't mitigate the incredible tragedy of how the week ends
    - On Monday: celebrated by His disciples like a conquering King
    - On Friday: executed by the Romans and Pharisees like a common criminal

#### How do you explain these radically different reactions to Jesus?

- His followers: worshipped... the Pharisees and Romans: condemned

#### All hinges on how you answer the question in Mt 21:10... "WHO IS THIS?"

- For the disciples and Pharisees... their answer determined their response to Jesus
  - o determined whether they would worship Him or crucify Him
- And that decision: shaped rest of history

#### Who is Jesus?... the Question of Questions – not just for them but for us

- **Most important question any person will ever answer**
- **Because your eternity hinges on your answer** – determines your life now and forever

#### So how did the Pharisees and Romans answer that question? Who was Jesus to them?

- They heard Him make big claims – talked and spoke like a king, claimed to be divine

- But He sure didn't look like a king or a God!
  - o Just a common man... and a poor man at that, from a tiny town and an insignificant family
- He couldn't be king! Couldn't be divine!
- So to the Pharisees = **blasphemer**
  - o Just a man who claimed falsely to be God
  - o Violated 1<sup>st</sup> commandment – deserved death
- To the Romans
  - o didn't care about blasphemy... cared about law and order
  - o to them Jesus was an **agitator** – a threat to stability
  - o so crucified Him like a common criminal
- The key to understand:
  - o If Jesus really was a blasphemer & agitator
  - o then by 1<sup>st</sup> Century law, He really deserved to die – their response was entirely logical
  - o He got what He deserved **if** the Pharisees & Romans were right
- You must realize: there is no middle ground with Jesus
  - o He can't just be a good man!
  - o If His claims to power & divinity weren't true... He was a LIAR or a LUNATIC
    - who got what He deserved

**That's what the Pharisees, Romans, and crowds believed about Jesus...**

**But what did His disciples believe? How did they answer the question?**

- **Let's find out by going back to the beginning of Jesus' story**
- **Turn to John 1**
  - o Could go to any of the 4 gospels to see what they believed about Jesus
  - o But it's John that really focuses on the identity of Jesus from the beginning
- **John introduces us to Jesus through 4 significant titles**
  - o rest of the book proves that Jesus deserves these titles

**Who is Jesus according to His disciples? 4 Titles in John 1**

- The first title is found in the first verse...
- **Read John 1:1-4,14,18**
- **1) The Word**
  - o begins with the biggest title of all
  - o That's an unusual title, isn't it! What does it mean?
  - o *Logos* in Greek
    - usually = literal words of speech we use to communicate with one another
  - o The Old Testament frequently talks about God's words
  - o It tells us that God's words are not like our words
    - our words are just sounds that facilitate communication
    - God's words are different – have power and authority
      - Genesis 1 – God speaks, universe pops into existence
        - o Sun, moon, stars, life – His words have power to create
      - They also have power to legislate – Law given in Exodus
        - o all become instantly accountable
      - When humanity disobeys – God's words judge us
      - When humanity obeys – God's words bless us
    - God's words in the Old Testament have power, authority, and life in and of themselves!
      - God speaks from heaven – His words descend & accomplish
    - That Old Testament observation lays the foundation for the mystery John reveals
      - Jesus is God's ULTIMATE WORD
        - o the all-mighty revelation of God come to earth in human flesh

- v1 – the Word is God – yet distinct from God
  - v2 – He has always existed with the Father
  - v3 – He was at creation for all things were made through Him
  - v4 – He is the light of the world & and the source of Life
  - v14 – He is as glorious as the Father, yet took on human flesh
  - Why? v18 – so that He could reveal God the Father to us
- Impossible to overstate the significance of the title “Word of God”
  - Yes, Jesus is a man, yet He is also God – the God-man
  - God come in human flesh to reveal God to us once and for all
- *If the 1st title emphasizes Jesus’ power, the 2<sup>nd</sup> emphasizes the exact opposite...*
- **read John 1:29**
- **2) The Lamb of God**
  - The first title is big and powerful... the second is small and vulnerable
    - Almost any predator can kill a sheep... especially a lamb! Easy snack!
  - How did the Creator get connected to this weak, soft little animal?
  - “Lamb” takes us all the way back to the book of Exodus
    - the final plague – the angel of death
    - the Israelites sacrificed spotless lambs – blood on doorposts
    - saved them from God’s wrath
  - Later in the Old Testament, God promised to send a perfect Lamb to save God’s people once-and-for-all from sin
    - **Read Isa 53:6-7**
  - This is Jesus – the promised lamb – would die in our place
- *Find the 3<sup>rd</sup> title in v41... John 1:41*
- **3) The Messiah/Christ**
  - “Christ” is not Jesus’ last name! It’s His title
    - e.g. “Queen Elizabeth” – “Queen” not a name – a title – identifies position
  - “**Christ**” in Greek = “**Messiah**” in Hebrew = “**One anointed for a special role**”
  - Old Testament – lots of “messiahs” = all priests & kings
    - men anointed by God with authority to lead the nation of Israel
  - Unfortunately, the vast majority of them blew it
  - So God promised to send one last ultimate “MESSIAH”
    - lead God’s people out of judgment and into blessing
    - fulfill all of God’s Old Testament promises to Israel
    - **The Messiah = “the One who would fulfill all God’s promises”**
  - So to a 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jew: “Messiah” = person who will make all our hopes come true!
    - Think about a time when you waited and waited for something you desperately wanted
    - For Julie and I – kids – struggled with years of infertility
      - Month after month... negative pregnancy tests
      - Finally, got a call, “Your blood test came back positive! Pregnant!”
    - Elated – had to pull over to side of road
  - That’s what it felt like to a Jew in 1<sup>st</sup> Century to hear their “Messiah” had come
    - After centuries of waiting, all of their hopes about to be fulfilled
- Final title: **read John 1:49**
- **4) The Son of God & King of Israel**
  - When we hear “Son of God” – we think “second member of the Trinity”
    - That’s what the title will come to mean later in the New Testament
  - At this point – they only have the Old Testament to go on

- An in the Old Testament, “Son of God” = “King of Israel”
  - The title was used of both David and Solomon
  - Called “Son of God” because they represented God to the people
- Towards the end of the Old Testament...
  - kings of Israel had failed
  - nation conquered and exiled
  - God promises 1 last king to restore His people and rule the world forever
- Nathanael recognizes that Jesus is that King!

**So according to His disciples, Jesus is the Word... Lamb... Messiah... King**

**That’s why on the first day of Jesus’ last week... His disciples worshipped Him**

- Because if He was who He said He was: only proper response is WORSHIP

**If Jesus is what these titles claim: He deserves our complete worship & devotion**

- Again, there is no middle ground with Jesus
- Can’t just be a good guy that you talk about on Sundays
- If He’s a liar or lunatic, He doesn’t deserve anything from you
- But if He’s who He claimed to be, He deserves your devotion now and forever

**To see what that kind of devoted worship looks like... read about an event that occurred right before Jesus’ final week...**

- **Turn to John 12**
- We’re going to read about a young, single woman named Mary...
  - arguably the greatest worshipper in the whole Bible
  - models for us what worship and devotion to Jesus should look like
  - anoints His feet – a highly symbolic act of devotion in the ancient world.
- **Read John 12:1-8**
- **Two things to know about what Mary does in this scene...**
  - **First, it was expensive!**
    - Pure nard
      - fragrant oil from crushed aromatic herb from northern India
      - opened only on special occasions – put a single drop on the head of an honored guest
    - You were incredibly careful with it because it was incredibly expensive
      - v5: 300 denarii
      - 1 denarii = 1 day’s wage by an average worker
      - so ~ 1 year’s total income – perhaps \$50k today!
    - And yet she gladly dumps it all out on Jesus’ feet!
  - **Second, it was scandalous!**
    - In 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish culture: had scandal written all over it
    - Rabbi’s rarely had female followers
      - inappropriate for non-related man & woman to spend time together
    - Mary lets down her hair (not okay in public), touches him
    - Disciples probably feeling very uncomfortable
  - **So with those realities in mind – imagine you were there...**
    - Room full of Jesus’ male disciples – talking about significant stuff
    - Reclining on floor as they eat – feet out to the side of them
    - Here comes this young, single woman...
      - breaks incredibly expensive bottle of perfume
      - overwhelmed by scent – never smelled so much perfume!

- a drop would have done the trick!
  - You're more than a little offended!
    - by financial waste
    - by scandal of this act
    - "Mary, you're making a scene! Get a grip! What will people say?!"
  - You stay silent because you know Jesus will rebuke her
  - But your offense turns into shock when He commends her instead!
- **He says this act of extravagant worship is RIGHT – it's proper, it's good**
- **Why? Because if Jesus really is who He says He is, then there is no limit to the devotion He deserves from us**
  - A \$50,000 vial of perfume – nothing compared to what Jesus is worth
  - Scandal and ridicule – nothing compared to what Jesus is worth!
- **Of all the great disciples in the room, Mary is the only one who gets it**
  - Only one to really grasp that He's the Lamb – anointing Him for death
  - Throughout gospels – Mary is always first to get it
    - Ironic: in culture that looked down on women, this young, single woman understood Jesus better than anyone!
  - Fascinating – all 4 times we see Mary in the same place: at His feet listening and worshipping
- **Because Mary understands...**
  - **If Jesus is really who He says He is... then He deserves unending worship**
- **Mary knew the right answer to the most important question. Who is Jesus?**
  - He is the Word of God, our sacrificial lamb, promised Messiah, eternal King...
  - and therefore, there is no limit to the worship and devotion He deserves

**Application: So, let me ask you... WHO DO YOU SAY JESUS IS?**

- **Are you still trying to figure it out?**
  - Take time this week to consider His claims, His life, His deeds
  - What's keeping you from believing?
  - Come talk to me or someone else here
- **If you do believe, then are you following Mary's example?**
  - Is your worship extravagant?
  - Do you give generously of your time, energy, and money to Jesus and to the things Jesus loves?
- **We have two weeks to prepare ourselves for Easter**
  - **spend this time at His feet in worship**