

The most fundamental question anyone can ever ask is, "Who is Jesus?" Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say I am?" (Matthew 16:15) Of course I believe it is a fundamental question because I am coming from the conviction that what Jesus said about Himself is true. The claims He made about Himself challenge us to believe or reject Him and warn us of the consequences of rejection.

Commented [notes1]: 15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"
Matt 16:15 (NIV)

After the pastors in our community purchased a page in the local newspaper, we received a letter telling us how ignorant we are to believe in the Bible. The person went to a great deal of effort to try to convince us that we are in error. I had the feeling that he or she was trying to convince him or herself. Why?

I don't feel any compulsion to explain why I am not a Buddhist or a Muslim. When I read an article written by leaders of those religions, I don't feel compelled to tell them why they are wrong. But when I read the words of Jesus, there is such certainty in His declarations that they demand that we decide whether or not He was crazy or telling us the mind of our Creator. He is offering us our only hope or He was an egomaniac. That compels us all to make a decision to believe or reject Him. The problem is that many people just don't know what Jesus said about Himself. Our passage today is one in which Jesus clearly described who He is. Understanding how Jewish ears heard the passage will even make it clearer for us and call us to make a decision to hear His words or reject them.

¹⁶ So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. Jesus obeyed the Father and healed the paralyzed man that had been an invalid for 38 years. Instead of marveling that God had shown mercy by miraculously healing the man, the religious leaders were upset that the man was carrying his mat that he had lain on. The man defended himself by telling them that the man who healed him told him to carry the mat. In their eyes, Jesus not only broke the Sabbath command to rest by healing a man who wasn't critically ill, but also by encouraging him to carry his mat. The moving of household items from one place to another was forbidden in their interpretations of the law. Instead of praising God for the miracle of mercy, they attacked the One through whom the miracle came.

¹⁷ Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." Jesus always answers uniquely. Instead of correcting their error in interpretation, He gives them instruction that can solve all their errors. Instead of addressing the evil in their hearts, He offers the words of life that can change their hearts.

The rabbis of that time had come to the conclusion that God is always at work without breaking the Sabbath. He brings the rain, feeds the birds, oversees all things, and yet does not break His own command. They reasoned that these things were easy for God and so it's not really work. When Jesus responded as He did, He put Himself in the "God exclusion" of Sabbath keeping. He was declaring Himself to be a co-laborer with God! (John 14:10) He was saying that their deductions were wrong. God and He are Lord of the Sabbath. (Matthew 12:8)

Commented [notes2]: 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.
John 14:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."
Matt 12:8 (NIV)

To understand why this was so radical, we have to see that the keeping of the Sabbath was one of the key elements of Jewish society that distinguished them from other cultures. There were harsh punishments prescribed in the Laws of Moses for Sabbath breakers. (Exodus 31:14) Jesus was claiming the God exemption! He called God His Father. There are a few examples of God called Father in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 3:4; Psalm 89:6), but Jews of that day only called God "Father" with a descriptive adjective like "heavenly" so that it would not sound blasphemously familiar.

Commented [notes4]: 14 "Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from his people. Ex 31:14 (NIV)

The next verse reveals that they understood exactly what Jesus was saying. ¹⁸ *For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.* Anyone that is ignorant enough to say that Jesus never said He is God needs to read this verse. The people of that culture understood perfectly well even if we don't. The Jews are fiercely monotheistic. The Old Testament has numerous examples of people who took a little too much glory to themselves and were severely punished or died.

Commented [notes5]: 4 Have you not just called to me: 'My Father, my friend from my youth, Jer 3:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 6 For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD? Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings? Psalms 89:6 (NIV)

(2Chronicles 26:19) For anyone to claim equality with God was punishable by stoning. In the Roman world, a son that was of age could represent his father, and thus the Son of God title claimed equality with God. To the Jews, no man represented God! That was a step beyond even the office of prophet.

Commented [notes7]: 19 Uzziah, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry. While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the LORD's temple, leprosy broke out on his forehead. 2 Chron 26:19 (NIV)

¹⁹ *Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.* Moses said something similar in Numbers 16:28. He declared that what he was doing was not his own idea but God's. Jesus is repeating His previous defense in different terms. He is saying that He never acts independently. Acting on our own is what gets us into trouble. He is ever our example in all things. He acts upon what the Father shows Him. He co-labors with the Father, and that is what we should be doing. Henry Blackaby put it well when he wrote, "When God reveals to you where He is working, that becomes His invitation to join Him." Jesus always saw the Father at work and always joined Him. If we are working with the Father, we can't be doing something wrong. It's impossible. Sin is to work against the Father.

Commented [notes8]: 28 Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: Num 16:28 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: Experiencing God; Blackaby and King pg 35

This is one of a few verses that help us understand that Jesus was all God and all man. As a man, He didn't dare do a single thing unless He saw the Father doing it. As God, He was always able to always see what the Father was doing. As men and women, we are to follow His example. He told us very clearly in the 15th chapter of John, "Without me, you can do nothing." (John 15:5) As He depended on the Father, so we must depend on the Son and work with Him. He has given us the Holy Spirit to help us see what He is doing. (John 14:26)

Commented [notes10]: 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5 (NIV)

Jesus went on to say, ²⁰ *For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.* Jesus wasn't holding back. He defended His actions by saying He was working with the Father, but then He went a step further and said that because the Father loves the Son, He shows Him everything He does. (Luke 10:22) No rabbi would ever make an all-inclusive statement like that. It was unfathomable. But then He took it a step further. *Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.* If you thought healing a man that was an invalid for 38 years threatened your positions, wait till you

Commented [notes11]: 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 22 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Luke 10:22 (NIV)

see what is coming! What would it take for them to believe? He was challenging them to consider what they would do when greater miracles take place. What will they do when He walks out of His tomb? (Matthew 28:6)

Commented [notes13]: 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Matt 28:6 (NIV)

²¹ For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. What will you believe if I raise the dead? To the Jewish mind, God was the only One with the power to raise the dead. (1Samuel 2:6; 2Kings 5:7) Elijah was the single exception, and that was one reason they considered him to be one of the greatest prophets. (1Kings 17:22) The text gives credit to the LORD for hearing Elijah's prayer. Jesus claimed He can raise whoever He pleases! Again, He is putting Himself on equal status as the Father, the Giver of life.

Commented [notes14]: 6 "The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. 1 Sam 2:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 7 As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!" 2 Kings 5:7 (NIV)

When I read that verse, I wondered if Jesus meant giving life spiritually or physically. As I read on, I realized He means both! Of course, pleasing the Father is what pleases Jesus. The Father isn't pleased to give rebels life unless they come through the Son and are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:16)

Commented [notes16]: 22 The LORD heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. 1 Kings 17:22 (NIV)

²² Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, First, He claimed to be the Son of God. Then He claimed all His actions are ordained of God. Then He claimed to be the Giver of life. Now He is claiming to be the Judge. The Jews saw God as the Judge. Abraham called God the Judge of the whole earth. (Genesis 18:25) But Jesus is just warming up. Get the flow of this. These religious legalists persecute Jesus because He healed the invalid on the Sabbath. Jesus then just makes one audacious claim after another, but the biggest is in the following verse.

Commented [notes17]: 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 25 Far be it from you to do such a thing--to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Gen 18:25 (NIV)

All judgment is entrusted to Jesus, ²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. Jesus is saying, "Honor me like you honor God! If you don't honor the Son then you don't honor the One who sent Him." Even today if a country rejects an ambassador, they are rejecting that country and its rulers. Jesus is God's ambassador to earth, but He is more than that. He is the exact representation of His being. (Hebrews 1:3) Jesus was declaring Himself to be worthy of worship because He so perfectly represents the Father. This is God's plan. Ignore it to your peril. God is a spirit but is manifest in Christ Jesus. (Colossians 1:15) Honor Jesus; honor God. Worship Jesus; worship God. Reject Jesus and you reject God.

Commented [notes19]: The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. Heb 1:3 (NIV)

If you think that is taking Jesus statement to an extreme, consider what God said through the prophet Isaiah. ⁸ "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. Isaiah 42:8 (NIV) Either Jesus and YHWH are one, or the Jews were right to seek to put Jesus to death. We have to decide. But don't fall for that ignorant line, "Jesus never said He was God." You now know better. But we aren't through. There's more.

Commented [notes20]: 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Col 1:15 (NIV)

²⁴ "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. Jesus begins this and the following statements with amen, amen. It's like saying, "Listen to this unarguable truth!" The Son gives life to whoever He wills. He wills to give it to those who hear His word and believe God who sent Him. That is why it is so important

for you to decide what you will do with Jesus' declaration of who He is. If you have heard it and believe God, Jesus declared you've passed from death to life. (John 3:36)

I remember the day at 5 years old when I passed from death to life. I wanted salvation because of the simple selfish reason that I didn't want to face judgment. Then I heard His word to me. "Don't you want me in your life because of my love for you?" I received His words and believed. At that moment, I passed from death to life. (Colossians 2:13)

We rely so heavily on the expression, "born again" which is only used in the third chapter. (John 3:3) It's a wonderful expression, but it isn't the only expression. We talk about asking Jesus in your heart, an expression from Revelation 3:20 that isn't even about salvation. Here is another way to express how to be saved from being condemned on Judgment Day. Hear Jesus' words and believe God. Jesus' words are from God. He just said He is the Son of God, the life giver, the Judge. You heard it. Do you receive it? Then you've passed from death to life. (Ephesians 2:5) That's Jesus' declaration. Hallelujah!

²⁵ *I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.* The expression is reminiscent of the valley of bones in Ezekiel 37. We were all born dead spiritually but when we hear the words of Jesus, the bones begin to come together. We hear more and the sinews connect with the bones, and then we hear more and muscle connects and then the breath of life enters our once dead spirit and we pass from death to life. "...is coming and has now come..." Future and present because Jesus was present and in the future His word would be recorded by the Apostles and gathered in a book and preached around the world on Sunday mornings like this one. As I share the words of Jesus, the voice of the Son of God, I hear bones rattling. I think the wind is about to blow! (Ezekiel 37:5)

²⁶ *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.* ²⁷ *And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.* Giver of life and Judge of the world! (Genesis 2:7; Psalm 36:9) Just in case they missed it, He said it again. And to help them understand exactly what He meant, He called Himself Son of Man. Our English text has "the" in front of the title, but the original text does not. This is the only place in the New Testament where Jesus refers to Himself as "Son of Man" without a definite article. It is a clear link to the Son of Man passage in Daniel 7:13-14. ¹³ *"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like (a) son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.* ¹⁴ *He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.* What a prophecy to claim to be about Himself! He receives authority and power over all and is worshipped by all! He reigns forever. Who in their right mind would say that was about them alone?

²⁸ *"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice* ²⁹ *and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.* Not only does Jesus speak the words of

Commented [notes21]: 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." [John 3:36 (NIV)]

Commented [notes22]: Colossians 2:13 (NIV) 13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,

Commented [notes23]: 3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." John 3:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. Rev 3:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: Ephesians 2:5 (NIV) 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.

Commented [notes26]: 4 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!' Ezek 37:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 5 This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. Ezek 37:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 7 the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. Gen 2:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 9 For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. Psalms 36:9 (NIV)

life to us and make our spirit come alive, but the day is coming when He will speak to every dead body that ever lived. Then every literal bone will come together and the dead will physically rise. The sheep will be gathered on His right and the goats on His left. (Matthew 25:32-33) The righteous will receive recompense for the things they did while alive on earth. Their judgment was taken care of on the cross. Those who reject the words of Jesus and refuse to believe God will be held accountable for every idle word, for every rejection of the Holy Spirit, and for every selfish act. (Matthew 12:36)

In that day, they will stand before the Man that healed the invalid, the Man they are accusing of breaking the Sabbath and blaspheming, and He will be in all His glory. His head and hair will be white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like blazing fire. His feet will be like bronze glowing in a furnace, and His voice like the sound of rushing waters. Out of His mouth will come a sharp double-edged sword. His face will be like the sun shining in all its brilliance. (Rev 1:14-16 (NIV)) All who rejected His gracious and loving words will fall at His feet as if they were dead.

The language that Jesus used about those rising from the dead to judgment is reminiscent of Daniel 12:2. *Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.* What we do with Jesus' words will determine which it will be for us.

Jesus concludes with this magnificent declaration. ³⁰ *By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.* Our perfect example! O that we would take that as our own motto. *By myself I can do nothing; If we could learn to depend on the Lord, His direction, His strength, and His love, what a difference it would make in our lives. I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just...* I hear too many Christians criticizing their brothers. Is it your judgment or is it the Lord's? Only the Lord's is just. He shares it with the Son because He is the Judge. *I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.* That is the voice of every new heart in Christ Jesus.

Do you want to know how your spiritual growth is coming along? Line your life up along side this last verse. That's our yardstick, the life of Jesus. But do you know the wonderful news is that if you are in Christ, the Father sees your life as that of Jesus. (Romans 3:22) He sees you living that verse because of Jesus' sacrifice in your place. As great as He is, He came down so low, to take our sins upon Himself that we might be made new in Him. (2Corinthians 5:17)

Do you hear the radical claims of Jesus? He is the giver of life. He is the Judge. He is "Son of Man"! Does His life look like that of an egomaniac? Do egomaniacs wash the feet of others and lay down their life? (John 13:5) Jesus is unique in all of history. Now that you know His claims you must decide. You can pass from death to life this morning, just hear Him and believe. (Romans 6:13) He'll do the transforming work in you. I guarantee that you will never regret it! (Romans 10:11) Has anyone ever told you to "get a life"? Well now you know how to get life everlasting, life as it is meant to be lived. Hear Him! (John 10:27)

Commented [notes30]: 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.
Matt 25:32-33 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.
Matt 12:36 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.
15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.
16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.
Rev 1:14-16 (NIV)

Commented [notes33]: 2 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.
Dan 12:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes34]: 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,
Romans 3:22 (NIV)

Commented [notes35]: 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
2 Cor 5:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes36]: 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.
John 13:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes37]: Romans 6:13 (NIV)
13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

Commented [notes38]: 11 As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."
Romans 10:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes39]: John 10:27 (NIV)
27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.