

Easter 2018, Jesus, the One and Only, April 1st

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never went to college. He never travelled more than two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things usually associated with greatness. He was only thirty three...His friends ran away, One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves...While dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing, the only property he had on earth. When he was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen centuries have come and gone, And today Jesus is the central figure of the human race. All the armies that have ever marched, All the navies that have ever sailed, All the parliaments that have ever sat, All the kings that ever reigned put together have not affected the life of mankind on earth, As powerfully as that one solitary life.

There is no denying this reality. Listen, Napoleon, Alexander the Great, George Washington, and because we are in Philly area, Nick Foles, are significant people... but we do not measure time by their birth. Katy Perry and Justin Beiber may have the most Twitter followers today, but I guarantee you that 2000 years from now a 1/3 of world's population won't be gathering to celebrate their significance, like the world is today with Jesus.

It is undeniable that Jesus Christ is the most significant person that has ever lived. So it begs the question: Who is this Jesus?

Who is Jesus? Our world is not lacking opinions about who he is.

Jewish rabbis say that he was a man, a great man, a rabbi, maybe even a prophet
Muslims-Jesus was one of the prophets of Allah, among whom Muhammad was the greatest.

Mormons who say Jesus was a man who worked his way up to being a god, just like you an I can do.

Jehovah's witnesses- Angel of God who was the 1st creation of God.

Eastern Mystics- Jesus was an enlightened soul, a guru, who had attained nirvana

Humanists and Universalists- Jesus was a man who was a great moral and ethical philosopher who tried to help lots of people in a hard world, dying before his time.

You would be hard pressed to find any rational, educated person who completely denies the existence of Jesus because that is just not an option with the history and archaeology we have. They all agree that he was at least a great man...but was he more than that? Who is Jesus?

This was the question that Jesus himself posed to his followers.

Matthew 16:13-15

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say

Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”¹⁵ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Pause here. Let’s put ourselves on that mountainside with Jesus 2000 years ago. What if he asked that question to you? How would you respond? Who is Jesus? Have you stopped to really pay attention to who he is? Have you really taken the time and attention to consider his claims for yourself? As we will see, this is more than just an important question to ask. It is THE most important question you will ever ask and answer. So who is Jesus?

I believe the best way to answer that question is to go to the source, not to what other people think, but what did Jesus claim about himself? Who did Jesus say he was? Jesus said many things about himself but I want to look at **6 Claims of Jesus** that demand a response. (Note take)

1) Jesus claimed to be the Messiah of God sent in fulfillment of Scripture.

Now I have heard people say that Jesus never claimed to be the savior or that he was the fulfillment of Scripture, it was his followers who came up with that. And yet, we find him over and over again in Scripture saying just this!

John 5:37-40

³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, ³⁸ nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. ³⁹ You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

Matthew 26:63-64

The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied.

2) Jesus claimed to be God.

Here is another instance where you will hear that Jesus never claimed to be more than a man, and certainly not God...that was made up later by his followers. There are many examples of his claims, let me just show you two.

John 10:30b-33

I and the Father are one.” (Reference to the OT- Deut 6- The Lord is One) ³¹ Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, ³² but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” ³³ “We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”

John 8:56-59a

⁵⁶ “Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” ⁵⁷ “You are not yet fifty years old,” the Jews said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!” ⁵⁸ “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” ⁵⁹ At this, they picked up stones to stone him.

You say, "Why were they so mad at bad grammar?" It doesn't make sense to us. But in the uttering of the phrase I AM immediately everyone knew exactly who he was claiming to be.

Exodus 3:13-14

¹³Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" ¹⁴God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"

This was the most sacred and holy name of God- I AM. The eternally existing God. In fact, the Jewish people did not even speak this name it was so holy. Jesus could not have stated who he was any more significantly than this.

3) Jesus claimed to have authority to forgive sins.

Context- Jesus was teaching in a home, there was a crippled man who believed that Jesus could heal him but the crowd was so packed he couldn't get into the house, and so his friends figured out a way to lower get him up on the roof and lower him down through the tiles right in front of Jesus! Those are some good friends! Two ways to know if you have good friends- They show up to help you move and they would lower you through a roof if you were sick.

Luke 5:20-25

²⁰ When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." ²¹ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ²² Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?"

²³ Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? ²⁴ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."

²⁵ Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.

-Question: Have you ever sinned?

4) Jesus claimed that he was on a mission of love to rescue us from our sin.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his unique son, that whoever believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.

Mark 10:45

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

There is no greater love than giving your life in place of someone else's is there? One of the heroic stories that came out of the Parkland Florida school shooting was

Football Coach, **Aaron Feis**. When the gunshots started Aaron ran toward the sound not away. He literally used himself as a human shield while multiple students could run to safety. He was there to serve the students, giving his life as a ransom for theirs. There is no greater love. This, times a billion, is what Jesus did. Romans 5:8. Do you know how much God loves you, what more could he do to prove it?

5) Jesus claimed that he would rise from the dead.

Mark 9:31

He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise."

David Blaine claimed that he would get buried alive for 7 days... remarkable feat, but be buried dead for 3 days and then come to life? That's a bit more than a great endurance trick. It's one thing to predict your death, but when and how you will rise?

6) Jesus claimed that he was the only path to God

John 14:6

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Recap: Jesus Claimed:

- 1) Messiah of God sent in fulfillment of Scripture.
- 2) God in the flesh
- 3) Authority to forgive sins
- 4) Mission of love to rescue humanity from their sin.
- 5) Rise from the dead.
- 6) Only path to God.

Jesus' claims set him apart from every other religious leader and philosopher in history. Other religious leaders and philosophers claimed to point to a way to God, Jesus claimed to be the way. Other religious leaders claimed to teach truth, Jesus claimed to be the truth. Other religious leaders claimed to provide a new way of life, Jesus claimed to be the source of life. See we cannot simply say that was just a good moral teacher. The evidence just doesn't allow it. Merely good teachers do not make these claims about themselves. If I said to you, "Be kind to others, love your spouses, do unto others as you would like to be done to you...and also, I'm eternal God who spoke the universe into existence." You wouldn't call me a good moral teacher, you would have other words to describe me. And so in the words of **C.S. Lewis he's either a liar, a lunatic or he is Lord.**

(Blank Slide) You say, "Well anyone can say those things about themselves." Aidan, story of the Hedgehog- named Sprinkles and Prinkles. Anyone can say anything. The proof is in the pudding, Show me the money! How did Jesus back his claims?

He backed his claims that he is exactly who he said he was, Lord, God wrapped in flesh, through his resurrection from the dead, just as he said he would.

Matthew 27:62-66

62 The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. 63 "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' 64 So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day.

Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." 65 "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." 66 So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

A Roman "Guard" was not a Mall Cop, like **Paul Blart**. A Roman Guard, was not one individual. It consisted of fifteen soldiers plus one officer. These soldiers had a deeply vested interest in making sure that nobody stole Jesus' body. Not only was this a high profile crucifixion, if a Roman soldier lost his prisoner, or this case the body of Jesus – he lost his life! Do we really think that a bunch of unarmed, poor women and fishermen could have gotten past these battle-hardened soldiers (who knew their lives were on the line) and stolen the body of Jesus? No Jesus did exactly what he said he would do.

Mark 16:1-6

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb 3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.

5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.

He then appeared to at least 520 eyewitnesses according to Scripture all throughout Jerusalem over the next several weeks before he ascended into heaven. His resurrection ultimately, is Jesus' "Show me the money" moment.

"If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead." –Tim Keller

The resurrection is the lynchpin of our faith because it verifies every claim of Jesus. If Jesus rose from the dead that means he is the Messiah sent by God, that He is the

Eternal God wrapped in flesh, that he does have the authority to forgive sins that separate us from a holy God, that his great love compelled him to come from heaven on a rescue mission so that we can spend eternity with him, and that he is the only way there.

So I take you back to that mountainside 2000 years ago when Jesus asked his followers the question, "Who do you say I am?"

Matthew 16:16-17

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

What do you say? **Who is Jesus?** Is he all that he said he is? Because if he is, there is no greater news, if this is true we should be out of our minds happy and celebrating! It is the most important question and the most important answer in the universe.

Excerpt from "Who is Jesus?" Many people missed Joshua Bell even though he was right in front of their eyes. Why? Because they never really stopped to pay attention to who he really was. Most people were too busy, too caught up in their own little world, own agenda, own devices, to stop, listen and look up...to take in how beautiful and significant this moment and this person really was. Don't make the same mistake with Jesus. Do be so caught up in your life, your agenda, your presuppositions, your timetable...and miss out on the beauty, how beautiful and significant Jesus is.

We want to help you with this. The disciples got to know Jesus by walking with him and observing him. That's what we want to invite you to do.

-**Connection Café**

"Who is Jesus" 80 free copies, if we run out and you give us your info, we will order you a free copy.

-We have a 6 week class starting next Sunday I'm teaching **"Christianity 101"**

-Maybe you say, I still have questions, "How do we know we can trust what the Bible says?" "Is there evidence for the resurrection?", "What does it mean to trust God?" "How can I have assurance that I can go to heaven when I die?" Come to this class!

He is risen! He is risen indeed!