

Who is Jesus?

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[0:00] Who is Jesus?

This is the single most important question that anyone can ask, that anyone here in this meeting this morning can ask. That's a bold statement, but I hope that in 30 minutes time you'll be able to agree that it's a true statement.

Every week in this church we ask and answer this question in different ways, but last Sunday and this Sunday we are asking, who is Jesus in the most direct and clear way that we can?

We ask the question because many people have never asked this question and have no answer.

You might come from a country where very few ask, who is Jesus?

In fact, surprisingly, perhaps you're living in a country now where few people ask this question. And if that is you today, please don't be frightened or ashamed.

[1:06] We're so glad you're here, that you're able to find out and that as a result your life might be different and better. We ask the question because many people only have a part answer.

For instance, Jesus is something to do with Christmas. Or, Jesus was a good man who lived a long time ago. Or perhaps you know that Jesus is also known as Jesus Christ.

And Jesus started a religion called Christianity, Christianity. Now those are part answers. But the trouble with part answers is that they are only a part.

And sometimes people are happy with a part and don't know or aren't interested in the rest. For instance, if I want to make a chocolate cake, I need flour.

That's a part answer. But you won't get any idea of what a chocolate cake looks like or tastes like with that small answer. Or if I just tell you that football is about a ball, you will have no idea what a game of football actually looks like.

[2:23] Or you may feel you have a sufficient answer. You've been going to church for many years. You try to live a good life.

And you would call yourself a Christian. But maybe what you really know most about is not Jesus Christ, but Christianity.

And that might not be the same thing. But how can we get answers? Where should we go? We might study history and see what people have written about Jesus.

Interestingly, many have, including people who lived at the same time as Jesus. The one thing that we can be clear about when we study history is that there was a real man called Jesus who lived about 2,000 years ago in the area that we now know as Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Well, we can look at the story and traditions of the people who became followers of Jesus.

Christians. From a tiny beginning 2,000 years ago, there are now estimated to be 2.3 billion people in this world who follow a Christian tradition.

[3:42] That's more than any other tradition that is or ever has been.

That's one third of the world's population. At the very least, that number might make us think that there is something important here.

What do these people believe? What do they do? How do they show that they are followers of Jesus? How does that relate to 100 years ago or 1,000 years ago?

The stories of the past are very rich and often helpful. But studying history and looking at the stories and traditions of Christian people will only get us a little way and may end up confusing rather than helping us.

Someone says one thing. Someone says another. What is the truth? Can we know? There is a way of avoiding confusion and getting good, clear answers.

And that is to read the Bible. This is a special book. It's special because it's actually a collection of 66 books written by many different people over a space of perhaps 1,500 years.

[4:54] It's even more special because all of it is actually inspired and directed in great detail by God. So that what is in the Bible is exactly what God wants us to know.

And as you read the Bible with God's help, you can see that from beginning to end, it's all about Jesus. It says much to us about God.

It says much to us about ourselves. But most sharply and powerfully, it tells us about Jesus. Here is the question.

Who is Jesus? And it is the Bible where we need to go to get clear, safe and true answers. And there's one more thing I'd like to say about the Bible.

It's not about myths, legends or fairy stories. People from the beginning of time have told each other stories which may or may not have any basis of fact.

[5:58] We do it to maintain traditions, habits and memories. Now the Bible clearly sets out to be read and understood to be about real truth.

Not myths and make-believe, but real truth. Some of this truth we don't or can't see. Some of this truth is so amazing or mysterious that it's hard to grasp.

But it's still truth. So for many people, it's the idea of someone like Jesus that counts. It doesn't matter whether he actually lived or not. The Bible says, no, no, no.

Jesus did live and that really matters. Now this morning I want to speak of ten things that the Bible says about Jesus and illustrate each of these things by phrases from the Bible itself.

One, maker and sustainer. The first book of the Bible is called Genesis, which means beginnings. And the very first words of the Bible are these.

[7:03] In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And it goes on to describe many of the things that God made. How did he do it?

Out of nothing. And just by saying that it should happen. This is the phrase used again and again in Genesis to describe the creating work of God.

And God said, and it came to be. And it was so. So God is the creator or maker of all things. Now thousands of years later, John, one of the followers of Jesus Christ, who knew him very well, wrote this about Jesus as an eyewitness.

From the very first day, we were there. Taking it all in. We heard it with our own ears. We saw it with our own eyes.

Verified it with our own hands. Then he says, the word of life appeared right before our eyes. We saw it happen.

[8:15] He uses this phrase, the word of life. He's calling Jesus the word of life. It's a clear reference to the voice of God which spoke.

And in the words of Genesis, and it came to be. So astonishing is this thought that John then says, and now we're telling you in the most sober prose, that what we witnessed was incredibly this.

The infinite life of God himself took shape before us. That's in the first letter of John. In another place, John says this.

Through him, all things were made. Without him, nothing was made that has been made. Do you see the connection? Jesus is identified with the creator God.

Another Bible writer says this. He sustains all things by his powerful word. The same voice that caused something to come out of nothing is the voice that sustains everything.

[9:27] That means it keeps everything alive now, including you and me. And that voice is identified with Jesus. That first book of the Bible, Genesis, very swiftly goes on to tell of a catastrophe that came upon the world.

The first man and woman were tempted by God's enemy, the devil, to disobey the God who had made them. And when they disobeyed, sin came into the world.

Sin means missing the mark. And that's what we do all the time in respect of God. We do not please him, in fact, the opposite. With that sin came God's judgment of death.

And that sin and death has never left this broken world. It's the explanation for the battered, limited, and ultimately frustrated lives that people live.

At the deepest point is the explanation for what happened in France yesterday. Despite thousands of years of education and technological and artistic progress, we have never been able to break out of the cycle of sin and the judgment that comes with it.

[10:54] Something is deeply and darkly wrong in this world and each one of us. We need to be rescued. We need to be delivered. We need to be saved from our fighting against God and the judgment that has come upon us.

Secondly, promised saviour. Jesus is the promised saviour.

Immediately after the first man and woman disobeyed God, God not only told them of judgment, but of the deliverance they needed. One day, someone would come who would deliver men and women from their sin and judgment.

God said to the devil in the hearing of the man and woman, I will put enmity or warfare between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers.

He will crush your head and you will strike his heel. Someone is going to come who will crush the devil. The shadowy language of the beginning of the Bible becomes clearer and stronger as the years go by, as men and women show by their words and actions how unable they are to rescue themselves.

[12:14] And God again and again, by words and pictures and deeds and promises, says that someone is going to come who will save us. It will be hard, there will be a battle, but this someone will come and fight and he will deliver us.

And that someone is Jesus. He's the promised saviour. Someone who will come and will save us. Now three, God with us.

During the reign of the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, a messenger from God appeared to a young woman living in the town of Nazareth in Israel. Her name was Mary. The messenger told her that although she was a virgin, she would give birth to a boy and she was to call him Jesus, which means the Lord saves.

The time had now come for the promised saviour to be revealed. Matthew, another who knew Jesus, wrote about this. All this took place to fulfil what the Lord said through the prophet.

The virgin will be with a child and will give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us. The maker and sustainer of all, the promised saviour, would now come to earth to live with us.

[13:39] He is God with us and he is Jesus. Jesus is God with us. Four, perfect man.

We know from the Bible stories written by contemporaries and followers of Jesus what he said and what he did. Not everything, but definitely enough. He lived for approximately 33 years.

Little is written about the first 30 years, but a great deal about the last three. Many, many people saw and heard him. Some loved him, others hated him.

He met all types and ages of people, people in every circumstance of life, often people who were desperate, sad, diseased, busy, fearful, worldly.

In those years, he didn't live alone, but closely and day by day with 12 men. People looked very carefully at him. Some tried to test his character, to annoy him, to trip him up, to find his failures.

[14:46] He lived under the spotlight. At the end of his life, he was arrested on false charges, but they couldn't find anything bad to say about him.

Looking back on all that he had seen and heard, one of those 12 said of him, he went around doing good. And again, and remarkably, he committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth.

These are astonishing words. We sin. We all sin. We sin every day and in all ways. But he committed no sin.

No thought sins, no attitude sins, no word sins, no deed sins. He is the one and only perfect man. Five.

He is a sin bearer. Although he had done nothing wrong, he was condemned to death and was executed like a criminal on a Roman cross. A horrible death.

[16:00] Death. But why did he die? Death is God's judgment upon sin. But Jesus was the perfect man and had done no sin.

Not one. But he tells himself why he had to die. To give his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus knew precisely why he had come to this world. Coming as the promised saviour to die for us. This was prophesied in the Bible 600 years before Jesus was born.

But the writer speaks of it as a done deed. He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him.

And by his wounds we are healed. One of his followers looked back on that terrible day of Jesus' death and said, he himself bore our sins in his body.

[17:08] On the cross he represented us. He took our sin on himself and received the punishment of death for that sin. The full justice of God came upon him.

The punishment that we deserve was put on him. Jesus became the sin bearer. It was hard. It was terrible.

It was a battle. But he did it. And he did it for us. Six, death defeater. To all appearances this looked like the end.

A magnificent example of selfless sacrifice. But two days later some women coming to the tomb where the dead body of Jesus had been placed to embalm the body found it empty.

A messenger of God appeared to them. He's not here. He's risen. Not to vanish but to appear again and again over the next 40 days to his followers in small and large groups indoors, outside.

[18:18] The same Jesus but different with a new and a glorious body. Later on his follower Peter reflecting on this would say it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

and again God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of this fact. This fact.

This proof that Jesus was all that he said he was. Christians trust in the one who is God with us the perfect man who became the sin bearer for us and defeated death for us.

Whatever he did he did for us that we might be forgiven our sin accepted by God and enjoy eternal life. Jesus is the death defeater.

Seven. King of kings. When Jesus died an ironic sign was crudely fixed to the cross upon which he was executed and it read this Jesus king of the Jews it was put there as a joke and a warning an example to others who thought they were something whereas the real power lay with the Roman emperor but actually it was no joke it was a fact and the beginning of an even greater fact Jesus the resurrected Jesus is a king not only so but the king of kings there is no one greater because of what he did by his life death and resurrection there is no one greater he is the ruler of all kings and their kingdoms will rise and fall the kingdom of Jesus grows greater and greater and when all other kingdoms have vanished his will remain forever and ever and one day we'll see this with our own eyes and on that day we will know how true this is therefore

[20:33] God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name honor praise and follow Jesus now there is no one greater than him eight spirit giver to be a follower of Jesus is not something superficial a hobby a passing interest it's a matter of the heart it's something that affects us in the deepest and most enduring way it's something that once begun can never end it affects the whole of our lives our desires our hopes our ambitions our priorities and our relationships it's so total and so transforming that the Bible calls the start of this a new birth Jesus himself said to someone who was interested in this you must be born again born again but how this is not reincarnation it's a new creation which

Jesus does by sending the spirit of God into us God with us God in us this is exactly what Jesus promised his followers on the night before he was crucified he said I will send him the spirit to you you and I need the spirit of God in our lives have you experienced this nine judge of all we don't see Jesus now but one day we will he's coming back to the world again and everybody will see him then not just those who are alive when he comes back but everyone who has ever lived you and I will see him that's an amazing thought not as the man of

Galilee but the king of kings and then the judge of all because when he returns there will be no more sin bearing no more spirit giving but a day of judgment when he will judge each of us and either find reason to welcome or to reject us man is destined to die once and after that to face judgment says the Bible that day is coming as surely as the day when the child was born so the judge of all is coming and ten alpha and omega how great is this Jesus here's some words from the

last book of the Bible Jesus speaking of himself he says I am the alpha and the omega who is and who was and who is to come the almighty yet again

I am the alpha and omega the first and the last the beginning and the end alpha and omega these are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet these the beginning and the end he is there he's present he's active he's ruling he's reigning Jesus is inescapable there is no one like him heaven his home is now deafened by this praise you are worthy our Lord and God to receive glory honor power for you created all things by your will they were created and have their being ten truths about Jesus Christ I've spoken about people who became followers of Jesus and I've asked two people who are Jesus followers to tell us what

Jesus means to them so Martin please come Chris has asked me to say a few words about what Jesus means to me my memory tricks with me a bit these days so I've written it down and I'll just read it what I would like to say I think at different stages in our spiritual history Jesus means different things to us I won't explain for lack of time but at this time in my life I've been impressed by the example set by Jesus as the one who came to do his father's will saw it through and has reaped and is reaping the reward of what that meant that is the good and acceptable and perfect will of [26:11] God so the good will of God prophetically it says of Jesus here I am I have come I desire to do your will oh my God your law is within my heart so he came to do God's will because it was good his relationship with his father demonstrated throughout his life that he knew the father's will was good I like all of us I guess will always say that God's will is good because he is God it's an objective thing for us that we would all say that God's will is good but what about the acceptable will of God the crunch comes when I think about the acceptable will of God can I accept God's will for me in whatever I'm going through this is very much a matter of experience and can be hard says of

Jesus in Hebrews 5 that he learned obedience from what he suffered good passage that on this point but we won't read it because of time it was not that he had to learn to obey on account of who he was but the passage shows he was and is a real man and learned the experience of what subjection to his father's will was through what he was going through as a man and Chris has told us some of that God's will was acceptable to him in Gethsemane before the crucifixion he asked his father to take away what he had to go through on the cross if it were possible that he said not my will but yours be done he accepted what the father's will was in spite of what it would cost him! When it comes down to me though what I've gone through recently and for several years being contented and accepting God's will I found not easy have I been able to say God's will is acceptable Paul said that I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation he had suffered in so many ways but he had learned to accept God's will whatever it meant for him I would love to be like that just as I read it thinking of Paul said in one situation that he asked the Lord three times to remove his thorn for the flesh only three times and the

Lord said my grace is sufficient so that the Lord knows that we have problems in this area of accepting his will and in his grace he has set us in families without our church family here which has given me so much support I don't know how I would have been able to cope let us not be so secretive as to not talk to our brothers and sisters about what we go through the words says he knows that we are dust Jesus understands our frailty and has given us a family here to support us and to help us to accept his will so as we think of the perfect will of God Jesus went through suffering throughout his life but on the cross as we've been hearing about and you know one thing that kept him going

Hebrews 12 we're told it was for the joy set before him that he endured the cross scorning its shame what was that joy it was that he would have thousands and thousands of people who would love him and commit their lives to him and be with him in heaven for eternity he can look back on what he went through and say it was worth it I still have to look back on what I'm currently going through and see what God's purpose has been but I can say that looking back on my life I can see the way the Lord Jesus has guided me through many trials and difficulties and were it not for depending on him

[31:38] I doubt if I could have survived that makes me realise that I need to accept his will because I know it will turn out right in the end no matter how hard so to say God's will is perfect is again a matter of

our experience we're told again in Hebrews that the father chastens the son who he loves and at the time is not pleasing so if any of us are going through issues in our lives it's because we are loved and it will have a positive result we will look back and see the perfect will of

God Paul was in prison when he wrote to the Philippians and he says the way things have worked out are for the furtherance of the gospel he looked back on what he had suffered and saw the working out of God's perfect will so what Jesus means to me at the present time is that I truly want to follow his example of one who knew the good and acceptable and perfect will of God and I can rely on him to see me through to the end accepting his will and looking forward to seeing the outcome and realize his will is perfect I trust we will all have that experience

I also asked Alessandra to tell us what Jesus means to her I think it's okay I was asked to tell you who Jesus is to me the answer is Jesus is my friend for the past months I have met many people and when I meet new people the first information I usually share about myself is my name and that is usually followed by my country of origin which leads the conversation to the explanation of why I am living in England which finally requires me to say what my profession is even after all this information people don't know who I am people don't know who I really am and we don't become friends

I guess what I'm trying to say is that even though I know Jesus name I know where he comes from I know the reason why he came to earth and I know that sorry and I know what his job is this is not what makes us friends Jesus is my friend because he's to me more than the son of God who saved me from eternal death raised after his death and operates miracles Jesus is to me a personal friend he is whom I can trust to whom I can ask for guidance he will reach out to me whenever I need and Jesus wants to know me way deeper than my name nationality profession and occupation it doesn't matter who I am or what I do he wants to know me and the fact that I also want to know him in a deeper way makes us a perfect match and the result of it is an eternal life enduring friendship thank you both we're all so different aren't we and

Jesus has a place for each one of us this all leaves us with a serious thought and a challenge and an opportunity just a few minutes ago you may not have known anything about Jesus or just a little now you know more if these ten things about Jesus are true there's something you need to do something that you need to ask God to do in you you may be in a place where you are already a follower of Jesus but need to get closer to him every day Jesus asks us to follow him in old and new ways there may be some area of your life where you need to obey him some forgiveness to be offered to someone else some sin habit to be confessed and put away some act of deliberate obedience that you've been putting off perhaps to be baptized or to commit to fellow

[37:47] Christians by becoming a member of the church possibilities are enormous you may be someone who wants to find out more maybe to read some of the Bible and I encourage you to read a part of the Bible so we've got a number of copies of Luke Luke gives a clear account as a follower of Jesus a contemporary of Jesus Christ who lived with him one of the twelve he tells the story of Jesus life and there are copies of this book and they're quite free they're on that table over there please take a copy please read this account please ask God to show you what you need to know concerning Jesus you may be in a place where you know that you need to give your life to Jesus to ask him to be a sin bearer and a spirit giver for you so that you might become his follower today we're going to pray a prayer that you can join in and say amen to at the end and if that is your prayer you need to tell someone here about that so that you can establish that commitment and follow up on that new beginning so a further step need to find out more need to give your life to

Jesus we reflect soberly on the fact that yesterday 129 people in Paris were living their lives with full expectation that they would have more life but their lives were fatally cut short suddenly irretrievably and none of us knows what other opportunities we may have to get ourselves right with God to be able to face the judge of all with the confidence confidence that he has received accepted and forgiven us it is important I said at the beginning this is the most important question that anyone can ever face in their lives and it is the most important question for you today so this is the prayer we could bow our heads perhaps oh God you know me you know my need because of

Jesus his perfect life his death and resurrection please forgive my sin and put your Holy Spirit in me that I might live for you only all the days of my life and be with you forever amen we're going to finish with this