

Who Is This Jesus

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[0:00] This morning we're going to look at an important topic, namely, who is this Jesus? You may remember that Jesus calmed the storm in Matthew chapter 8, 27.

As a result of that, the disciples asked, What sort of a man is this that even the wind and sea obey him? They know that he's a teacher, and a teacher can do lots of things.

I have been a teacher for 40 years, and I can do lots of things. But when you get your degree, they don't give you authority to calm the sea.

If you want to come with me, we'll go after the service, we'll go to the lake, and I'll command the lake to be still, and you'll quickly see how silly I am.

So, Jesus is a teacher. He's the rabbi. But he must be more than a rabbi. So, what kind of a person is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?

[1:12] They're asking themselves. Well, they are going to get a final exam, because Jesus is going to ask them at the Mount of Transfiguration, Who do people say I am?

And then he turns and asks that sticky question, Who do you say I am? Well, I mean, one answer is, we don't know. That's what we're asking. We've been asking ourselves for eight chapters.

Who are you? They haven't gotten to that point yet. They're in the middle. They're between, what kind of a man is this that even the wind obey him, and the point, you are the Christ, the son of the living God.

They are transitioning in their understanding and grasp of who Jesus is. So, in chapter 12, we have three wonderful answers.

So, I thought I would begin by asking you this. Okay? Don't write anything. Just keep it in your mind. Number two, I want you to think of a very famous Hollywood actor.

[2:29] Number three, I want you to think of a famous governor of California. And the answer is Arnold Schwarzenegger.

So, who is he? Is he a bodybuilder, as in his youth? Is he the Hollywood actor? Or is he the governor of California?

Or is he the failed TV personality? There is no simple answer to that. If you just choose one answer, you're not getting the whole picture.

You need to see all these things to understand who Schwarzenegger is. The same is true of Jesus. One answer is not enough.

It does not give you a rounded picture of Jesus. So, what happens in Matthew, chapter 12, is that we have a phrase that is repeated three times.

[3:34] That phrase is someone greater than X, Y, or Z is here. So, let's look up those three verses and figure out what Jesus, this is Jesus speaking, figure out what Jesus think he is.

If anybody knows who Jesus is, you assume that Jesus knows. And he does. And so, we have first of all, in verse 6, someone greater than the temple is here.

In verse 41, someone greater than Jonah is here. And in the next verse, someone greater than Solomon is here.

temple, Jonah, Solomon. Jesus is referring to the Old Testament. The Old Testament is three times the size of the New Testament.

There are thousands of verses. Of all the things to refer to, why does he refer to these three rather than some other three? David, Isaiah, Jehoiakim.

[4:50] Why does he refer to temple, Jonah, and Solomon? For the simple reason, Solomon was a king, Jonah was a prophet, and the temple is where the priests ministered.

You have prophet, priest, king. In Deuteronomy 17, God wants to establish his own kingdom. But he doesn't want his kingdom to be just like any other earthly kingdom. You know, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Amorites, et cetera, et cetera. He wants his kingdom to be unique and special, to reflect him as God and Lord over his kingdom.

A theocracy. Not a monarchy, but a theocracy. The kingdom of God. Not the kingdom of Solomon, not the kingdom of David, but the kingdom of God.

So, in order to make it reflect him, he institutes three offices or three organizations or three institutions.

[6:02] The priesthood, the prophets, and the kings. So, Deuteronomy talks about prophet, priest, and king.

And what Jesus says in Matthew 12, that he, that someone is he. He himself is greater than all the Old Testament prophets, he is greater than all the Old Testament priests, and he is greater than all the Old Testament kings.

Kings. Someone greater than. So, what, to the, to the question, who is this Jesus? Well, he is lots of other things, but at least he is prophet, priest, and king, and the greatest one, the greatest prophet, the greatest king, the greatest priest.

priest. Let's take a look at each one of those three, someone greater than. The first one is someone greater than the temple is here.

It's, it's the Sabbath and the priests, and the disciples are hungry, so they are gleaming, they're like harvesting, and the Pharisees, chapter 12, as Mike said, is filled with tension, it's filled with conflict.

[7:28] Jesus and the Pharisees argue about everything, and the first one that comes up is, why are you disciples doing this? Because it's not right. And so, Jesus responds by saying, look at what David did, and look at what the priests did.

David ate food that was consecrated for the priests. He, David, David himself, is not a priest, so he is eating priestly food even though he shouldn't.

And you can say, well, that's wrong. And the priests work on the Sabbath in the temple, and that's work. And so, they're wrong, too.

So, in a superficial reading of this passage, you will conclude that David was wrong, and the priests were wrong. But that's not what's going on, because Jesus gives us an insight to why it is not wrong.

And the insight is from Hosea 6.6, I desire mercy, not sacrifice. So, if David is hungry, what is the merciful thing for the priest to do?

[8:43] Just say to him, go hungry, or to feed him. If it is more merciful to feed him, to give him food, then Jesus is also more merciful by allowing the disciples to eat as well.

David is hungry and he eats, the disciples are hungry and they eat. It's a parallel situation. But what about working on the Sabbath? The priests, by giving David food, fulfill his physical needs.

They are meeting his physical needs, hunger. But what about working on the Sabbath? On the Sabbath, well, on every day of the week, they had to offer certain sacrifices to consecrate the temple.

That is to say, to keep the temple holy so that it could be a place of worship. On the Sabbath, they offered all the ones that they normally offer every day, plus two more lambs.

And furthermore, they needed to bake the bread, take away the old bread, bake the new bread, and present it to God. And if a child needed to be circumcised, he would need to be circumcised too on the Sabbath.

[9:58] They had to do all this work. Why isn't that allowed? Why is that allowed? Because by consecrating the temple, they make it possible for people to come to God and receive forgiveness of sins.

So the person would say, I'm a sinner, I have disobeyed you, O Lord, please forgive me. And the priest, as mediators between God and man, serve in such a way that he can receive God's forgiveness.

Food meets our physical needs. forgiveness meets our what? Spiritual needs. So the priests are acting in a merciful way, both in terms of basic physical needs and, much more important, spiritual needs.

They are showing mercy in both areas. And what does God want? God wants mercy. mercy. I want you to really understand that God wants mercy.

I want to develop this point some more. There's a very important thing that was going on in rabbinic Judaism. What's going on is this.

[11:21] In the Torah, there are 613 commandments. 613. So the rabbis, naturally, since they have nothing else to do, ask themselves, can we list those 613 in order?

From the lowest to the highest. From the least important to the most important. The least important are called the lighter, and the most important are called the weightier, and they went at it and did it. The least important commandment is this, number 613, at the bottom, the very bottom. If you're walking in the forest, and you see a small bird that has fallen from its mother's nest, pick up the bird, climb the tree, put it back in its mother's nest.

That's number 613. You know what number 612 is? If you climb to the nest and you see lots of eggs, don't take all the eggs and say, God is going to give us omelette for breakfast. don't take all the eggs, leave some for the future, so that at least that family doesn't become extinct. So that's 612.

[12:41] What are the top? Well, usually when rabbis discuss these things, I find it historically interesting, but I don't make any spiritual commitment to what rabbis decide, except in this case, Jesus also is involved in this discussion.

And that discussion is in Matthew 23, 23. Matthew 23, 23. Remember, lighter means the bottom of the list, heavier means the top of the list.

So here Jesus gives us his answer to what are the really important commandments. So in Matthew 23, 23, Jesus says, Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites, you tithe, you give a tenth of your spices, mint, dill, and cumin, but you have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

Not paying taxes, mowing the lawn, changing clothes. Justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

What's in the middle of those three? Mercy. Mercy is what Jesus considers at the top of the list. Where is he quoting from?

[14:19] He is quoting from Micah, chapter 6, verse 8. Micah begins by asking, with what shall I come before the Lord?

And then he comes with an answer. He has told you, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you? Justice, mercy, and walking with your God.

God. In Matthew, Hosea says, God says, I desire mercy.

So God desires mercy. In Micah, it's slightly different. Micah is asking, what should I do? And the answer is, he has showed you, O man, to do justice, to do mercy, and to walk.

So God desires mercy, and God wants us to desire mercy. Mercy is important to him, and it is important to us. And Jesus says, the priests are serving with mercy.

[15:26] They are taking care of physical needs, they are taking care of spiritual needs. But the statement is, someone greater than the temple is here.

how is Jesus greater than the temple? Well, in Israel, in the Old Testament, Israel failed to keep the covenant.

They disobeyed God, they forsook him, they abandoned him, they pursued other gods, they broke the Ten Commandments constantly, and so God sent them to exile.

That was the big punch. so they ended up in exile. The reason they ended up in exile is because of their sins.

In relationship to the temple, by sinning, they could sin in an even very specific way in relationship to the temple itself. listen to the words of Jeremiah 7:11.

[16:32] Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight? You should recognize the words, den of robbers.

robbers. They were abusing the temple and making it a place where all of these criminals hide. So they sin, and they hide in the temple, and everybody would see them in the temple, and they say, oh, they're religious people, how wonderful.

You remember when Jesus cleansing the temple, he says, my father's house is called as a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.

the temple can be abused. Secondly, the enemy can destroy it, and indeed in 586, the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem and captured it and destroyed the temple, and so when they came back from captivity, they needed to rebuild the temple.

In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed the temple, so people can abuse it, our enemies can destroy it, but what is worse is what happened in Ezekiel.

[17:54] Ezekiel has a vision in which God abandons the temple. The glory of God moves up, moves out of the temple, out of the city, out of the country, and goes away.

So, the underlying imagery in Ezekiel is the departure of the glory of God. God has abandoned us. Will he ever come back? So, people can abuse it, enemies can destroy it, and God can abandon it, can abandon it.

But even when the temple is being used correctly, it has limited access to God. The outer court, the holy place, and the most holy place.

God sat enthroned on his throne above the Ark of the Covenant, Testament. But only one person, only once a year, could that person come before God.

[19:00] Once a year, one person, out of a population of two and a half million. That's really restricted access to God. What does Jesus do?

He removes all these obstacles. By dying on the cross, he opens a way for us to enter, and that is reflected in the tearing of the curtain from top to bottom.

It is saying no more restrictions, everybody is welcome, come in. The temple houses God. So what happens when the temple is destroyed?

Where is God now? Where is God now? With Jesus, it is Emmanuel.

Emmanuel. Emmanuel. What does Emmanuel mean? God is with us. Where is God? God is with us. Where with us? Here in Jesus.

[20:04] Jesus is greater than the temple because he is where God is. He is where God is. Moving on to the no, not moving on, still.

What happens if we keep the Sabbath correctly? That is, if we do on the Sabbath what God wants us to do on the Sabbath, namely to rest, but to show mercy.

Rest doesn't mean you just sit on the sofa and don't do anything for 24 hours. rest. It's not that people who are in coma are the best believers. That's not.

If we observe the Sabbath correctly, we rest. I want you to go to chapter 11, verse 28.

Go back to Matthew chapter 11, verse 28. This great invitation is, come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.

[21:18] Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. Rest in Matthew 11, rest in Matthew 12.

How do we find this rest that Jesus promises in chapter 11? Clearly first by coming to him, but then by accepting his teaching on how things are.

so, moving on then to the next title, someone greater than, it is someone greater than Jonah.

And the next verse, someone greater than Solomon. Solomon. Why did he choose Jonah and Solomon? Why didn't he choose Isaiah and Josiah?

Why not Hezekiah and Jehoshaphat? Why these two? Why Jonah and Solomon?

[22:39] Solomon? Because if we look at Jonah and Solomon, we see something. Let's look at this passage.

Let's read it. In Matthew 23, I'm sorry, Matthew 12, verse 41. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah and now one greater than Jonah is here.

The queen of the south will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom and now one greater than Solomon is here.

If we look at the men of Nineveh and the queen of the south, we can see both similarities and differences.

Let's take a look at the obvious differences. How does the queen of the south differ from the men of Nineveh? The most obvious one is that she is a woman and they are men.

[23:54] She is royalty, she is a queen, they are just commoners. If she is queen, I suspect she is rich. If they are average citizens, I suspect they are not rich.

They are just, anybody here rich? I am not rich. If she is queen, then she is famous and important. If you are average citizen, nobody knows you. I go to city hall to pay city taxes and they don't even know who I am. I felt so offended.

I thought they would put the red carpet and blow the trumpet. Samir is coming, Samir is coming. They couldn't care less. but the most important difference between the queen and the people is that she came to Jerusalem to hear Solomon.

The men of Nineveh did not come. Jonah went to them. They came. He went. But the same result took place.

[25:13] They both heard the word of God. They both heard the word of God. They both believed in God.

They both had faith, expressed their faith in them. You can see that in 1 Kings chapter 10. And Jesus says, they will both stand up with this generation and condemn it.

She came to hear Solomon. Solomon. Not Jesus, but Solomon. She came to hear Solomon.

Look at Matthew 11, 28. What does Jesus say? Come to me. And she came. Not to Jesus because he wasn't even born yet, but to Solomon.

and she heard the word of God. And they heard the word of God and repented and God spared Nineveh.

[26:18] And so, what should we conclude? What should we think in the light of all of these things? Let me suggest three things.

number one, we need to start to ask ourselves, who is this Jesus?

And the answer is, it's a complex answer. It's not a simple answer. Jesus calls himself the son of man. He does. But Jesus is the one who is greater than Old Testament kings.

Jesus is one greater than Old Testament prophets. And Jesus is greater than Old Testament priests.

Who is Jesus? He is the one who is greater than everything in the Old Testament. I thought he was bold when he says no one knows the father except me.

[27:33] Boy, Jesus doesn't have any limits. I mean, when he goes, he goes. He runs with it. Nobody knows the father except me. I am greater than all the prophets.

I am greater than all the priests. I am greater than all the kings. You can imagine the poor disciples thinking, boy, who is this guy?

And the answer, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. We should think big of Jesus.

Jesus isn't just your friend. He is our friend. But he isn't just your friend. He is a lot more than that. He isn't just your body.

He isn't just the one who is there. He is this but he is a lot more than that. There is no one or nothing, no person and no institution greater than Jesus.

[28:38] Someone greater than Solomon is here. Someone greater than Jonah is here. Someone greater than the temple is here. The second point, and I want you to reflect about this.

Look at what happens to the gospel. The gospel does not differentiate. It doesn't matter whether you are a woman or a man.

It doesn't matter whether you are a royalty or whether you are a commoner. It doesn't matter whether you are rich or whether you are poor.

It doesn't matter whether you are famous or not famous. it doesn't matter whether you are highly regarded by society or not highly regarded by society.

It doesn't matter whether you came to hear the gospel or the gospel went out to you. I became a Christian because I was really interested in the truth.

[29:44] So rather than majoring in medicine as all my family wanted me to do I wanted to know the truth. So foolishly I majored in philosophy and then God changed that.

So I majored in philosophy because I was searching for the truth. Other people aren't searching for anything. You are minding your own business and I sit next to you and I say have you heard of Jesus?

As we did with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and Campus Crusade and Navigators you go up to total stranger and you interrupt his life and some people are searching and they come and some people are not searching and God comes to them.

It doesn't matter how you hear the gospel you hear the gospel. And the third thing you need to remember is now that I have either come or it has come to me what do I do next?

What do I do next? Look at the queen of Sheba what she did look at the Ninevites what they did and look at what Jesus tells us to do.

[31:04] 41 verse 41 the men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah and now one greater than Jonah is here what do we need to do we need to repent we disobey God we ask his forgiveness we repent what did she do the queen of the south will rise on the judgment with this generation and condemn it because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom and now one greater than Solomon is here she listened not just for curiosity if you look at 1st Kings 10 she confesses that God is the Lord a Gentile confessing that God is Lord we call that conversion they repented she listened what does

Jesus tell us to do go back to 11 28 come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light what should we do we should come to Jesus that is what God is asking us to do why should we come to Jesus because he knows the father because he is greater than the priests he is greater than the prophets and he is greater than the kings he is it nobody is greater than Jesus have a high opinion of Jesus not low but high the highest you can come up with that is who

Jesus is let's have a word of prayer thank you father for these brothers and sisters thank you for many of us whom you have extended your grace to and allowed us to come and repent and listen thank you because we belong to your family thank you because you have extended your mercy to us by meeting our physical needs and our spiritual needs father we pray as a church that you would help us to take this great treasure that you have bestowed on us and share it with our community help us to know how best to minister what is the most effective way of ministering and may you bless our efforts to honor you I ask this father in Jesus name amen