

# Who Do You Say Jesus Is

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[ 0 : 01 ]     Page 844, Mark 8, and I want to look with you at that little section beginning of verse 27, a little section in which Jesus says to his disciples, verse 29, but who do you say that I am? Who do you say that I am?

Well, this first Sunday of 2019, this first Lord's Day of this new year, well, it's very, very appropriate that, you know, each one of us uses this opportunity to examine our hearts, for you and for me to test our hearts, to test our faith and to test our understanding of this most important question to be asked.

Who do you say Jesus is? Not who do you say Jesus was or who do you say Jesus might have been, but who do you say Jesus is?

Because you're confronted with a question that tests your heart. You're confronted with a question that the answer to which surely reveals where your heart truly lies in relation to the Lord Jesus.

Have you entered another year with that saving knowledge of the living Lord Jesus as Lord and Savior? Have you come into this new year with your Savior, with the Lord Jesus?

[ 1 : 29 ]     Have you come into this new year with Him who came for you, who gave His life for you, so that you can acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior, as the Son of God, as the Son of Man, who came to give His life for you?

Well, again, we'll look at that, these designations are something, particularly that designation of Jesus in a little while, the Son of Man. We'll come back to that maybe, yes, later.

But what is your testimony at this time of year, at this new year? I mean, I'm sure you've got many connections, many associations that you're more than happy to speak about, you know, in relation to yourself, whether it be in relation to yourself and your family, relation to yourself to a particular church or denomination or work or something you belong to.

But what is of true, utmost importance in your very life, in your very soul, has to be your relationship, your eternal relationship, your eternal connection with the Lord Jesus.

Can you say, He's my Lord and my Savior? Can you say, He came for me? Can you proclaim this year that the Lord Jesus is Savior?

[ 2 : 49 ]     Or do you have no faith to declare Jesus a Savior and Lord? Who do you say Jesus is? It's a question that none of you can avoid.

This is a direct question. You know, think of an arrow. Think of an arrow that directed a particular target. Well, that question's like an arrow. It's firing straight where?

It's firing straight at you. You might say it's firing straight at your heart. And it's an arrow you can't avoid. You can't run away from. You can't dodge. Because it's pointing straight at you.

It's a question which you have to respond to. Whether indeed you know Jesus. For who He is. For who He has revealed Himself as.

Or whether you're still to know Jesus. As He's made Himself known in His Word. And when you think of this question. Notice that this question was given.

[ 3 : 45 ] You notice even in the middle of this. Middle of a chapter. It's not, you know, it's not just in isolation. You see, everything in Jesus' public ministry. Has been leading up to this point in His mission.

You know the key stages in Jesus' ministry. His baptism. Obviously His birth. His baptism. His temptation. His temptation in the wilderness. Calling His disciples.

And then the ongoing work of preaching. And teaching. And healing. And, you know, through that ministry of Jesus already. Crowds have followed Him. Crowds have been eager to follow Him.

And, you know, they've given a generally positive response to Jesus. Other people, religious leaders, they've considered Jesus even demonic.

But, time and again, Jesus has, what Jesus has been doing has demanded a decision about who Jesus is. And it's come to this point, as Mark records for us here in the middle of chapter 8.

[ 4 : 48 ] In this recognizing who Jesus is. I mean, the disciples up to this point, they've come close to identifying Jesus as Messiah. As the one sent from God.

Remember when Jesus was walking on the water and they said, Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey Him? But then, that was it. So, if you like, between the beginning of Mark's Gospel.

I mean, Mark has written there of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah. As the Anointed One. To this point where Peter recognizes that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One.

Up to that point between the beginning of Mark's Gospel and here in the middle of chapter 8. There's been no acclaim of Jesus as the one sent from God, as Messiah, as Christ.

So, I mean, the evidence has been there. Jesus has preached, He's taught, He's healed. Because all these things, of course, are pointed to Jesus and His divine authority. But up to this point, there's been no recognizing Jesus as the one sent from God, the Anointed sent from God.

[ 5 : 54 ] Until this point when Jesus confronts His disciples with this question that none of them and none of us can avoid. So, if you like, we've come to the center.

We've come to the central part of this Gospel. The events in Jesus' ministry have come to this point, come to this stage. And Jesus has been revealed, made known more than ever before.

So, the importance of this question stands out. Because it's going to reveal Jesus' identity. And it's going to reveal your identity, my identity, who you are, who I am in relation to the Lord Jesus.

So, listen carefully to what Jesus asks. Yes, He's asking about Himself. But it's more than just, you know, for the disciples to, you know, to list, you know, what they think about Jesus.

It's a question that concerns their heart, your heart, my heart. It concerns who you are. Who you are in relation to the Lord Jesus. Because it concerns your very life.

[ 7 : 04 ] Whether your life is in Christ. Or whether your life is outside of Him. So, listen. Listen carefully as we probe this question. The first thing we need to probe is where Jesus asks the question.

The place of the question. I love place names. I absolutely love place names. When I taught in Skye, I used to do a course, a little mini course on the Viking place names in Skye.

The origins of, you know, place names like Uig, for example. And if you're from Skye or Lewis or whatever part of the Highlands. You know there's so much there in the place names from a Norse origin, a Viking origin.

Of course, not just Lewis, it's Harris, the Highlands. I mean every part of Scotland, you know, is so rich in place names. These names that go back many centuries that, you know, indicate maybe reasons why a place was given a particular name.

Some places are given names because of an important person. You know, a village or a town named after a particular person. In America, for example, a lot of places, a lot of small towns, maybe even large cities are named after important individuals.

[ 8 : 16 ] So the obvious one would be Washington. But when we, and that's, there's a purpose in all of this. When we see Mark telling us in verse 27 that the place where Jesus was on his way to, the area where Jesus was on his way to, it's there that Jesus asked this particular question.

And it's not just a random, you know, asking in a random place. We're told, verse 27, we're told that Jesus asked this question on his way to Caesarea Philippi.

Caesarea Philippi was the capital of this area in the north of the country. This place given by the Romans, because the Romans were the occupiers at the time, given to one of the Herods, the sort of sub-rulers if you like.

Herod, Herod Philip, given to this place, given to Herod Philip. And Herod built this capital to honour the Caesar, to honour the emperor, Caesar Augustus.

This was the Caesar that ruled the Roman Empire when Jesus was born. And so Herod gave the name Caesarea, okay, after Caesar Augustus. But of course in his arrogance and his pride, he wanted to put his own name attached to it as well.

[ 9 : 36 ] So Caesarea Philippi, as I said, this is Herod Philip, so there's the place name. But it's more than just an interest in, you know, understanding why a name has come about. It's so relevant to what we're considering about the Lord Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Because the place, this place named Caesarea Philippi, even these two names indicated human power. That place named Caesarea Philippi indicated human power, earthly rule, earthly authority.

In fact, people that, you know, as you know in the Roman Empire, people spoke of Caesar as Lord. So in that very place, in that place, and this was quite a distance from Jerusalem, it was even distinct from Galilee itself.

This is where Jesus is first publicly acknowledged as Lord, as Messiah. So in contrast to the rulers of the day, in contrast to even Caesar Augustus, in contrast to those rulers who boasted of their own divinity, who spoke of themselves as gods and wanted other people to think of them as gods.

I mean, even in contrast to Herod, this Herod Philip, and every other Herod who boasted of power and wanted favours for themselves. Jesus is being proclaimed as the true Lord, the true King, the true Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One from God.

[ 11 : 06 ] Something that no earthly ruler could surpass and can surpass in greatness. Now bring all this to ourselves.

You might say we're living in a modern day Caesarea Philippi. We're living in a, you know, a time when the cult of power and success and status and self-love and money and wealth, you know, gods of our own making.

You know, things that people are creating to be worshipped. The worship of the idol of false gods. Isn't it not this very context, this very atmosphere, this challenge that you have to proclaim the one true God and Saviour amidst this modern day Caesarea Philippi.

And it's for you to take your stand and proclaim, no, not the Caesars of this day, not the idols of this day, but Jesus is Lord.

So take your stand against the false gods that, yeah, they're everywhere. They're appearing at every corner, every niche of life. You proclaim Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

[ 12 : 24 ] Yes, when you do that, there's going to be conflict. There's going to be conflict with others who will have no other god but the Caesars of their own making, of their own choosing.

But, so we're thinking, New Year's Day, be strong, be courageous. He's before you, he's with you. You take that stand for him and proclaim the Lord Jesus as Saviour.

Remember, this year that's begun, 2019, you're going to be face to face with many who follow the Caesars of their own choosing. You're going to be face to face with those who will have nothing to do with the Lord Jesus.

Well, choose you this day whom you will serve, whether it is the Lord Jesus, your Saviour, the Saviour of the world, or the false gods, the Caesars, who might appear strong.

Caesar Augustus appeared strong. Even Herod in his own way appeared strong at the time. But all those Caesars, all those rulers, all those powers might appear strong.

[ 13 : 28 ] But there is nothing before the one true King, the one true God. So, be encouraged as we move into 2019. We do so proclaiming the Lord Jesus as Lord, as Saviour.

Proclaiming that he alone has power, power to save and power to redeem, power to enable you to enter the Kingdom of God. And as we said, well, we live in a world, a society that acclaims many Saviours, materialism, secularism, humanism, atheism.

No, you have before you the one true Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is Lord. He is the Christ. He is God incarnate.

So, you see, when we read the announcement that Peter gives, when Peter tells of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

So, we're seeing, remember, Peter's making that announcement in this vicinity where others were proclaimed as Lord and God. That Jesus has been proclaimed here as the one true Lord, the one true Saviour, the Saviour of the world, as the Son of God, the place of the question.

[ 14 : 48 ] But then, secondly, the popular opinion about Jesus. What of the people of Jesus' day? People that witnessed Jesus' miracles.

People who heard Jesus preach, who heard him teach. Who did they think Jesus was? What was their opinion? What was their opinion then? And what's the popular opinion now?

Well, Jesus asked the question, verse 27, Who do people say that I am? Who do men say that I am? The question was given 2,000 years ago.

It's still given today. Well, look at the popular response of Jesus' day and let's look at the popular response today. I mean, people at that time were speculating, speculating who Jesus was.

I mean, Jesus has been in their midst, certainly in his public ministry for a good amount of time. I mean, Jesus' fame has spread far and wide.

[ 15 : 49 ] And so there have been many opinions given of who this preacher and teacher is. I mean, you know, he's performed miracles. I mean, there's already wild guesses being pronounced.

Mark 6, 14 to 16. Some are saying John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That's why miraculous powers were at work in him. Others are saying he's Elijah.

Others are saying, well, he's a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago. I mean, you go back there, I think, is it Mark 6? Herod says, John, the man I beheaded has been raised from the dead.

And then the religious leaders, Mark 3, as we said, they're thinking he's demon-possessed. Mark 3, 22 is possessed by Beelzebub, the prince of the devil. He's an evil spirit.

So when Jesus is asking this question, who do men say that I am? Well, the disciples certainly repeat what they've already heard. Obviously, they've been hearing what folks are saying about Jesus.

[ 16 : 59 ] And it's very, very interesting when you see and read of what people say today about Jesus, how similar the views are today as of 2,000 years ago.

We've mentioned that people then thought of Jesus as John the Baptist. In other words, that Jesus, well, was a good man. I mean, John, remember, was very highly thought of by the people.

He drew large crowds to himself. Crowds came all over to be baptized by John. John's the last of the great Old Testament prophets.

A man executed because of his righteous conduct. Some are saying, could Jesus be John the Baptist raised from the dead? Or maybe Elijah, one of the great prophets.

The Old Testament, Malachi chapter 4. The reader of God sending Elijah before the great day of the Lord. Maybe one of the prophets. Someone like Jeremiah.

[ 18 : 01 ] Jews believed that Jeremiah would return before the end of the world. In other words, people are prepared at best to see that Jesus was a good man, a righteous man, someone who had all the credentials of a prophet, spoke God's word to the people, but that was it.

No more. No recognition of Jesus as the promised Messiah. No recognition of Jesus as the promised Christ. The one sent by God to save his people from their sins, to bring in the eternal kingdom of God.

Okay, the people's views, we might argue, were positive. They saw Jesus as a holy, righteous man. But that's as far as it went.

That's not far enough. Unless you recognize that Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, the one promised to the people, the one promised for the people, unless you recognize Jesus as the one come in human form to save his people from their sins.

And all that adulation, all that praise of a good man is not enough. It's a missing the mark. Failing to see truly who Jesus is.

[ 19 : 15 ] Things haven't really moved on two millennia. I think the most recent studies in this country, and certainly in America, happened in 2016, in relation to popular perception of Jesus.

I think it was the Barna studies that revealed that most adults in the United Kingdom actually believe that Jesus was a historic person. However, when it comes to probing what people think of Jesus and his divinity, very much less.

Very much less. In fact, really not common at all. One in five adults of the general population, that's the study found, would support the truth that Jesus is God in human form who lived among people in the first century.

That's the statement that was made. I mean, the most common statement, actually, about Jesus in these studies in the United Kingdom, certainly, was that Jesus was a prophet, a spiritual leader, but not God.

Just going back to what was thought of Jesus 2,000 years ago. So whether it's the first century or the 21st century, yes, there's a general recognition of Jesus as a good man, someone, yes, who truly lived, someone who lived a holy life, but a minority, a small minority, believing in Jesus' claim to be the Christ, the Son of God.

[ 20 : 46 ] You see, if Jesus is just a prophet, just a prophet amongst other messengers, he's not the Jesus Christ of the Bible.

If he's just one spiritual leader among many, he's not the only one in whom you can put your faith and trust in as Saviour, as Lord. If he's just a good man, he can't lay claim to die for me.

You know, Jesus is the sinless one, the sinless one who came for sinners. And I mean, if Jesus is just a good man, then I believe the delusion.

But there's no Christ delusion, there's no God delusion. And you see that in Peter's reply, when he gives that wonderful reply, Peter answers him, you are the Christ.

Christ. So Jesus has asked his disciples, who do men say that he is? Disciples give him various responses, what they've heard in their journeys with Jesus.

[ 21 : 51 ] But then the questions asked us, we said, in that most personal of ways, the way that none of them, none of you, none of, I can't avoid. What about you?

Who do you say that I am? And he's looking at every single one of his disciples. Who do you say that I am? Peter, of course the spokesman, comes out, you are the Christ, you are the Messiah.

Peter said, yes Lord, Jesus, you are the one whom the prophets spoke about. You are, whom they said would come, you are, what the Christ means, the anointed one, the Hebrew word Messiah, the Greek word Christ, Christos, the anointed one, you are the Christ.

So, from the heart, Peter's saying, yes Lord, you are the Messiah. You are the anointed one. You are Lord. Kings, in Old Testament times, prophets, priests were anointed because that, to show their office before God.

And of course, Jesus is the divine prophet, priest and king. He is the anointed one. He's come to do the will of the Father. So certainly, in that sense, Peter's understood that Jesus is the Messiah.

[ 23 : 11 ] God's appointed one to fulfill what God had promised through the prophets of old. Just a little under a fortnight ago, we remember the birth of the Lord Jesus.

And, on two occasions in this very part of the building, we sang Christmas carols. Silent Night, for example, we sang that Christ the Saviour is here. I pray that many who sang these words sang them from the heart.

Was that rejoicing that Christ the Saviour had come in human flesh? But, you have to say, and we say the truth that not all sang these words with that saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

We pray for those who attended these services. Maybe they came out of a sense of duty. Many who come from a culture where duty is important, but who at the same time will not give their lives to the Lord Jesus and give Him the glory as the Lord Jesus, as Christ, as the Son of God.

But, what about you? Can you say Christ the Saviour has come and say it from the heart? Can you truly say Jesus is the Christ?

[ 24 : 32 ] Do you believe with all your heart that He's Lord? That He came to save you from your sins? Well, if you do, rejoice. Rejoice that even you are confessing the Lord Jesus as the Christ, as the promised one.

And when you confess Him, you're making that confession from your mouth. Well, may it be that that confession comes from a heart that truly recognizes who Jesus is, that He is the living Lord Jesus, that He is the divine Son of God, that He did come in human flesh, that He died, rose again, ascended to heaven, sitting at the right hand of the Father, the dust of the earth, the throne of grace.

And when you confess the Lord Jesus as Lord, as Savior, well, may you know that you have that promise of eternal life.

Paul stated that when he was writing to the church in Rome. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. And you confess the name of Jesus as Lord and Savior, surely that should give joy in your heart, that you know that He is yours and you are His for all eternity.

That's what the Apostle John declared. 1 John 4, whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.

[ 26 : 04 ] Now, we live in a world that denies that Jesus is Lord, is Christ, is the divine Son of God. We saw that even in these studies I mentioned. and when that's the case, then isn't that a challenge to your evangelism, to our evangelism?

Isn't that a, you know, at the start of this year, a reality check for you as an individual, if you know the Lord Jesus as Savior and for us as a congregation, when we know that so few will recognize Jesus as Lord, as the Christ, the Son of God, surely that should be a motivation to drive you, to drive us, to go forth with the gospel to your neighbors because, you know, we sometimes confuse what a church does in evangelism.

First and foremost, it's you as a Christian going to those whom God has placed you beside to tell others of the Lord Jesus. So, yes, go with the gospel to your neighbor, to your friends, and probably sometimes the most difficult of all, your family, to your work colleagues.

Tell them of the Savior who died for you. Show that truth by your words and by your actions, your witness, and make Christ attractive to your testimony.

But, of course, that leaves, that begs the question, the question that verse 30 brings up. Why does Jesus not want his disciples to tell anyone about him as Messiah?

[ 27 : 34 ] I mean, you would have, sure, you might have thought that, well, Jesus would want people, you know, to know him as Messiah through the disciples. I mean, you know, you know yourself that when Jesus rose, he gave the command for his disciples to go into the world, all the world, to proclaim Jesus.

So, why at this point in Jesus' ministry does he forbid the disciples not to tell anyone about him? Well, the answer is really quite straightforward because, you see, the popular perception, or should I say the popular expectation amongst the people there in Israel was that a triumphant Messiah would appear, a royal figure, a spectacular hero, someone who would drive out the hated Roman rulers, someone who would set up this Jewish state.

So, to announce to this, you know, excited public, people who are already, you know, watching what Jesus, to announce that Jesus was a Messiah, the Messiah would arouse sort of unrealistic expectations about Jesus and wrong expectations because Jesus would be the focus of an unrealistic political expectation.

in other words, he wouldn't be followed for who he truly is, the Messiah, the Christ, the one through whom, through the one who came to give his life through obedience, suffering, and death.

Now, as we read on there in verse 31, of course, Jesus explains, Jesus explains that the truth about his being Messiah is the suffering Saviour.

[ 29 : 19 ] He's going to explain that to his disciples. And as we know, and we'll maybe follow this on next Lord's Day, Peter at that point, Peter couldn't yet take this in. I mean, Peter's correctly recognised Jesus as the Christ, but he hadn't understood at that point what being the Christ meant in terms of Jesus' suffering and Jesus' death.

Now, yes, he would understand later after Jesus' death and resurrection, but now that Jesus has come, now that Jesus has lived that life of perfect obedience, now that he has died that substitute's death on the cross, now that he's risen from the dead, and now that he's seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, then we do tell others that Jesus is the Christ.

You do confess Jesus before others. You do use your lips to tell of Jesus as Saviour. and you don't keep that secret to yourself anymore.

You know who Jesus is. He's the Christ, the suffering Saviour. And you do rejoice that Jesus is here, that Jesus came to earth, that Jesus accomplished the work that his Father had given him to do.

And God the Father sent the Son as the Anointed One. And so be unashamed in your profession of Jesus, the only Saviour, the Saviour of the world.

[ 30 : 44 ] Because the world must hear the good news, that good news of Jesus as Saviour, as Lord. And so as we close the service, well, the arrow has been fired.

The arrow of the question, do you know, who do you say Jesus is? Do you know Jesus? Not just know of Jesus, but do you know Jesus, who Jesus is?

Do you know him as Lord, as Saviour, as Friend? Or is he still a stranger to your soul? Well, I pray that you'll know him. That you'll know him as he's made himself known in his word.

That as you know him, you'll trust in him, follow him, through this year live for him, you'll serve him, and not be ashamed of him. And that as you go through this new year, that you'll have that courage the more to proclaim Jesus and show your profession in your life, who you speak to, who you communicate with, whom you're with.

And that this will be a year when you're bold, bold for him by word and by action. when you tell others that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, in whom alone is salvation.

[ 32 : 04 ] Amen. Let's pray. Lord, have mercy on us, we who are sinners, we who have so often hid our lamps under a bushel and not shown forth the Lord Jesus and proclaimed him by word and witness.

Help us, Lord, even to have that courage this year to tell others of the Saviour who died for sinners. Help us, Lord, give us that strength, that enabling.

Keep us, Lord, from doing that which dishonours you this year, even by silence. Help us, Lord, to speak for you, to glorify you, to serve you, to honour you.

Help us, Lord, then we pray even through the remainder of this day. Bless our fellowship, bless all that we do in your name this day and go before us. We pray in all things.

Amen. Well, let's close in Psalm 40 on page 260, the older version.

[ 33 : 10 ] Psalm 40, singing from verse 8 down to double verse 10. To do thy will I take delight, O thou my God that art, yea, that most holy law of thine I have within my heart, within the congregation great, I righteousness did preach.

Lo, let us know, O Lord, that I refrain not my speech. 8 to double verse 10 to God's praise.