

Is Jesus really God?

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Preacher: Nick Freestone

[0 : 00] What if God was one of us? I'm showing my age.

Do you know the song? What if God was one of us? There we go. I'm not allowed to sing anymore because YouTube will give us a strike and kick us off. However, in 1995, that song was written.

It goes like this. If God had a face, what would it look like? And would you want to see if seeing meant believing, it meant that you would have to believe in things like heaven and Jesus?

God is great. God is good. Yeah, yeah, yeah. What if God was one of us? Just a slob like one of us. Just a stranger on a bus trying to make his way home.

Back up to heaven all alone. Nobody calling on the phone except the Pope maybe in Rome. What if God was one of us?

[1 : 08] I remember being 10 years old on a bus, on the bus to school and hearing that song and sitting there for the whole bus ride just thinking about that question.

What if God was one of us? As a kid, though, I missed all the sarcasm and the bitterness in the song. Because it's the song of a secular person.

It's a song of someone who believes that God doesn't exist. And even if he does, it wouldn't matter even if he did show up. But what if God was one of us?

Today we're going to hear from a man like one of us called Jesus, who claimed to be God. The wildest claim anyone could make. But if it's true, it really does matter.

Is Jesus really God? If you went down into Chatswood and asked people that crazy question, what would people say?

[2 : 15] They might say, God doesn't exist, so Jesus is a fraud. Is Jesus really God? Or God does exist, but he doesn't care or can't or won't do anything.

He's lazy or voiceless or vindictive. Jesus, no, he doesn't matter. Or maybe Jesus is God or some other deity.

Maybe they're all the same. Or I'm a good person. I live a good life. So I don't need Jesus, even if he is God. How would you answer?

I want you to imagine you're on a plane. But the plane is crashing. I'm sorry. The plane is crashing. What do you worry about in that moment?

Would you be devastated that your life is about to end? Or angry at a God who doesn't care? Or be counting up your sins and checking your moral status? Would you have any assurance of what meeting with God will be like after you die?

[3 : 26] The truth is, we are all on a plane like that. A plane that is our lifetime with no landing gear.

No matter what point in the flight you are, every life hits a mountain called death. We need someone to give us life beyond the crash before we crash.

And we'll see today that there is only hope for life if Jesus really is God. So get John chapter 5 in front of you.

The beginning of this chapter, we heard this last week from John Lauer. And Jesus went to work on the Sabbath day.

When it was illegal to work. He went and found a man who could not walk and did the work of healing him. And then in verse 16 of chapter 5 it says, The religious leaders began to persecute him for doing this.

[4 : 34] Why? Because Jesus deliberately broke the law as they knew it. It was said that only God could work on the Sabbath. For God is always working and his work is effortless.

God only needs to speak and creation obeys. But Jesus says in verse 17, My father is always at his work to this very day.

And I too am working. See, Jesus was claiming to be working legally. He was claiming to be God.

And the religious leaders understood exactly what he claimed. No longer were they going to just persecute him as a nuisance. But from that point, as soon as Jesus said that, they sought to kill him.

Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God. And the rest of the chapter is Jesus' answer to their charges and judgment of him.

[5 : 42] That he was not God and deserved punishment. Deserved death. So Jesus stated his case before them in our passage today, outlining his claims in more detail, and how he planned to prove that those claims are true.

Jesus claimed to be God. He said that he was doing God's works, like a son following in his father's trade.

Imagine a son and a father in a workshop. Maybe they're working on some wood. I'm not very handy. But I'm imagining this is the kind of language and picture Jesus is trying to paint when he says in verse 20, for the father loves the son and shows him all he does.

Jesus even said he's worthy of worship like the father. Verse 23. Whoever does not honor the son does not honor the father who sent him.

But the two-edged swords of his claim to be God is this, that he is the judge of all and he is the giver of life.

[7 : 01] Let's read from verse 28. A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out.

Those who have done what is good will rise to live and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. Jesus' accusers were not shocked that he said every person will be raised to judgment, either to death and condemnation or death and to eternal life.

But they were shocked because Jesus said he is the voice. He is the voice that would rise the dead into judgment.

Verse 22. The father has entrusted all judgment to the son. Verse 27. And he has given him authority to judge. Jesus literally claimed he will judge all people for the life that they live.

Their eternal destiny, my eternal destiny, will be determined by Jesus. Man. Speaking in Palestine 2,000 years ago.

[8 : 18] Verse 25. Very truly I tell you, a time is coming when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

Were you reading along with your Bible? You've got to hold me accountable here because I left something out. I did it on purpose, but you've got to be reading along. Because, he says, a time is coming and is now here.

The determining of eternal destiny started the moment we heard Jesus' voice. The judge of the world has arrived. He came with a voice that would condemn or bring life.

And Jesus also claimed to be the giver of life. At the beginning of chapter 5, he goes to work and does a healing.

He heals completely dead legs. And then in verse 12, he came to be able to raise the completely dead just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life.

[9 : 29] Even so, the Son gives life. It's not just physical death, though, that he claimed to have power over. It's spiritual deadness, too. In verse 24, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged, but is crossed over from death to life.

This judge claimed to be able to grant life on one condition. salvation. And it's backwards to what people in our city might expect.

It's backwards to what the people hearing Jesus expected. Because it's not merit. It's not good works. It's not our own goodness. Jesus said just by believing he would grant eternal life.

This believing is hearing Jesus claim to be God and agreeing that God, the Father, sent him. Look again at verse 24.

Look at this promise. Jesus said that by believing in him we have eternal life. We have crossed over from death to life at the moment of believing.

[10 : 49] how could Jesus promise people this? There's a clue in the next verse. Verse 25. 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.

Jesus is the start of eternal life. It's his initiative. It's his life and it's his promise. Believing in him now begins an eternal life.

with him. We will all one day be physically dead and without an eternal life beyond death where spiritually is good as dead.

Yet anyone, Jesus says, can receive eternal life now by believing in him and cross from death to immediate abundant eternal life.

Life that begins in eternity with him as your God. Free from condemnation, free from fear, free from hopelessness by simply believing that Jesus really is God.

[12 : 04] These claims shatter the expectations of our city. God and over 100 years ago, a man called C.S. Lewis in a different city that didn't care about God and if they did, they had the wrong expectations.

He wrote this about all that Jesus claims as a challenge to us. in the mouth of any speaker who is not God, these words would imply what I can only regard as a silliness and conceit unrivaled by any character in history.

You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the son of God or else a madman or something worse.

You can shut him up a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. Chatswood, we've got to make a choice.

Is Jesus a mad fool worthy of death or the judge of the world freely offering you immediate abundant eternal life? Those claims are astonishing.

[13 : 23] But Jesus claimed he can prove it to you. He lines up witnesses to his claims. For he says it's not enough for me just to say, in verse 31, that I am God.

It's not enough for me to witness to myself. According to Jesus, John the Baptist, the greatest man of all time as Jesus described him in Matthew 11, John the Baptist declared Jesus as the Lamb of God.

And God the Father declared audibly from heaven, this is my Son, listen to him. But Jesus says in this passage that his accusers don't recognize the Father.

They've never seen him, they don't know his voice. So what he says of Jesus goes unheard. John 5, 37, he says, you've never heard his voice. And agreeing with the Father is scripture itself.

That whole Old Testament that's come before. Jesus summarizes it as Moses, the great prophet and champion of Israel.

[14 : 32] He says in verse 46 and 47, if you believed Moses, you would have believed me. For he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?

The religious leaders of the time had their heads buried in God's words, but that was not enough for them to recognize God right in front of them. But most of all, it's Jesus works themselves that witness strongest to the truth of his claim to be God.

Have a look at verse 36. Jesus says, I have testimony weightier for the works that the Father has given me to finish.

The works that I am doing testify that the Father has sent me. If you've been following along with this at church, or if you've ever read it before, the book of John describes Jesus' miracles, not with that word miracle, but the word sign.

Signs point to something. They can be proved right or wrong. If you follow them. If you're local or you've been around Chatswood at all, or if you've ever been to our church, you go straight down this street here, down Help Street.

[15 : 55] Over the train line is a gigantic sign. It looks like it could be as big as that wall right there. That sign is trying to convince you that a new breakfast cereal or a new car or a new hair product is better than your current one.

The flattering photoshopped picture is its proof that their cereal is tastier, that the car has a smoother ride, or that you really can regrow your hair.

Chatswood is a prove-it kind of place. If you made the claim Jesus is God in Chatswood, if I put Jesus is God on that sign, people would drive down, it's hilarious, it's called Help Street, but they drive down Help Street, look at that and go, prove it.

Chatswood is a prove-it kind of place. And Jesus says, his proof is in his signs. So let's look to some of Jesus' signs. And see, can Jesus really give us the life he claims to offer?

Look back at verse 21. Just as the Father raises the dead, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Jesus was able to give life to dead legs.

[17 : 19] Can he give life to dead people? Can he give life beyond the grave? Let's look in John for some proof. John 11.

Later in John's Gospel, Jesus received a message that his friend Lazarus was sick and to come quick to the town nearby and heal him.

But Jesus waited. He waited. He didn't go. And when he finally did go, Lazarus had been dead four days.

And Lazarus's sister Martha said to Jesus in verse 21, if you'd been there, my brother would not have died. And just as an aside, last week we looked at John 4.

There was a man who lived 20 miles away from where Jesus was and he traveled to Jesus and asked him, can you come the 20 miles to my town to heal my dying son?

[18 : 22] And Jesus just said, your son will be healed. The man went back to 20 miles and found his son healed. Jesus doesn't need to go.

Remember the signs people. So Lazarus went with those in mourning. Jesus went with those in mourning to Lazarus's tomb.

and he commanded it to be opened and the smell hit everyone full in the face and Jesus shouted, Lazarus come out and Lazarus walked out in burial cloths alive.

Jesus proved he could raise the dead. He proved he could bring dead limbs back to life. He proved he could bring dead people back to life. How could he prove that he could offer eternal life?

John knows that that's his next question because immediately after he describes this wonderful moment of celebration, this wonderful sign, he says, and now the religious leaders literally signed his death warrant.

[19 : 40] That was the moment they said, nope, enough is enough, no more planning, he's got to die now. And spoiler alert, he did.

Jesus' plane hit the mountain. How can a man that claims he is God and the giver of eternal life be legitimate if he dies?

Well, in a similar tomb to Lazarus, Jesus was buried. And a couple of days after his brutal murder, his followers went to properly prepare his dead body, because they couldn't go on the Sabbath, because that would have been work.

But the tomb was empty and the body was gone. And then Jesus revealed himself as alive, unexpectedly risen, still scarred from his cross, and hundreds met with him.

And many of them died witnessing to his resurrection. But one disciple, early on, Thomas, missed seeing the risen Jesus with the rest of them.

[20 : 51] And he doubted that Jesus lived, and he demanded, in John 20, 25, he says, unless I see and put my finger where the nails were, put my hand in his side, I will not believe.

He challenged Jesus' claims. He's Chatswood in that moment. We join in with him and we say, prove it. Then Jesus appeared to Thomas, as if to us, and said, go ahead, touch my scars, it's really me.

But for Thomas, seeing was believing, as he witnessed, my Lord and my God. Jesus really is God.

Jesus claimed to be God who can offer immediate, abundant, eternal life, and proved it. He proved it by signs he performed as the God and the giver of life.

And Jesus was on the plane of life like we are, and died like we will, yet lives to prove that he has life to give for now and for eternity.

[22 : 02] And that's why this gospel exists. Just read it out before. John says immediately after Thomas' witnesses to Jesus, almost like he's connecting it on purpose. To show us this sign.

So that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you might have life in his name. That's why he's written the book.

He hopes you'll see Jesus through his witness. And that Jesus really is the life-giving judge of all people. And that Jesus really is God. Remember that song I quoted at the beginning?

What if God was one of us? I just want to point you to verse two. Because it asks this bitter, sarcastic question of us, assuming that it wouldn't matter if God was one of us.

Here's the question. If God was one of us, would you want to see? If seeing meant that you would have to believe in Jesus? Well, like Thomas, your answer should be yes.

[23 : 08] Yes, I want to believe. I'm on a crashing plane and Jesus is offering me life. No matter what you right now think of God, no matter what, Jesus offers you life.

No matter what you think of your life, Jesus offers you an abundant life today. life. Jesus can offer it to you because he died your death.

He experienced the crash of your life and all of your judgment for you as he crashed on his cross. His astonishing offer of life is proved just and fair because his perfect life deserved no end.

His life deserved landing gear. instead, he offers you a trade. If you claim the trade Jesus offers you, you can exchange your life and your judgments.

Evil for good. Condemnation for life. life and he will give it to you right now. Crossing over from death to life if you believe.

[24 : 39] Only Jesus can offer you an abundant life which is rest and peace from all that your life is striving toward.

forward. There's no ticket on offer here off this crashing plane but there's rest and peace for the flight and that's what Jesus' abundant life redeems you from.

It's a life at rest from the striving that's underneath all the work that you do. The work in striving for your security, for your reputation, for your own righteousness.

righteousness and it's peace from having to work your works to earn anything before God. You can receive belief in him as an unearned gift.

Only Jesus offers you hope beyond life. Here's the verse I would write to this song. What if God was one of us? In this broken and violent, decaying, deathward world, there is an end to your fear of condemnation, an assurance that cannot be shaken.

[25 : 52] It's joy for today and tomorrow and hope beyond death. For God was one of us. Jesus really is God.

Is Jesus really God? Your answer should be yes. I want you to believe in Jesus. You should want to believe in Jesus. Take your next step and believe today.

Receive the eternal life that he offers. For Jesus really is God. And if you believe Jesus is God, then join in with John as a witness to Jesus.

Share Jesus' signs with people so that they might believe in him. From belief in Jesus brings a desire to be a sign that points people to Jesus Christ.

I'm going to do something we don't often do in church, which is get out your phone. Get out your phone and point it at the screen and scan this code. And if you do, you will download an app that's free.

[26 : 58] It's a resource called Word One-to-One. This is the Gospel of John and it's broken up into little short readings. There's questions to ask yourself, to discuss with others, and there's help to understand the context and the meaning of the book of John.

This app will help you share the good news of John, explore the claims and proof that Jesus really is God, and how it really matters that Jesus is God.

Once you have the app, there's a button called Share, and you can hold that code out to anyone who has a phone, and you can open the Bible with someone who doesn't have one, no matter where you are, as long as you have battery on their phone.

And if you believe that Jesus is really God, then he's worthy of your worship. As we enjoy Jesus' accomplishments for us, and the peace and rest in him, we reorder the priorities of our life around his.

For he is worthy of your life. That's why we've sung today. That's why we teach and learn new songs, because he inspires works of thanks and praise.

[28 : 20] So, what if God was one of us? He was. He was one of us. He is Jesus. He claimed this, and he proved this, and he offers you immediate, abundant, eternal life in him.

So, take your next step and open your Bible and hear God speak. Verse 24, a time is coming, and has now come, where the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

Amen. Amen. Amen.