

# Jesus the unique God Man

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[ 0 : 00 ] What I find really interesting about the Palm Sunday event, and the text that we're looking at this morning, of course, is not specifically about the Palm Sunday event, the triumphal entry into the holy city, but it's a parallel passage, a quite complementary passage, in fact, because we see in both instances just how fickle the vision of the people can be.

If you recall, as Jesus is entering in his triumphal procession on the donkey, humble and lowly, greeted by palm branches and the shouts of Hosanna, there is a great reception, a great party, in fact, the anticipation that the Messiah, perhaps, is coming, and yet it's not very long into the week that Jesus is betrayed and arrested and tortured and executed.

There appears to be, throughout the pages of the Gospels, in fact, this great dichotomy of vision, really sort of a polarizing effect that Jesus has on almost everyone that he encounters.

It's impossible, in fact, to be apathetic or ambivalent about Jesus Christ. In John chapter 14, Jesus says something really radical, really provocative.

He says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Over and over and over again, Jesus, throughout his ministry, is putting himself at the center of human existence to say, if you want to abound, if you want to live, if you want to live eternally, you must orient yourself around me.

[ 1 : 42 ] When Jesus calls himself the way, the truth, and the life, we see that he's not simply speaking about justification, about salvation. He is speaking about that, of course.

But he's talking about daily life, the grounds of real human living. The reason why I, and I suspect you, get distracted from time to time, give in to temptation to sin, is because we have, in effect, taken our eyes off of Jesus Christ.

We have forgotten, at least momentarily, we've experienced a kind of gospel amnesia in the moment. We have forgotten how satisfying and how sufficient and how answering Christ is.

This is true for every sin and every moment when we choose something other than God to satisfy us, that is actually what we're saying. We're engaging in a kind of disbelief.

We are saying in the moment, God, you don't satisfy me. You don't fulfill me. You don't validate me. You don't justify me. This is what will give me peace and joy and happiness.

[ 2 : 50 ] I think of all the things that I look to to satisfy me when I know it really is only Christ and his glory that can bring me great and deep and abiding joy.

This is what the Apostle Paul says in Philippians chapter 3. Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ. And so I think the biggest problem that Christians face is not that we haven't thought of Christ alone for salvation, but that we only consider Christ alone every now and again.

Many of us live very compartmentalized lives. We tend to think of ourselves as existing in these time slots or having multiple roles.

There's our work self and our home self, our family self, our school self, our recreational self, and then there's our religious self. And we're accustomed to thinking of Jesus when it's time to think of spiritual or religious things.

[ 4 : 02 ] But the Jesus of the New Testament, the Jesus who is the real Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, doesn't abide in his own assigned time slot. He is the ruler of all existence.

He is the sovereign Lord of all. The real Jesus will not stand for being assigned a compartment in our life. He is the center of the universe.

So again, the problem is not that we don't look to Jesus, but that we don't spend enough time looking at all of him, which is to say, pondering his glory. And that's what I want to sort of explore with you this afternoon, what I want to help us see together this afternoon, really the point of this

passage in John chapter 8.

And the first thing that we should mention as we look at this exchange, this debate, this argument, is that it isn't really a personality clash.

You know, sometimes when you hear, you know, some folks explain the difference between the Pharisees and Jesus or why they continue to have this clash, it's put very superficially as if the Pharisees are mean and Jesus is nice.

[ 5 : 17 ] And this is really the, you know, the reason why they're so angry with Jesus is because he's going around telling everyone to be kind to each other and he's teaching peace and this really upsets them. And that really just sort of scratches the surface of the primary disconnect between the religious rulers and Jesus.

You don't execute somebody who's just teaching everyone to be nice to each other. That might irritate you, but it wouldn't drive you to want to execute them. What this is, is not primarily a personality clash.

It is a theological conflict. It is about belief. In the ruler's mind, in the religious leader's mind, it's about orthodoxy and heresy, in fact.

At stake is what is expressed in verse 48. Is Jesus a demon-possessed Samaritan? Now, of course, I know you don't believe that Jesus is a demon-possessed Samaritan.

But if we were to put it in our terms and sort of the language of our day, how this sort of debate or misunderstanding or failure to see the glory of Christ really works out, we might put it this way.

[ 6 : 30 ] Who is Jesus? Is he who he says he is? Or is he something else? And Jesus himself is saying some incredibly provocative things about himself all over his preaching ministry.

But right here in this theological conflict at which he is the center, he's saying some really provocative, really spectacular, really mind-boggling things. In verse 49, he says, I honor my father. In verse 54, he says, my father glorifies me. Now, if you're one of the religious leaders at this time, you're thinking, hold on just a second, time out.

This has the air of blasphemy to it. Because this man who isn't yet 50 years old is saying basically, the father that you call God glorifies me.

Why would God the father glorify this man? Who is this man to claim such kinship, such intimacy, such parity, equality with God the father?

[ 7 : 40 ] So we have to set aside, if we're to take Jesus at his own words, we have to set aside the option that he's simply a good teacher that went around telling everyone to be nice to each other. He is, as C.S. Lewis famously put it in his apologetic, he is either a lying scoundrel, right?

A demonized Samaritan, perhaps. Or he's crazy, a lunatic. Or, or, quite possibly, verse 55, he knows the father.

Like, actually knows the father and keeps his word. And what makes the difference, what makes the difference between seeing Jesus as he truly is, as the redeeming God-man, and not seeing him as he truly is, is contingent upon seeing his glory.

My working thesis here, the reason why I draw that particular filter over our understanding of the text, comes primarily from 2 Corinthians chapter 3, where in verse 18, Paul says, it's by beholding the glory of Christ that we are transformed from one degree of glory to another.

So there's something, there's something supernatural, something spiritual, about seeing the glory of Jesus that makes the difference between seeing Jesus as just a man, or just a good teacher, or as a liar, or as a lunatic, and seeing Jesus for who he truly is, for who he revealed himself truly to be.

[ 9 : 14 ] And this really is a spiritual thing. Some people look at Jesus all the time, and they don't see anything impressive. They see the liar Jesus, or the lunatic Jesus, or the just a good teacher Jesus.

But others, others see a glimpse of his glory. They taste and see, in the revelation of Jesus Christ, something delicious, spiritually transformative, forever changed.

So if we look carefully at this text, we can see some of this glory here in this exchange. Jesus is showing it to us, even as he's withholding it from his Jewish accusers.

And what do we see? How wondrous is the glory of the God-man Jesus? What is it that Christ's glory alone does? Well, first of all, Christ alone has glory that reaches into the eternal past.

He has glory alone that reaches into the eternal past. As the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews chapter 1, verse 1, once upon a time, God spoke in a lot of ways through the prophets, but now, finally, all of these messages, all of these prophecies, culminate in the final message, the incarnate

word, Jesus Christ.

[10:34] And the entire collection of books that we call the Old Testament unfold the plan of redemption that sets the stage for the incarnation of the Son of God who has come to save sinners from death.

Every person, every prophecy, every prescribed ritual, all of it is pointing to the fulfillment of itself in Christ Jesus.

If you remember, right after his resurrection, Jesus kind of sidles up along the disciples on the road to Emmaus. And at first, they don't recognize him. They're not quite sure who he is. But he begins to teach and preach to them.

And it says, He revealed everything about himself from the law and the prophets to them.

Essentially, Jesus is preaching to them a Christ-centered, expository sermon from the Old Testament.

Or if you prefer, because it's Jesus preaching it, a expository, self-centered sermon from the Old Testament. He's telling them about himself. This is where I was in Genesis and in Exodus and Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

[11:36] And their response, if you remember, the disciples who are hearing this sermon, Jesus showing himself, his glory from the pages of the Old Covenant Scriptures, their response is not simply to say, Oh, that's really interesting.

You've really unlocked some things that help us mentally. No, they say, Our hearts burned within us. What does that mean?

Well, it's the response of worship. They have not just heard intellectually the glory of Christ, but they have seen spiritually the glory of Christ, and they have been transformed.

They've had their affections stirred for this Jesus. This is how Jesus puts it here in verse 56. Your father Abraham, Old Covenant, your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day.

He saw it and was glad. This is very similar to another moment in Jesus' ministry, in the early days of his ministry, in fact, when he's in the synagogue in Luke chapter 4, if you remember, and he's reading from the scroll of Isaiah, reading the prophecy, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

[12:49] He reads this, and then he essentially says to the gathered congregation, All of that is about me. And the audience reacts very similarly to how this audience reacts in John chapter 8.

The reality is that Jesus Christ is not some divine improvisation. It's not as if God thought that we could work out salvation by our own merit, just pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps, that we could eke out some sort of spiritual achievement, and then embarrassed by our failure to measure up, and surprised by our inability, thought, Oh, I guess I should go ahead and send my son down there to sort things out.

No, the covenant of grace, begun and finished by Jesus Christ, was part of his plan all along. In fact, everywhere Jesus goes, he's telling people this.

He's not plan B. He is God's plan A. He says, You don't believe me because you don't believe the scriptures. Here are a few examples.

In Matthew 21, verse 42, Jesus said to them, Have you never read in the scriptures the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone? This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

[14:09] Matthew 22, 29, Jesus answered them, You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. Matthew 26, verse 56, All of this has taken place that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.

Mark 14, 49, Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you didn't seize me, but let the scriptures be fulfilled. Or Luke 24, 27, Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Luke 24, 45, He opened their minds to understand the scriptures. John 5, 39, You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, but it is they that bear witness about me.

The truth of the glory of the God-man Jesus Christ rests on the rich, thick tapestry of the God-breathed scriptures. Even Abraham, Jesus says, could see it on the horizon.

From the darkness of antiquity, Abraham sees the dawning light of Jesus Christ, and his heart thrills with hope. His heart burned within him. He saw my day, Jesus said, and he rejoiced.

[15:28] But the Bible doesn't just give us a glimpse into the beginning of time and the beginning of the covenant. No, in fact, the glory of Jesus, the glory of the saving Son of God, didn't begin in Genesis any more than it began in Luke chapter 2 or John chapter 1.

It's not just into the historical past that Christ's glory reaches, but into eternity past that his glory reaches. Before time even began, the plan of the gospel was in the heart of God.

How do we know this? Well, we see that the names written in the Lamb's book of life, for instance, in Revelation chapter 13, verse 8, were written, it says, before the foundation of the world.

The truth is this, for the Christian, Christ's saving glory was fixed on you before there even was a you. Romans chapter 8, verse 29, Paul puts it this way, for those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.

I don't know if you've ever thought about that, but just the reality, the biblical reality that the God who is outside of time, who created time, who rules outside of time, could look forward into the time that he will create and see me, puny little old me, weak and deficient and flawed, riddled with sin, and say, I'm going to put my grace on that person.

[17:07] I'm going to make that man a beloved son of mine. I can barely get over that. God even knows the sins I've yet to commit, the ones that I don't even know I'm going to commit.

He sees all of that and still says, I dedicate myself to him. And if you've repented of your sin and put your faith in Jesus Christ, he says that about you as well.

But it gets much deeper, in fact, the wondrous glory of the God-man reaches into the past, but also, secondly, Christ alone has glory that reaches into the eternal present, into the eternal present.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, in the first few verses of that chapter, Paul is essentially just giving kind of the outline of the gospel message. He gives the simple summation of the good news.

He says, Jesus Christ died in accordance with the scriptures. He rose again in accordance with the scriptures. He mentions Christ's ascension and the witnesses to that event. And he says that this message is the most important thing that you could know.

[18:16] This message is of first importance. But then he says something really radical. And in fact, if you're reading too quickly, you would just sort of gloss right over it. This news, he said, about the gospel, this news about Jesus Christ, what he has done in history, he says, you received it, right?

So, in some way, shape, or form, you assented, you believed in the gospel, you had a conversion experience of some kind, that might look different depending on your context or the circumstances. Perhaps you prayed a prayer with someone, someone led you through a gospel tract, you responded to an invitation at a church service or something like that, but you received it, right? So we kind of all understand that.

But then he says, you didn't just receive it past tense, but you're also standing in it present tense. Isn't that interesting? The glory of Jesus Christ didn't just capture your soul at some point in your personal history, it is at this very moment sustaining you.

Paul puts it in Galatians like this, having begun by the Spirit, do you continue in the flesh? And the answer is no. Having begun by the Spirit, you continue, you stand in the Spirit.

[19:32] Jesus Christ is millisecond by millisecond upholding your salvation by the word of his power. Here is the spectacular, mind-blowing thing that Jesus says to his accusers in verse 58.

Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am. Now, the first thing that we notice about this verse is this.

Jesus is very clearly appropriating or assigning to himself the divine name, Yahweh, I am. And unless we think that's somewhat of an interpretive improvisation that we're just kind of making that up, notice how the crowd reacts to him making this statement.

They know he's assigning the divine name to himself, which is why they pick up rocks to murder him, because they think he's committing blasphemy. He's claiming to be God.

This is one of Christ's more astounding I am statements, if only because it's somewhat of a standalone. There's no addition to it, right?

[20:42] So in other places he says things like, I am the door, or I am the vine, or I am the way. Here he's simply saying, I am.

It's very similar to the moment in Mark chapter 6, if you recall, where the disciples are on that storm-tossed boat, and Jesus comes walking on the water. And he says to them, don't be afraid, it is I.

And the Greek phrase there that's translated it is I is the equivalent of the Hebrew I am. So it's not simply that the disciples are scared in the boat and Jesus walks up and says, don't be nervous guys, it's just me.

Essentially what he's saying is, don't be afraid, I'm God, I control all of this. Jesus says, before Abraham existed in the past, I am right now.

I don't know about you, but this hurts my brain. Before Abraham was in the past, I presently am. It's messing with our sense of the space-time universe.

[ 21 : 51 ] Just let it settle in for a second. Jesus Christ, not yet 50 years old here, is claiming to be outside of time. To be eternal, to be eternally now.

He doesn't need a DeLorean or a TARDIS or a Narnian wardrobe to do it. This is what I find so wonderfully confounding about the incarnation.

The Son of God becomes fully man, right? That's the true Christian, the orthodox view of the incarnation, that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man simultaneously.

He's not sometimes God and sometimes man. He's not a man who just is somewhat anointed, has the air of divinity about him. He's not God who gives the appearance or the illusion of being a man. He is 100% God, 100% man. And if this is true, if this is true, it makes sense of the entire testimony of the Scriptures. Paul in Colossians 2, verse 9, for in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

[ 22 : 56 ] Hebrews chapter 13, verse 8, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Or John chapter 8, verse 58, before Abraham was, I am.

Here's just one implication of this. I don't know if you ever have thought about this. I know we're entering the Easter season, Easter week, but look forward to the Christmas season and picture little baby Jesus, right?

Cute, adorable, little baby Jesus. Put him in the manger with the swaddling clothes. If Jesus is fully God, then the baby Jesus who was wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger, was also omnipresent Lord of the universe.

Because omnipresence, the ability to be everywhere, to be everywhere, to see everything, is one of God's impassable attributes. Meaning, it's one of the qualities of God or the characteristics of God that cannot change.

So God cannot not be omnipresent. So for Jesus Christ to be fully God, really fully God, must mean that he was omnipresent.

[ 24 : 14 ] You might say, well, I mean, didn't Jesus disregard his deity as something to be grasped? That's what Paul says in Philippians chapter 2, verses 5 through 8.

But I think what Paul is getting at is not that Jesus didn't hold or maintain the fullness of his divinity, but that he did not exploit it or leverage it. In other words, at any point, the temptation for Jesus could have been, I don't want to experience this kind of suffering, I don't want to experience this kind of hurt, I don't want to experience this part of humanity, therefore I'm going to slip into God mode and exploit my deity so that I don't have to experience that.

And what Paul is saying is he was fully God, he was never not God, but he didn't leverage his divinity against the experience of humanity. He didn't pull the divine parachute, in other words.

So what we see in the wonder of the God-man, in the wonder of the incarnation is in essence not a reduction of the Trinity or reduction of the divinity of the Son of God, but an extension.

It's as if the Son of God bent over from heaven and stooped low to become one of us, to embrace us. If we're going to deny that Jesus was simultaneously incarnate and omnipresent, in fact, we have to adopt a lesser incarnation on one side or a lesser deity on the other.

[ 25 : 42 ] Here is something extremely marvelous. In Calvin's estimation, John Calvin, he says, God's incarnation in Christ was not an exit from heaven so much as a descent, a stooping, in other words.

So the incarnation was a humbling of God's Son, but not a lessening of Him. The God-man was simultaneously incarnate and omnipresent, there in time and space as the Son of a carpenter, but also upholding the universe as the Son of God before Abraham was, I am.

And this is why this is good news, by the way, because it may just say this is just like a theological head trip. What difference does this make? Why should we even think about this? It's really complex. It's in the afternoon, you're tired, it's hot.

Why even think about this? Well, here's why it's important, or at least why I think this is important.

Because it's not just the sinful past that you've been forgiven of, and it's not just the future paradise

that you look forward to, it is the very present moment that believers in Jesus are spiritually united to the Son of God.

That Christ's glory reaches into the eternal now means that we who are united to Him are never in danger of being separated from Him. We get to enjoy blessed union with Christ.

[ 27 : 16 ] Ephesians chapter 2, verse 6, Paul writes, He has raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places. We are inextricable from Christ. In Colossians chapter 3, Paul puts it this way, we are hidden with Christ in God.

Or in John chapter 11, just three chapters after our focus text here, Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.

Where does he get off saying this? If you don't see Jesus for who He truly is, hearing things like this would make you angry. This is why the rulers are constantly upset with Him and aggravated with Him.

This is why they're driven by envy to murder Him. And yet for those of us who have seen the glory of Christ in a saving way, even if in a small way, but a saving way, this means that having been united to Christ, who is eternally God, you are as secure as Christ is.

Now how secure do you think Christ is? The wondrous glory of the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God-man reaches us, sustains us in the eternal present.

[ 28 : 47 ] But thirdly, and finally, Christ's glory, I'm sorry, Christ alone has glory that reaches into the eternal future. Christ alone has glory that reaches into the eternal future.

This is where Paul goes, by the way, in 1 Corinthians 15, in those early verses, when he says, you received, past tense, the word, the gospel, you stand, present tense, in the word, the gospel, and then he also says something that's even more spectacular.

He says, you are being saved by this word of the gospel. This is how Jesus puts it here in verse 51. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.

This is like the moment when Jesus looks into the tear-stained face of Martha, weeping over the loss of her brother Lazarus.

And Jesus himself is weeping, the text tells us. And I imagine he's just sort of gently put his hands on her shoulders and he's looking into her face with abundant, eternal compassion, and he comforts her in a way that no other man could ever comfort her.

[ 30 : 00 ] He says, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

and then as if to drive the point home, to make it personal, he looks her straight in the eye and says, do you believe this?

This is the question before you this afternoon. This is the question before all of us. This is the question before us every morning when we get out of bed. Are we going to live our life as if Jesus Christ is the God-man, as if he really is the resurrection and the life, as if to be united to him means that even if we die, we will live?

And in fact, to believe in him means that we'll never die? We must be out of our minds to think something like that. Or perhaps, perhaps we've seen something different that other people haven't seen.

maybe our eyes have been opened in a way that other people's eyes haven't been opened. Maybe we've seen the glory of Jesus Christ. And we know he's not an ordinary man.

[ 31 : 16 ] And we know he's not just a good teacher. And we know he's not a liar. And we know he's not a demon-possessed Samaritan. We know he is who he says he is, the Son of God.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life. And the only alternative, of course, is everlasting death, which is no alternative at all.

To take or leave Jesus, to be ambivalent about Jesus is to be against him. He says this himself. If you are not for me, you are against me. And these people, these leaders, they're against him. Verse 59, they picked up stones to throw at him. They wanted to kill him. They tried to kill him. But Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

Now there's something fascinating here about verse 59. And I don't know if you see what I see. And it's something that I have missed for a very long time. If you're reading quickly, again, it's maybe something that you could just gloss over.

[ 32 : 28 ] He's revealed the truth about himself and they reject him. They want to kill him. But Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. What does it mean he hid himself? What do you think he did, like literally, physically did in that moment?

How did he, like was there a pillar there and he like jumped behind it to hide? Did he pull the kind of classic, look over there guys. And when they turn their backs, you know, they're distracted, he kind of ran away. What does it mean he hid himself?

What does it mean? Well, I mean, this is just speculation. This is just imagination. It doesn't say literally what's there. So we just have to kind of go by implication. But it's within the realm of possibility if he is who he says he is.

It could be a miraculous obscuring. In some way, supernaturally, spiritually, he hid himself. They couldn't see him.

Earlier, I referenced the incident in Luke chapter 4 where Jesus is preaching and the crowd at first is loving it. I mean, they really like when Jesus teaches because he's really dynamic and he's really compelling.

[ 33 : 36 ] They say he preaches as one with authority. He has a lot of power. But then when he says, all of the stuff I just read, that's about me, they turn on him in an instant. And they do what this crowd does.

They try to kill him. And if you recall, they try to push him off a cliff. They like kind of carry him out to push him off the edge of a cliff to murder him. And in that instance, do you remember what Jesus does?

He walks right through him. How do you think he did that? I mean, like did he fight him off? It doesn't say he did that. How is it possible that the crowd would be around him violently trying to murder him and he just passed right through them as if to say, this is not how this happens.

This isn't going to happen today. And he just peacefully with authority passes right through them.

Perhaps it was a supernatural thing. Perhaps this is a supernatural thing. He's obscuring himself. But whatever's happening here, whether he truly hid himself behind something, if it's like physically he's getting away from them, or he veiled himself in some supernatural way, the point is really heartbreaking.

Either way you slice it. The point is this. They can't see him. They can't see him. Which is the worst thing that can happen to you.

[ 34 : 59 ] The worst thing that can ever happen to anybody is to be closed off to the glory of Christ. The worst thing that can ever happen to you is to reject Jesus and have his glory hidden from you.

The glory of the God-man is our only hope. hope. I pray that you have the eyes to see.

Christians, here's the eternal reality. if Jesus is who he says he is, and if you have put your faith in him, he has you covered past, present, and future.

And one day, when the rapidly coming future crashes into the eternal now, when the glory of Christ, as Habakkuk chapter 2 says, covers the earth like the waters cover the seas, you will stand blameless before his presence in great joy.

Not because of you, but because of him. And you will see, as if for the first time, that you are clothed in the glory of Christ.

[ 36 : 19 ] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we ask for the eyes to see. for some, in a fresh and newer way, to have our eyes opened a bit wider to how wonderful, how lovely, how saving your son Christ Jesus is.

Father, perhaps, for some, for the very first time, that the scales, as it were, would fall from their eyes. and they would behold the glory of your son for the first time.

Heavenly Father, your church believes in you and we ask that you would help our unbelief. Help us to press the gospel into the corner of every room of our heart. That we would worship you more vibrantly, more faithfully, with our hearts aflame with affection for your son.

We ask for the grace to see your son as he is. So we ask for your Holy Spirit, Father, to be stirring our hearts and souls, revealing a vision of your son, crucified, risen, ascended, ruling over heaven and earth.

And we pray all these things in the name of your son, the precious name of Christ Jesus. Amen.