

WHY IS JESUS SUCH A BIG DEAL?, LUKE 9:18-25

Why?-Questions for Christians #7

◆Intro:

- ◆“He was a man known for his unusual wisdom, which he spent his lifetime trying to instill in anyone who would listen. He’s efforts were met with great resistance as he pushed against the accepted religious beliefs of his day. But gradually—against the odds—his teaching caught on, as more and more people were changed by his words and became his disciples. In time, his circle of followers grew into a movement, and after his death, that movement became a major world religion.
- ◆Over time, however some of his followers, zealous to honor him in the greatest way possible, began to transform what he had taught into something quite different. The teacher had claimed to be just this: a spiritual guide, with unique insights and wisdom. But they turned him into a savior, and more than that, a divine figure who would be worshiped—ideas that were completely contrary to what he had taught. Is that an accurate account of what really happened? Yes, it actually is.
- ◆ So writes Christian author, Mark Mittelberg in his book on apologetics. However, he isn’t writing about Jesus, but about Siddhartha Gautama, otherwise known as the Buddha, founder of Buddhism who lived around fivehundred years before Jesus, around the time Israel was exiled in Babylon. People quote him like people quote Jesus: “Try NOT! Do or do not; there is no try!” Or was that Yoda...? Ironically, while many of his followers today worship Buddha as a god, he himself did not even teach that there is such thing as a God. So did the same thing happen with

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Jesus? Big question. Why does Jesus have the central place in the Christian religion? Did he say he was God or did his followers make it up years later? Maybe we should go along with the Muslim faith and just say that Jesus was a great religious teacher... Who is Jesus to you?

◆ What we are going to see today, it that 1) Jesus himself spoke as though he is God 2) his followers from even before his death and resurrection back to life, spoke of him as God, 3) his Jewish countrymen hated him because they clearly knew he claimed to be God and to them, this was blasphemy! All of which means Jesus was certainly not a good religious teacher. He is either far less than that, more like a man who belongs in a locked ward, or he is far more than teacher; he was God himself in the flesh and you and I should tremble at his name! But there is no middle ground. Of course, this creates a problem which we will talk about.

◆ **1. Jesus claims to be the one true God (divine exclusivity.)** That is, unlike Mohammad, who never pretended to be God, and unlike Buddha who didn't claim divinity, Jesus in no uncertain terms, spoke as though he was the/your Creator-God and the only one at that.

◆ A. That makes him unique of all religious leaders.

◆ First, note that Jesus uses the title "Son of Man" of himself (22, 26). Many mistakenly believe this is in reference to his humanity, but it is not. Jesus uses this title referring to

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himself more than four dozen times, more than any other. It comes from the Old Testament book of Daniel where it refers to a divine (god) figure who was to come at the end of the world to judge mankind and rule forever!

◆“I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. “And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.” Daniel 7:13, 14, NASB.

◆So using this title was like saying to a Hebrew, “I’m from heaven.” If that’s not enough to give us the picture, lets consider that Jesus made direct statements claiming to be God.

◆“I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.” Jn.14:6

◆“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” Jn.14:9

◆“I and the Father are one.” Jn.10:30

◆On top of that, Jesus forgave people their sins! What? You might attend a mega-church with another 20,000 worshipers and think the preacher was one special fella, but if he met you in the hall and he said, “Hey, I forgive you for being rude to your wife last night.” well, you’d think he was a little off, wouldn’t you?

◆No other religious system has an individual who claims to be God. Yes, Roman Emperors claimed the title in their days, but no lasting faith, or religion stemmed from any of them. This has serious **implications**, doesn’t it? People say a lot of different

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things about Jesus as though he was whoever you like him to have been. To one he is a sage, to another a moral teacher, to another a philosopher, a magician, a nice guy, a good person. Anyone who knows history has to admit that Jesus of Nazareth has literally impacted human history more than any other person. What was it that made him such a big deal?

◆B. The biggest implication (and we'll think more about this as we go) is that you and I cannot avoid dealing with the person of Jesus Christ whether we want to or not. He has created for us the greatest human dilemma we will ever face (Mittelberg). Mohammad has not put us on the spot. We can read the Koran and decide if we like what he said. It's not like he can do anything about it. Buddha has not put us on the spot. His teachings do not demand our allegiance. The Hindu gods do not put us on the spot, there are thousands of them and no one of them claims power over all the others as though we all answer to it. But Jesus. We only have two choices with Jesus: accept him as the God of Heaven, or reject him as a looney tune, but that means rejecting all him as a good teacher of godliness as well. And if we reject him, and he IS God, we are in a heap of trouble! Just listen to the way he talks!

◆*"Then he said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not. That is why I said that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am who I say I am, you will die in your sins." "Tell us who you are," they demanded.*

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Jesus replied, "I am the one I have always claimed to be." John 8:23-25, NLT.

◆C. Jesus is the one religious figure that allows no wiggle room! This my friends is why, I think, the secular world is so intolerant with Christianity. Muslims teach that the materialistic, licentious American is going straight to hell, but our culture welcomes them with open arms, and respect for their right to believe. Buddhism does not worry our culture because it teaches a universal morality. Hinduism believes we are all part of god, and right and wrong are equally a matter of perspective. But Christians are a different story because their leader, Christ, does not leave us open to lots of individual options. That makes people uncomfortable!

◆[Aside: a common accusation of non-christians against Christians is that we think we're the only ones who are right. They see it as arrogance. Be careful not to let your faith come across that way! Remember, Christians are not to arrogantly claim to have the truth. We are to humbly declare we believe Jesus' claim to be the truth. Jesus and the Scriptures claim he is God. For our part, we affirm we believe it. Always point to Jesus. The problem the unbeliever faces is Jesus and his claims, not his followers!]

◆So who do you say that Jesus is? If he is God, and you chose to **ignore** his commands and wisdom, ("wants to save his life", v24) the way you are living will by nature bring you misery. If he is

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God, and you chose to **obey** Jesus ("loses his life for me." v24), then you can be confident that your obedience will by nature benefit you most.

◆*"And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. So whoever has God's Son has life; whoever does not have his Son does not have life. I write this to you who believe in the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life." 1 John 5:11-13, NLT.*

◆Do you see the possibilities if you believe in Jesus the Son?! Your destiny is assured. You cannot louse it up no matter your pile of mistakes and sins. Jesus paid for all of them!

◆**2.** Ok, what about the people living with and around Jesus? What did they think he was claiming? Or did the whole God-thing grow as a legend over thousands of years as legends do? **The people of Jesus' day were well aware of his claims of divinity.** Some believed it, and some did not, but there was no question that he was claiming it.

◆**A.** The Disciples knew that Jesus was no mere man. Now unlike Buddha's followers who centuries later decided to worship him, Jesus followers already began recognize Jesus as God before, but with certainty after the resurrection. Peter's confession in our text bears this out. You are the "Christ". Christ is not Jesus' last name, it is a title: "the anointed one". The Hebrew term is messiah; the one all the prophets of Israel spoke about for 1000's of years. The one from God that would save his people. Peter is

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saying, "Jesus, you're not just a prophet like Elijah, or a power-preacher like John getting ready for the day of the Lord. You ARE that Lord we've all been waiting for!"

◆It is likely that Peter had been adding things up in his head; things that Jesus had been doing that the prophets had said the Messiah would do. There are over 450 of them.

◆Born in Bethlehem.

◆Enter Jerusalem on a donkey.

◆Be whipped, crucified, offered bitter wine in his death

◆Be from King David's line

◆Be born of the seed of the woman. (What? men carry the seeds! So born of a virgin.

◆Be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver.

◆Be a Nazarene.

◆Heal the sick with a touch, preach the kingdom of God

◆Spend time in Egypt.

◆Did I mention there are over 450 prophecies of the Messiah all of which fit the historical person of Jesus? Little wonder then that the followers of Jesus, who wrote the books of the New

Testament worshipped him and prayed to him. John calls Jesus the "Son of God". Paul calls him the "Savior", the "Lord", and says in him "all the fullness of the deity dwells in bodily form."

◆B. Ok, second, Jesus' countrymen also knew that Jesus was claiming divine status all along. That is why they despised him!

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Jews were strict monotheists; believing in only one God. They were not about to let anyone claim to be him!

◆“But He answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.” For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.” John 5:17, 18, NASB.

◆And again,

◆*“I and the Father are one.” Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” “We are not stoning you for any of these,” replied the Jews, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”” John 10:30-33, NIV.*

◆So you see, it was clear right then and there in the early years of the First Century that people were put on the spot having to say yes or no to whether Jesus was God and ought to be followed, or not. This brings us to our final thoughts for today.

◆**3.** Why is Jesus so central and important in the grand scheme of things? Because **Jesus is the answer. He is the God who saves you!** All other gods and all other religions tell you how you must live and what you must do to save yourself and get into the good graces of the divine Being. All other faiths and religion tell you what to DO. Do this and you will reach enlightenment. Do this and you will pay off your sins, though it may take many

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moons. Do these things and the spirits will smile upon you, Grasshopper. But the Christian faith tells you what's been DONE.

◆vs 22 This verse tells us what was done, even before it happened. Jesus was rejected, killed and came back to life on the third day! We know why! (v25) It was to save your soul from sin and death! That's what was DONE! We do not come here to celebrate how we must behave; but the celebrate how our savior behaved for us!

◆**Conclusion:** So friends, somewhere on the road of your life you have to answer the question of vs 20: *Who do YOU say that Jesus is?* As Lewis puts it,

◆"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of hell. 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 for 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. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

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◆ But here's what he did intend! Heb 9:27. "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him."