

Apr 12, 2026

The week after Easter, we are still in awe at the incredible work of the cross and Jesus' validation in the resurrection the following Sunday.

And today, I want to ask, who do we think Jesus is?

Matt 16:

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'

¹⁵ 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?'

So Who do you say that He is?

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On a march in 70s America, someone paraded with a banner that said:
The resurrection of JC is intellectually credible and existentially satisfying!

The two tests of a valid world view:

Has to be rational, coherent and true,

But also relevant to my needs.

These days, there is a temptation to say – if it works for you, it works!

But this is dangerous

There is something very dangerous called the placebo effect

For sure, you will feel better, but in the long run, the deadly disease is going to continue to take its path – it can do nothing for the disease

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If all that matters is that it feels good – the mafia can do that

It's good to have an income,

It's good to have brothers – sort of

You feel good for a while, but you are dying of something that is not being addressed

Christianity is not true because it seems to work, it works because it is true!

Don't come because it's exciting, relevant and meets your needs – though it undoubtedly is all of those things – but because it is true!

And because it's true, it is all those other things as well. If it's not true, it's a placebo

So how do you know it's true? Check out Jesus!

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The man born blind in our reading, we missed out a chunk of this story – the Pharisees putting enormous pressure on him to betray Jesus – it doesn't work. His own family don't want to get involved – they say, he is of age, let him speak for himself. And the man does.

And take a look what happens here,

Jesus said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

³⁶ “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.”

³⁷ Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”

³⁸ Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

³⁹ Jesus said, ^[a] “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”

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First, let's consider who this man is – a first century Jew

About the least likely of all people to worship a man

In Roman and Greek mythology, the gods weren't the creators of the world, they often mixed with mankind and got involved in all the ways you can imagine.

But the Jews revere the creator God so much that they will not even speak his name out loud. It's one of the reasons the Pharisees are so offended by Jesus.

But whatever passed between these people, this man born blind, confronted with Jesus – just worships him

A man called Huston Smith wrote a book called the worlds great religions. In it he says that in the history of the world, there have only been two individuals whose lives have been so extraordinary that people didn't just ask "who are you " but "what are you?"

Buddha and Jesus

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When they asked Buddha if he was God he said absolutely not, look to my teachings, they will show you the way to God.

Jesus says he is God come to us!

When this man worships Jesus, Jesus calmly takes it – he takes it!

Now, lots of people have claimed divinity but other than a small band of unhinged people, no one believed them – Only one man has ever claimed to be God and hundreds and hundreds of his close friends and acquaintances believed him – whose subsequent sacrifice caused thousands and tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands and millions and billions of people to believe! His earthly brother James – who wrote the book of James, wasn't convinced until after the crucifixion!

There is no need to check in to the life of David Koresh – he was a crackpot with not a shred of credible evidence backing any of his claims. But if you are a thinking person – the magnitude of Jesus' claim – and the conviction of those closest to the events of his life demand you to take a look

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So here's the evidence:

1. A man 2000 years ago claimed to be God
2. People at the time heard him speak, saw him change water into wine, walk on water, calm the storm, heal people, cast out demons and even raise people from the dead before his own resurrection.
3. The first century Jews closest to him – people hardwired not to believe that men could be God – were convinced that he must be – and worshipped him – cf today's rich and famous – see what their nearest and dearest have to say about them – they see the hypocrisy and the selfishness – they're the most salacious stories – but none of these exist about Jesus
4. After he died, dozens and hundreds of people said they saw him risen
5. That experience changed them so much that they spread the word far and wide and died for the privilege – faith in Jesus – in our part of the world anyway – may be described as an emotional crutch – but in the beginning – and still today – faith in Jesus can cost you your family, your friends, your job and even your life

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There are five answers to this problem – Who is Jesus?

The first two are impossible, the next two are improbable and the last one is inescapable

1. Legend
2. Good man
3. Liar
4. Delusional
5. What he says!

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1. Jesus is a legend!

it didn't really happen – just invented long after to allow the people to be controlled – pie in the sky when you die. Except the bible is not written as legend

Read the opening of Luke – a man of letters, he wasn't an eyewitness, but he interviewed the eye witnesses and put together a coherent account of all that happened.

Until the early 1900s, people thought that the gospels had been written a hundred plus years after the event. We now know that this was more like 40 years or so afterwards and some of Paul's epistles were written within 20 years.

If I was to make public a story claiming that there'd been a riot in my home town when I was growing up, there would be a long line of witnesses telling the world that was nonsense.

Imagine how many more would line up to debunk a story of a crucified man ascended to heaven?

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2. Jesus was just a good man

Jesus can be described as many things, but he just cannot be a good man.

Look at what he said:

I am the way the truth and the life, the Only Way to the father!

If you want to follow me, your love for parents, spouse, children has to look like hate in comparison to your love for me

If anything keeps you from me you need to cut it out – cut off your hand, pluck out an eye, better to be disabled than to risk losing me.

No good man would say these things.

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The next two are really the same, a liar or delusional, a fraud or a lunatic
He fooled his disciples.

But one problem with this – the quality of his teaching

GK Chesterton said if you find a key in the street and it opens a lock, you can safely assume it was made by the lock maker.

And so if you find a set of teaching in pre modern oriental society that is so relevant and attractive to all civilisations across millenia, then it is likely that those teachings were designed by the heart maker.

Look at his words!

No one has ever come up with the words that Jesus ought to have said or the things that he ought to have done!

If this has been made up, we would have to be having a conversation about the kind of person that was capable of doing this!

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The words of Jesus are the surprises of perfection

The demonstration of virtues never seen together

Tenderness without weakness

Strength without harshness

Humility without any lack of confidence

Holiness and unbending conviction without the slightest lack of approachability

Power without insensitivity

Passion without prejudice

Harshest judgement on the self satisfied but the most winsome kindness to the broken and marginal

Never inconsistent, never a false step, never a jarring note

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PT Forsyth says, if God be not thus he is less than the God we crave and less than the world needs!

And you can see as you read the accounts – like the man born blind in today's passage, they believed they were looking through the flesh at God himself.

In light of this, it is more difficult to believe that anyone could be this brilliant without being God! It's possible that he was a liar or deluded, but it is vanishingly improbable.

And we haven't even considered the feat of raising from the dead after being tortured and executed.

So it's impossible that Jesus is a legend or a good man.

And it's vanishingly improbable that he was a liar or deluded

We are getting close to the only sensible conclusion from reading the gospels – that he is who he says he is

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But it is such a big step – and we don't want to take it.

There is so much more evidence for Jesus' life, words and actions than for instance that Caesar invaded Gaul – but it's impossible for us to read them objectively. It makes no difference to our life that Caesar invaded Gaul, but if we believe Jesus is who he says he is, we lose control of our own life. We have to change how we live. There is a tremendous motive for us not to believe. That's why people want to tell themselves and you that it's not true.

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So what does this leave us with?

It's hard to believe he is who he says he is, but its harder to believe he's not

If you can get past the supernatural, get past the miracles and your prejudices,

Then he is the Son of God, offering us ultimate forgiveness and eternal life in Him

The I AM!

The name God gave for himself to Moses.

Think about the words – I Am. Never was, never going to be, just I Am – forever.

My wife Wendy has been married to at least five different men – and they've all been me

We change and we are here only for a fleeting time.

But God never changes and is always here.

And Jesus – my favourite of his I AM sayings,

Before Abraham was born I AM!

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But what does that mean to us?

If Jesus is who he says he is and you don't hate him, fear him or love him, you have not really been listening.

And so, who is he to us?

For me personally, he used to be the enemy. I attacked him and Christians mercilessly – but he always kept the door open. I honestly expected when I became a Christian that I would have a lot of apologising to do – but like the father of the prodigal son, they didn't allow one crumb of humble pie get to my lips.

I also had a long period of indifference – just putting my fingers in my ears and La La La!!

Actually, I think this is the hardest for the Lord to take – like a child that won't listen to any instruction, needlessly suffering.

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But then – and I was 30 when I became a Christian – he became my master and my friend – sort of all at the same time.

Though I should say that I have known people for who he is their master – they are obedient and ‘good’. They are Jesus’ servant but haven’t realised that he’s also a friend. It’s possible to get stuck here. Maybe it’s fear, maybe it’s bad theology – do you know anyone like that – are you like that?

Here’s what Jesus says in John 15:15 “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you”

And then somewhere over the intervening 25 years, Jesus became even more than a master and a friend.

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Just as the disciples developed from servants to friends, we read also in John – when Mary was speaking to Jesus after his resurrection – after Jesus had finished his purpose for coming to earth and living as a man – after mankind was reconciled with God through Jesus' redeeming sacrifice

Jesus says: John 20:17 ¹⁷ Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."'"

Go to my brothers

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Jesus always was and is our elder brother – but we need to grow into that relationship.

In a moment of silence – answer the question in your heart – who is Jesus to you, and who do you want him to be.

Amen

Let us pray

Prayer

Lord Jesus, when we are your enemy, have patience with us – help us to see that we have been deceived

When we put you from our mind and ignore you, stir up our hearts with a longing to know you!

When we fear you, give us the grace that relieves those fears and encourages us to come deeper into your presence,

When we love you, change us and mould us more into your image – help us to be willing to be pulled into a closer relationship with you.

And when we pull away, never give up on us.

We thank you that you never did give up on us, that you demonstrated your own love for us in this – while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

amen