

Jesus on Jesus

Series: *Jesus On _____: The Only Perspective that Matters*

Pastor Jarrett Stephens

I want to let you know that next week, we are going to have some special friends with us that are from the Holy Land. The Nissan family have been partners in ministry for a long time. When we take trips to Israel, we will typically go to Bethlehem and after touring The Church of the Nativity and having a service in the shepherd fields, we will have lunch at a restaurant owned by this family and then let those that are with us go to their olive wood store and do a little shopping.

They also own a small shop right near the Mount of Olives as well, and when it's not so safe to go into Bethlehem, we take those with us to shop at their store in Jerusalem. They always take such good care of us.

They are Palestinian believers and as you can imagine their business has suffered greatly over the last year, and so they are making their way through the States visiting with different churches that have visited them through the years, and we thought it would be wonderful to have them and AFTER the services next week, they are going to set up shop down in our FLC and make available some of their handmade olive wood products.

If you have ever wanted a manger set hand-carved and hand-crafted from olive wood right out of the town of Bethlehem, next week is your chance! They will have a ton of their olive wood products available.

This is a wonderful family and allowing them to set up after the services is just a small way we can serve them and help them in what has been a very tough time – you can imagine with the lack of tourism how hard it has been for them and all of the families they employ.

Wanted to make you aware of this so that you could come ready next week if you are at all interested.

In talking about Israel, one of my favorite places to go and teach when there is at Caesarea Philippi. This is a place that is rich in history as it related to pagan worship, and it is also the place where Jesus asked one of his most well-known questions in all of the Bible.

It's found in Matthew's gospel. **Matt. 16:13** – “**Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”**

Word had been getting around about Jesus and his ministry. And Jesus wanted the disciples to articulate some of the speculation and rumors they had heard. His ministry was no doubt causing A LOT of people to talk. And they answered him.

Matt. 16:14-15 – “**And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”**

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Just like today, there were a lot of opinions out there about Jesus. People were wondering and drawing their own conclusions concerning:

- Who he was...
- Where he had come from...
- How he had so much power...
- How he could speak with such authority...
- What was he going to do next...

It seemed as if EVERYONE had an opinion about Jesus. We’ll come back to this text at the very end of our time together today.

This is the conclusion of our *Jesus on* series. And we’ve been looking at what Jesus said about various topics and issues. His perspective matters the most and today we want to look at, and this is the title and direction we are going: **Jesus on Jesus**

It’s one thing for people to have an opinion about who Jesus is. It’s one thing for YOU to have an opinion about who Jesus is. What we’re going to discover today is: Who did Jesus say he was?

I’ve heard through the years people make this argument...that Jesus NEVER claimed to be God.

In fact, Bart Ehrman, a professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill classifies himself as an agnostic atheist. He is one of the foremost skeptics of the day regarding the claims of Christ.

His testimony is interesting because as a teenager he was “born again” only to abandon his faith after attending college AND seminary. He wrote a book called *How Jesus Became God*, and in it writes that Jesus never thought of himself as God nor did he claim to be God.

Now, a couple of things. First, he’s right that Jesus NEVER came out and said verbatim, “I am God”. If you are looking for that claim to be made in the “black and white” and in quotes in your Bible you won’t find it.

However, as we will see in the message today there is NO QUESTION Jesus was God, and it was validated throughout his life and ministry in many different ways...we’ll see this in our time together today.

Second, it just needs to be said...I know last week was senior Sunday, but there were a lot of graduations that took place this weekend, and I just want to say this to all our graduates.

When you go to college, your faith is going to be tested! Fair warning here: The Enemy will try to threaten and shake the foundation that your parents have laid in your life by teaching you the ways of the Lord, and the investment the church has made in your life.

So, just a word of encouragement: If you come across a professor who thinks they are smarter than God, don't let the Satan use them to persuade you into thinking that what you have been raised in is somehow too elementary or too simplistic!

As Christians, we don't check our brains at the door! We can defend our faith and if it's attacked, I would encourage you to lean into truth because Jesus is truth – don't you dare let a professor just because they have the initials Ph.D. beside their name cause you to doubt what has been poured into you all these years.

You ever heard the poem, *The Amazing Professor*? W.A. Criswell was prone to sharing it back in the day! It goes like this: “*Once I was a tadpole when I began to begin. Then I was a frog with my tail tucked in. Next I was a monkey on a coconut tree. Now I am a doctor with a PhD.*”

No offense to some of our PhD's out there doing good work! My encouragement is just don't listen and fall prey to someone who is so open minded their brain has fallen out!

So, let's get after it today. This is *Jesus on Jesus*. While he never spoke the words, “I am God”, did he know he was God? Did he suggest to others he was God? A lot of people have an opinion about him, what was Jesus's opinion of himself?

I want to look at two areas of his life to answer this question. We'll first take a deep dive into his identity and then we'll look at his teaching and miracle working ministry.

First, his: **Identity**

Now, there are two separate categories that point to the identity of Jesus. Let's look at both his character and his claims. Let's talk first of: **His Character**

One of my favorite books is by one of my favorite authors. It's A.W. Tozer and his book, *Knowledge of the Holy*.

It's a book about the attributes or characteristics of God. There are what are called communicable and incommunicable characteristics of God.

Communicable characteristics are those character traits and attributes that he shares with humans. These would include traits like love and patience and mercy and knowledge. We can have these characteristics and grow in these characteristics because God shares them with us...we have them because we are made in his image – communicable characteristics.

There are incommunicable characteristics though that God does NOT share with anyone else. When you think if humans, these attributes can't be described to them.

Let me give you just a few examples. There are more, but we will limit it for sake of time.

- 1. Omniscience – God perfectly and eternally knows all things that can be known – past, present, and future**
- 2. Sovereignty – the supreme authority of God**
- 3. Eternality – God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally, yet God sees events in time and acts in time**

Now, these are characteristics...attributes that can only be ascribed to God. You and me, and every other human to ever live do NOT share in these characteristics.

However, Jesus does. How is this? Because he is God. Now, he did “empty himself” while on earth of some of his divine rights – he left the confines of heaven (Phil. 2), but he didn’t empty himself from being God. And we can say this with 100% confidence!

Omniscience? Did Jesus know all things? Well, he knows more than mere humans, that’s for sure. We see in Matthew’s gospel he could read the people’s thoughts! They were wondering how he could forgive sin which no one could do but God (we’ll get there in a moment) and the scripture says in:

Matthew 9:4 – “But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts?”

This idea of Jesus knowing the unspoken thoughts of man is affirmed later in Matt. 12, Mark 2, and also in Luke 6. Do you recall his conversation with the woman at the well in John’s gospel?

He read right through her after she told him she didn’t have a husband. He said:

John 4:17b-18 – “...Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”

How did Jesus know that? Siri didn’t exist! He didn’t Google it or read a tabloid! He read her mail because he created her, knew her and knew everything about her!

- He knew Lazarus had died before he left on his journey to go raise him from the dead.
- He knew Judas was going to betray him and that Peter was going to deny him!
- He knew how he would die and that he would rise!

Jesus was omniscient because Jesus was God! What about sovereign? Can we say Jesus has supreme authority?

Matt. 28:18 – “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

Before his resurrection, where he spoke those words, do you remember what he said about rising from the dead...speaking of authority...sovereign over what would happen to him in his life:

John 10:18 – “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Omniscient – check! Sovereign over the affairs of the world – check! How many times in scripture was his life threatened and Jesus simply escape through the crowds? No one would touch him before it was “his time”. NOTHING happens without him signing off. What about eternal?

This is a BIG one! Church history is filled with this debate. Is Jesus divine in his nature or was he just adopted by God at his birth?

The earliest of the creeds, the Apostles’ Creed refers to “Jesus as Lord” – he is God! The Nicene Creed written in 325...listen to what it states about Jesus:

The Nicene Creed – “We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father.”

Arius was an early church heretic that taught Jesus was less than God...that he was a created being. Like Bart Ehrman, Jesus would have never thought himself as divine. Athanasius, an early church father comes along and using scripture begins to declare how wrong this thought is.

Ultimately, a creed is written and attributed his name because it champions a high Christology...that Jesus was divine...eternal. Here is a section of the creed.

The Athanasian Creed – “That we worship one God in trinity and the trinity in unity, neither blending their persons nor dividing their essence. For the person of the Father is a distinct person, the person of the Son is another, and that of the Holy Spirit still another. But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal.”

We’ll look at this in the next category concerning the claims of Jesus, but why would church historians fight for this? Why is this such a big deal? Because Jesus said it about himself. His eternity.

John 10:30 – “I and the Father are one.”

John 14:9b – “...Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”

These are just a few examples of the character of Jesus being the character of God. We could talk about:

- his holiness...
- his independence (he doesn't need anyone or anything)...
- his immutability (he is unchanging)...

Jesus acted as God because he was God. We see it in his character. And btw – this is why he is such a faithful High Priest...a mediator between us and the Father! This is why we can go to Jesus, lean on Jesus, trust in Jesus. Because he is God – his very character shines light on his identity.

We also see his identity being known via: **His Claims**

Jesus spoke as God because he was God. Let me show you very quickly three of his claims he made regarding his divinity.

The first is in John's gospel. Jesus is in a little discussion with the Pharisees. And they can't figure him out at all. And Jesus begins to teach them about his origin - that he has come from the Father and they take the conversation down the road of saying, well, "Abraham is our father." We pick up the conversation in **John 8:56-59** – "**Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.**" ⁵⁷ **So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"** ⁵⁸ **Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."** ⁵⁹ **So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple."**

So, look at this...crazy that people said, Jesus never declared himself to be God! Again, he never used those exact words, but this claim here that he makes: "Before Abraham was, I am" – that's the clearest he could be at claiming to be God!

Notice...he didn't say, "Before Abraham was, I was". He says, "Before Abraham was, I am" – this is Jesus clearly giving a reference God's self-given name to Moses from Exodus 3. He is setting himself up as the eternal, preexistent one.

Do you remember that scene in scripture? God calls Moses from a burning bush and commissions him to go to Pharaoh to demand the people of God be set free from the bondage of slavery in Egypt.

Moses wants to know what he is to say when Pharaoh says, "who is sending you". God's response is, you tell him the "I am" is sending you!"

In this instance, Jesus is claiming to be God. Why else would the religious leaders pick up stones to stone him! To them, he was committing blasphemy!

We already saw the claim Jesus made in: **John 10:30** – "**I and the Father are one.**"

That entire idea of “oneness” would have caused those listening who were all Jews to consider the words of the Shema that they repeated twice a day – “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one.”

This again, is Jesus claiming to be God. And here again, we see the religious leaders interpreting what Jesus is saying rightly because they again pick up stones to stone him.

John 10:31-33 – “The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?”³³ The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.”

Jesus did NOT hide his identity from people. He showed others via his character and his claims that he was God. I think of how he revealed this sometimes secretly to just some of his disciples (like at the transfiguration – Luke 17), but he also spoke about it plainly like he did before the High Priest the night he was arrested.

Mark 14:61b-64 – “Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”⁶² And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”⁶³ And the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further witnesses do we need?⁶⁴ You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death.”

They condemned him because he was claiming he is the “I Am” – that the honor that belongs to the one, true God rightly belongs to him – because he is God!

John Stott – “So close was His connection with God that he equated a man’s attitude to himself with his attitude to God, Thus to know Him was to know God (John 8:19, 14:17); to see Him was to see God (John 12:45, 14:9); to believe Him was to believe in God (John 12:44, 14:1); to receive Him was to receive God (Mark 9:37); to hate Him was to hate God (John 15:23); and to honor Him was to honor God (John 5:23).”

Jesus revealed he was God by declaring his true identity throughout his lifetime. Sure, he hid himself at times and did not disclose himself to everyone ALL the time, but he made his identity known by both his character and his claims.

He also demonstrated to people he was God through his: **Ministry**

And by his ministry, I primarily mean his miracle-working ministry. Think about how often in his earthly life, he performed miracles. ALL his miracles point to the fact that he is God.

He showed power over nature! Storms ceased. Love that imagery of this sleeping while the disciples are scared for their lives. What was rocking the disciple’s world was rocking him to sleep!

- Fish came in nets!
- He walked on water!
- He casted out demons! (Mark pigs – deviled ham!)
- He healed the sick!

All of this was to show forth...to demonstrate that he was God!

You see his teaching that he was God and his miracle working ministry confirming he was God coming together in places like Mark chapter 2 and the story of the paralyzed man.

Do you remember that story? (tell story)

Mark 2:5-12 – “And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”⁶ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts,⁷ “Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”⁸ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts?⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’?¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic—¹¹ “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.”¹² And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

There is no question, Jesus was God. It’s amazing as well to think about who Jesus targeted while on mission to earth. This again reveals to us that he’s God.

- He went after the broken and marginalized in society.
- His heart broke for the poor and the outcast and diseased.

Jesus touched them, spent time with them, and talked with them – his identity being revealed through his ministry.

The biggest miracles within his earthly ministry were of course raising people from the dead. Did you know that Jesus broke up every funeral he ever attended? (little boy, little girl, Lazarus, his own!)

All of these miracles point to and confirm that Jesus is indeed God. So, question, what is our response to all of this?

Well, in the scripture, when Jesus revealed himself as God...when they realized his identity usually AFTER hearing him teach or seeing it validated through his miracles, there was one of three responses:

The first was: **People confessed Jesus as Lord**

We see this in Thomas's life after he sees the resurrected Jesus. Thomas refused to believe until he saw Jesus personally. And then after he did, do you remember his response?

John 20:28 – “**Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”** (“God” reserved for the Father, and here it’s attributed to Jesus – he is God!) Thomas knows it AND confesses it!

The second response of people when learning of Jesus's identity as God is: **People worship Jesus as Lord**

We see this on multiple occasions. After Jesus walks on water demonstrating his deity, he gets in the boat and the scripture says in:

Matt. 14:32-33 – “**And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”**

After his resurrection, right before he gives the Great Commission, the scripture says in:

Matt. 28:17a – “**And when they saw him they worshipped him...**”

This worship is witnessed as falling down to the ground...it is paying homage to...it is a giving of your life. It's worship. It's surrender. And as a result we see a a third response in scripture, and that is: **People follow Jesus as Lord**

We see this in Blind Bartimaeus (tell story).

Mark 10:52 – “**And Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.**

We see this in Jesus calling his first disciples. He demonstrates his divinity. He reveals his identity through his miracle working ministry and look at what happens...we see all three responses in the life of Peter when Jesus called him to follow him.

Luke 5:4-11 – “**And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”⁵ And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.”⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.⁷ They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees (worship Jesus as Lord), saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” (confessing Jesus as Lord)⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken,¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.” (following Jesus as Lord).**

I want to close today's message with how I started...way back at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus asked his disciples a question, "Who do people say that I am?"

And they answered...What matters though is NOT who others think Jesus is, what matters is:

1. Who did Jesus say that Jesus was?

And as we have noted, by revealing his identity through his characteristics and claims and by demonstrating who he was via his miracle working ministry, we have seen MORE than enough evidence that he is God.

The question we have to answer is the follow up question he asked the disciples that day in Caesarea Philippi, and that is:

Matt. 16:15 – “But who do you say that I am?”

It's emphatic, it's personal, and it's a question that all of us have to answer before we leave today. IF you say that Jesus is God, then we must respond as we see in scripture. And that is by:

- Confessing Jesus as Lord...
- Worshipping Jesus as Lord...
- Following Jesus as Lord...

Will you pray with me?

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.