

## We Can Believe

### Part 6

#### **Text – John 8 : 48 - 59**

**Intro** – Why did the Jews want to stone Jesus to death at the end of their interaction with Him?

The reason was twofold. Jesus made two claims that were odious to His Jewish counterparts: **Jesus claimed to be eternal** (He claimed to predate Abraham, who at that time had lived 2,000 years prior) & **Jesus claimed to be God**. Jesus' claim to deity is seen in His use of the phrase, "I am," which is the self-revealed name of Yahweh, the God of Israel.

You have to admit, they're some tall claims: **eternality and deity!**

With this passage in John 8 as our backdrop, I'd like to share a quote from **C.S. Lewis** about Jesus: "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."

**What are we to make of Jesus?** Who was He? Who IS He? How are we to relate to Him? Is He the Son of God or a charlatan?

Let's begin our discussion with a familiar question...

#### **I. Why It Matters –**

- Among the many **claims** of Christianity, there are at least four that are important for our consideration regarding the person of Jesus:
  - 1. Jesus is God incarnate** – Jesus is not just a prophet, rabbi, teacher, good moral example, or humanitarian; He claimed to be God in the flesh.
  - 2. Jesus died for our sins to provide salvation** – Jesus was crucified on Calvary. **He didn't die as a martyr: He didn't die for a cause; He is the cause.** He died in giving his life and shedding His blood for our sin, taking our sin away by His vicarious death.
  - 3. Jesus rose from the dead** – When Jesus died, that was not the end of the story! His resurrection on the first Easter Sunday demonstrated His power over death, hell, and the grave.

- 4. Jesus determines our eternal destiny** – Where we spend eternity, in Heaven or Hell, is determined by our **relationship** with Jesus. Jesus, as the divine judge of the universe, will judge the whole of humanity and their eternal home hinges on their relationship with Him and Him alone.
- Just in looking at those 4 claims, there’s a lot to understand and think through.
    - As one writer states: “The truth, power, and appeal of Christianity depends entirely on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Christianity is not primarily a belief system or a set of religious doctrines and practices. At its core, Christianity is a commitment to a particular historical figure, Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, who is regarded as not merely human, but also divine. (We would say that Christianity is a relationship, not a religion.) The person and work of Jesus Christ sets Christianity entirely apart from every other religion and philosophy.”
  - With this being the case, we are pressed to make sure that what we believe about Jesus is true and accurate.
    - I don’t want to gamble with something as priceless as my eternal soul!
    - Furthermore, I don’t want to stand here before you and teach and preach that “Jesus is the Way” when He is not or if there are doubts about who He truly is.
  - There are many in our society who flatly deny that Jesus is Who the Scriptures proclaim Him to be.
    - You may remember the very popular book and movie back in the early 2000s – “**The Da Vinci Code.**”
      - **Dan Brown**, the author of the book, suggested that Jesus truly was a powerfully influential historical figure but stopped at recognizing His deity. Brown had no problem in recognizing Jesus as a great **mortal** prophet but refused to see Him beyond that.
    - Claims like those of Dan Brown and others cause us to consider Jesus and Who He is and Who He claims to be.
      - If He’s not God, we are wasting our time trusting and believing Him.
      - We know that’s not the case and so now we want to demonstrate that Jesus is actually who He claims to be.
      - Buckle up, this is going to be good!

## **II. Jesus’ Titles –**

- We want to begin by looking at how Jesus referred to Himself and how others referred to Him.
- There are **three titles** of Jesus that we want to consider:

## 1. Christ –

- The first title used of Jesus, and probably the most familiar, is the Greek “Christ” (Christo), which is derived from the Hebrew word for “Messiah.”
- The title Messiah or Christ was not an explicitly divine title; rather, it was the acknowledgment of a **divine anointing**.
- As Jewish history progressed, “**Messiah**” became a more technical designation for the anointed of the Lord who was expected to come to redeem or rescue Israel from oppression and bondage.
- There are **three instances** in the Gospel accounts that we want to look at where the title of Christ was used:
  - A. **Matthew 16:16** – Jesus had asked the disciples who people thought He was.
    - After their responses, He asked them who they thought He was.
    - This is when Peter responds with: **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**
    - Jesus does not rebuke or correct Peter for this. He actually responds with: “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” (Vs. 17)
  - B. **Luke 7** – In this passage, John the Baptist is beginning to wonder who Jesus was.
    - John sends some of his disciples to ask Jesus: **“Are you the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?”**
    - Jesus tells John’s disciples to take note of the miracles of healing and exorcisms they have witnessed through His ministry and report that back to John.
    - Jesus, here in Luke 7, is actually referencing O.T. prophecies found in **Isaiah 35 and 61**, which first-century Jews regarded as messianic promises.
    - In essence, Jesus is saying, “Yes, I am the Messiah. See how my ministry fulfills what was promised through the prophet Isaiah.”
  - C. **Mark 15:26** – When Pilate consented to Jesus’ crucifixion, he had to write the charges on the placard that was attached to the cross.
    - The charges read: **“The King of the Jews.”**
    - This title was one used by Jews for the expected Messiah.
    - Interesting to note here, this is not just Jesus’ reference or claim about Himself.
      - The Romans, the ones who were executing Him, identified Him as the one claiming to be the Messiah of Israel.

## 2. Son of God –

- This term claims for Jesus a unique intimate relationship and connection with God.
- Again, there are **three examples** of this we want to consider found in the Gospel accounts.
  - A. **Matthew 11:25-27** – “At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*.”
    - You can see that Jesus claims a unique and personal relationship with God the Father.
  - B. **Mark 12:1-12** – In this passage, Jesus tells the parable of the **wicked tenants**.
    - The owner of the vineyard is representative of God.
    - The vineyard is representative of Israel.
    - The owner sends his servants to collect his share of the crops (the fruit God expected of Israel).
    - Yet, on each occasion, the tenants mistreat and kill the owner’s representatives (O.T. prophets).
    - Finally, he has one more representative to send, that being **his own son**.
      - Instead of respecting the son, they kill him.
    - Jesus, in **vss. 9-11**, says this about the fate of the evil tenants: “What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. Have you not even read this Scripture: ‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES?’”
    - **Jesus is identifying himself as the son of the vineyard owner**.
      - The **tenants**, the Jewish leaders, would beat and kill Him.
      - The owner will respond by killing those tenants (**a foreshadowing of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70**) and will give the vineyard to others (referencing the Gospel being taken to the Gentiles, the birth of the N.T. Church).

- C. **Mark 14:35-36** – “And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell to the ground and *began* to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.”
- In the “Abba” prayers of Jesus, He regularly refers to God as Father.
  - This degree of familiarity was not recognized in Judaism.
    - God was Lord, sovereign of the universe.
    - A self-respecting Jew would find it quite presumptuous to call God “Father.”
    - Jesus was comfortable praying this way to God for He knew that God was His Father!

### 3. Son of Man –

- This title is important and meaningful in several ways:

#### A. Son of Man was Jesus’ favorite title for Himself –

- For example, in a passage we’ve already considered, Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man in **Matthew 16**, when He asked the disciples who they thought He was.
- As a matter of fact, Jesus uses the title Son of Man about **78** times in the Gospel narratives.
- Perhaps, just as interesting, is the fact that this title is only used once by someone outside of Christ in the New Testament, that being the first martyr of the N.T. Church, **Stephen** in **Acts 7:56**.

#### B. Son of Man carried very strong divine connotations in first-century Palestine.

- Jesus’ use of this title is different from the title we normally see used in the O.T.
  - In the O.T. references, when not referring to Christ, “son of man” was used generically, as in the case with Ezekiel the prophet.
- When Jesus uses the definite article “**The** Son of Man,” it is used to designate Him alone.
- This definitive use of the title, “The Son of Man” points us back to **Daniel 7:13-14**, which reads: “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, *One* like **the Son of Man**, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, And His kingdom *the one* which shall not be destroyed.” (NKJV)

- Daniel's Son of Man is a human-looking figure but is endowed with divine attributes.
  - Who is great and glorious enough to come on the clouds, approach the Ancient of Days, be given dominion and glory over all humanity, and is worthy of worship and praise of all creation?
    - It is none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God!
  
- As we conclude, let's briefly consider one last passage of Scripture found in **Mark 14:60-64**, which reads: "The high priest stood up *and came* forward and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" But He kept silent and did not answer. Again, the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "**Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?**" And Jesus said, "**I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.**" Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death."
  - Jesus is being questioned by the Jewish Sanhedrin.
  - They want to kill Him. For the most part Jesus remains silent until the high priest asks, "**Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?**"
  - At this, Jesus speaks and in so doing He references all three titles regarding Himself:
    - "Are you the **Christ?**" – "Yes, I am."
    - "Are you the **Son of the Blessed One?**" – "Yes, I am."
    - And then Jesus adds, "... and you shall see **The Son of Man** sitting at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of Heaven."
  - At this, the high priest tears his garments, demanding that Jesus be put to death for blasphemy.
    - And you know what, if Jesus is not in fact God, then he would have uttered blasphemy and deserved death under the Jewish law.
    - But praise His name, He is not a blasphemer, He is God.

**INVITATION** – Let's revisit C.S. Lewis as we close. Remember, he said the following: "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.**"

In essence, **Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord.** Who is He to you?

I pray that He is in your life, what He truly is in time and eternity, The Lord of Heaven and Earth!