

What Is The Big Deal About Jesus?

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[0 : 00] Well, what's the big deal about Jesus? I don't know if that's ever a question that you've ever asked. And if you wouldn't call yourself a follower of Jesus, you've probably asked that question, or at least thought it.

What's the big deal about Jesus? It's why is he so important to the Christian faith? Why is he the subject of the best-selling book of all time?

Why do people worship him? Why do people dedicate their lives to him? Why do people go around telling people about him? Why did this Jewish man, who historians agree, lived around in AD 1 to 30, why did he suddenly explode onto the scene and become the center of one of the biggest religions that shaped the Western world?

Why did his first followers claim that he was alive? Why were they willing to die for this claim?

What's the big deal about Jesus? All of us actually, whether we'd call ourselves Christians or not, we answer that question even just in our minds all the time.

When we, you know, why should we go to church? Why should I do what Jesus wants instead of what I want? Why should I battle to put sin to death? In fact, every choice we make is saying, ultimately, Jesus matters or Jesus doesn't matter.

[1 : 22] So that's the question. Why, what is the big deal about Jesus? Why should he be a big deal in our lives? And that's the question we come across in our passage this morning. What's the big deal about Jesus?

And if we pick up the story from chapter three, verse 22, Jesus and his disciples have left Jerusalem after the Passover and they've headed, they've gone into the Judean countryside and there Jesus is baptizing people.

But he's not the only one there. Verse 23 tells us that John is also baptizing. This isn't the John who's written the gospel, but the John the Baptist who he met in chapter one, John who describes himself as the voice crying out in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord.

In other words, John's the herald of the king. And John was a pretty popular guy. He was a great preacher. He taught and he told people that they needed to come to God.

They needed to repent. And people have been flocking around John. But then once Jesus comes on the scene, the most people who had been around John start leaving and they start going to Jesus.

[2 : 24] And so in verse 26, John's disciples say, why Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness, look, he is baptizing and all are going to him.

Now I don't know what kind of tone of voice you would read that with, but I don't think they're that happy. They're pretty jealous. They're upset. They're confused. John and John is their guy and now people are going to Jesus.

Why are they going to Jesus rather than John? In other words, what's the big deal about Jesus?

What does he have that John doesn't? Why is he so important that people should listen to him, that people should go to him?

And that's the question that runs all the way through this passage. What's the big deal about Jesus? Well, first John gives us our first point. John the Baptist responds to his disciples by telling us that Jesus is the bridegroom or reminding us of that.

Let me just read again from verse 28. You yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him. The one who has the bride is the bridegroom.

[3 : 28] The friend of the bridegroom who stands in his, him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. In other words, John is saying people should go to Jesus because I'm just the best man.

Jesus is the bridegroom. The bride belongs with the groom, not me. And that bridegroom imagery isn't accidental. It's not just a great little illustration that John's thought of.

You see, throughout the Old Testament, God describes his relationship with his people as a bridegroom with a bride. God rescues his people, his bride of Israel out of Egypt.

He brings them into the land. But then God's people are unfaithful. In Hosea, God describes them like an adulterous wife, even like a whore, in that they've turned away from God and they've given their love elsewhere.

And so Israel is exiled. But God doesn't just leave it there. Throughout the Bible, he promises restoration. And in the book of Isaiah, God promises to bring his people out of exile and restore them to himself as his bride.

[4 : 34] Let me just read the verse from Isaiah where, where God promises, for as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. God's promising that, God's promising the Old Testament to a people who have gone away from him, is that he's gonna restore them back in as close a relationship as a bridegroom with a bride.

And Jesus is a big deal because he is that promised bridegroom. He's the one who finally takes the people to be with him as his bride. Jesus matters because people belong with him.

And for John to get in the way of that would be like, the best man shoving the groom aside and taking the bride's hand instead. You can imagine the wedding scene. I mean, we just had a, there was just Gabby and Matt's wedding yesterday.

And there I imagined that Matt was there with his best man waiting for Gabby to arrive. Well, this scene is slightly different. You have the bride is waiting in the house or in the location and the best man is there waiting, making sure everything's ready.

And they're waiting for the groom arrive. I don't know if the groom is probably more late than most brides, because guys, I don't know, I tend to be late for things. But the best man is waiting and the brides all dressed up, everything is prepared.

[5 : 51] The only thing is left is for the groom to arrive. Well, when the groom arrives, how do you think the best man responds? Well, he's thrilled because he knows that his friend loves the bride. He knows that the bride belongs with his friend, the groom.

And so John, who says, John's like, says, I'm the guy that's just listening at the door. I'm the guy that's just waiting for this long awaited bridegroom to arrive. And now Jesus on the scene, I'm not disappointed.

This is the moment we've been waiting for. The bridegroom has arrived. Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete. There's nothing that could make John more joyful than people going to Jesus, because people belong with Jesus, as much as the bride belongs with the groom.

John says his job's just to hand it over, that he must increase and I must decrease. Jesus is the big deal because he's the bridegroom we belong with.

And people needed to know that. They needed to know that Jesus is the one they belong with. And that's why John was pointing them to Jesus. And the question is, do we realize that?

[6 : 59] If you don't know Jesus says your Lord and Savior, do you realize that that's who you belong with? You don't belong anywhere else. That's the place, that's the relationship that you were created for.

It's not an accident that the bridegroom language appears quite a lot in these chapters. In the beginning of chapter two, what happened? Well, Jesus performed the duty of the bridegroom by providing wine when it had run out.

And it's no accident that then the bridegroom actually imagery appears maybe more subtly in chapter four, where Jesus meets a woman at the well who's had five husbands and the sixth person she's with isn't her husband.

Jesus appears as the complete number seven and he says, I can give you the water of eternal life that completely satisfies.

In other words, he's the only one that can meet her needs. You need me, he's saying. Jesus is the bridegroom who we belong with. He's the only one where we're gonna find satisfaction.

[8 : 01] He's the only one where we're gonna find rest. Outside his arms, there's nothing that belongs with him. And there's sometimes a mentality that we need to trust in Jesus because, oh, because that just saves us from eternal judgment.

And it just matters after death, trusting in Jesus. But here, we're reminded that it's so much more than that. Every day we live outside the arms of Christ, every day that we give our love and devotion to anyone apart from Christ, we're cutting ourselves off from the bridegroom we've been created for.

In verse 36, Jesus says, whoever believes in the son has eternal life, has. That's present tense. The life that Jesus gives, the love that Jesus gives isn't just after death, it's the fullness of that.

Begins now. You can trace that word life all the way through John's gospel. If you got some time, read it through, trace it through, that isn't just life to come, that's life now.

Jesus is a big deal because he's the bridegroom we belong with. And that's something that we Christians need to be reminded of as well. The task of every Christian is like out of John the Baptist. [9:16] It's not just the preacher's job, it's to point to Jesus. It's that Jesus must increase and that we must decrease. We're not gonna do that though with any urgency or with any conviction unless we're first convinced that people need Jesus.

Unless we're first convinced that Jesus is a big deal, that he matters. Otherwise we're gonna point people to other things or even point people to ourselves. And our author knows, John knows that we need to be convinced still that Jesus is the big deal.

So he gives us little editorial in verses 31 to 36, which we're gonna turn to now with our second point. Why does Jesus matter? Why is he a big deal?

Because he's the ultimate envoy. You know what an envoy is? It's like an ambassador, a spokesperson. And the prophets of old and John the Baptist were all spokesmen for God.

They represented God to the people. They spoke for God to the people. Well, Jesus is the ultimate envoy. Because he doesn't just simply represent God, he is God.

[10:19] We see that in verse 31, reminded that he who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth, belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way.

He who comes from a heaven is above all. There, John is contrasting the ministry of John, the Baptist and the prophets, to that of Jesus. John is just a man. He's just from the earth.

Whereas Jesus comes from heaven. He comes directly from the farthest side, speaking the words of God as God. John began his whole gospel reminding us this.

Jesus is the eternal word who is made flesh. He's the one who always has been. He doesn't have an origin. He comes from God as God with God's authority and power and knowledge and wisdom. Jesus is the Lord of all. He's above all. That's why we need to listen to him. He's not simply above all though. He comes from above to make God known to us.

[11:19] That's what verse 32 is getting at. He bears witness to what he has seen and heard. You know, the prophets were just kind of, God was passing a message down to them. See, they said, thus says the Lord.

You don't find Jesus saying thus says the Lord though, do you? Because he's speaking from what he has seen and heard. He comes direct from heaven with that message. We're in a world that is searching for answers.

We're asking questions like, who am I? Why am I here? Where are we? And in our world, people take different avenues to try to answer those questions.

But ultimately, every way in which we answer those questions, left to ourselves, we don't know the answers. We're all as ignorant as the next person. I heard it illustrated like this.

Imagine you woke up in a big hall and the doors are locked and there's no windows and you don't know what's outside. You don't know how you got there. You've lost your memory.

[12:17] You don't know who you are. You don't know where you are. Well, everyone in the hall is gonna start kind of trying to work out who, where they are and what's happening. Sally, the scientist, is gonna start scraping away the rock and go, oh, it feels like kind of sandy sandstone and feels the heat on it.

Well, it feels quite hot. Maybe we're in Australia or some kind of guest like that. Phil, the philosopher will go and sit in the corner and stroke his beard for a few hours and then conclude, I think, therefore I am.

Ralph, the radical will just suggest that we're part of a big government experiment. But the reality is, everyone in that hall doesn't really know why they're there. They can take guesses. They can take educated guesses, but they don't actually know.

But then a hole in the roof appears and a guy is lowered down and he says, I've come to tell you why you're here and I've come to get you out. It's a very imperfect illustration.

It's not my own. I stole it. But that's a bit like the situation that the human race finds itself in. We're all asking questions, but we have no way of getting the answers unless someone from the outside comes in.

[13:23] Someone who's heard the things direct from the Father's side and Jesus is that someone. He comes from above. He comes to bear witness to what he has seen and heard. He doesn't just come with rumors, with myths, with other guesses.

His guess isn't as good as ours. He comes with the answers. That's why he's described as the light come into the darkness. That's why he's described, he's the truth, who brings truth to a world with no answers.

Jesus isn't just the messenger. He is the one who utters the very words of God we read in verse four. He doesn't just speak like the prophets of the Old Testament, he speaks as God.

The proof of this, John says in verse 34, is that he gives the spirit without measure. Now that verse is a bit hard to translate and it's difficult to work out who he is, who's giving the spirit.

But actually a lot of commentators think that it could be Jesus giving the spirit without measure, but a lot of commentators think that it's God giving the spirit to Jesus without measure.

[14:27] Because what it is, is contrasting Jesus who has the fullness of God's spirit with the prophets who are given God's spirit briefly and in a limited way for a short time. The point is though, is that Jesus is fully God with all of God's power and authority, he speaks as God.

Why is Jesus a big deal? Because he's God's ultimate envoy. There is no other source of truth. You know, every preacher is at best only just repeating the truth that Jesus has already said in his word. At worst there, just speaking something that's false. There is no truth apart from that which God reveals. God revealed himself in creation, but ultimately he's revealed himself in his son.

And that's why Jesus is the pivot, that's why Jesus is the focus point on which everything else turns. There is no truth apart from Christ. We can't choose our own truth here.

Everything determines on how we respond to Jesus. I don't know why you come here on a Sunday morning. Because I hope it's not to listen to me or listen to Thomas, because this passage reminds us that ultimately we got nothing to say.

[15:47] The best that we can say is just repeat what's in the passage here. That's why we're gonna keep looking at our Bibles, make sure that we're saying what is true. John the Baptist's disciples thought he was a big deal.

John was quick to point them and say, they're not the big deal, Jesus is. We need to do the same. Any minister who bakes themselves up, any congregation who puts a minister on a pedestal is forgetting that Jesus must increase, we must decrease.

Because Jesus is the one with the truth. He is the one who's the bridegroom. Churches need to do that as well. If a church is growing, if a church has thoughts thinking, wow, we've got something good going here.

They need to remember not to us, not to us, but to your name be the glory as we've sung in Psalm 115. We need to look to Christ, because he's the one who has come from God with the truth.

And that's a big deal because of what comes next. He's not the one who just comes with the truth, but our third point, he comes as the son.

[16:53] Let me read from verse 35 again. The Father loves the son and has given all things into his hand. Whoever believes in the son has eternal life.

Whoever does not obey the son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. These verses are the crux of why Jesus is a big deal.

Why he's more important than John the Baptist. Why he's more important than anyone else who's ever lived. Jesus is a big deal because he's the son. He's not just the ultimate envoy, he is the son. He was loved by the Father. And we saw the difference of that in our first reading, where God sent the parable of the vineyard, where the servants represent prophets that are sent.

And last of all, God says, I'm gonna send my son, maybe they're gonna treat him differently. There's a difference. Sending the son is on a whole new level. Responding to the servants, okay, that's one thing.

[17:47] Responding to the son, that determines their life and death. That determines how they respond to God. When Charles became king, not everyone was happy.

I don't know whether you saw the posters and not my king. People were holding above their heads. On the other hand, you've got some people who are absolutely thrilled. There's even, I read a tribe, a tribe in Vanuatu, who used to worship Prince Philip as a God, and some people think they're now gonna start treating Charles in the same way.

At the end of the day, though, it doesn't matter whether you love or hate the monarchy. It really doesn't. The Bible's clear that's not the case with Jesus, though.

He's not just a man with a message from God, he is God the son, who comes as God, who speaks for God. The way we treat Jesus is the way we treat God.

You can't claim to love God if you don't love the son. You can't claim to know God if you don't know the son. You can't claim to believe in God if you don't believe in the son.

[18:52] You can't claim to worship God if you don't worship the son. That's made clear in verse 33, where it says, whoever receives his testimony, he has set his seal to this, that God is true.

So receiving Jesus' testimony is saying God is true. In other words, saying Jesus' true is saying God is true. You can't divide it.

How we respond to the son is how we respond to God. How we respond to Jesus is all important, as we said with the children's talk. It's the line that cuts through humanity. It's the line that cuts through this room.

Whoever believes in the son has eternal life. Whoever does not believe in the son and does not obey the son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

There are those who believe in him and there are those who don't obey him. What's obedience to the son? Well, it's Jesus says, believe. So there's those who believe and those who reject or don't believe.

[19:52] Just two groups of people. There's no middle ground. You can't be agnostic about Jesus. Saying you haven't made up your mind is making up your mind already.

I don't know whether you know of the Rocky Mountains in North America, but they're known as the continental divide, because when rain falls on them, it either runs off into the Pacific or it runs off into the Atlantic.

Where is that, Matt, right? It either runs off into the Pacific or runs off into the Atlantic. Two raindrops can fall side by side. And one goes into the Atlantic, one in the Pacific, and it's the same with Jesus.

He's the great divide in the human race. Whoever believes in the sun has eternal life. Whoever rejects the sun shall not see life. There are consequences for how we respond to Jesus.

When it says that God's wrath remains on him, that's reminding us of our default state as those who are in rebellion against God by nature. The just punishment is facing God.

[20:57] The just punishment is facing God's wrath. The punishment fits the crime. Not for an instant, but for eternity, the God's wrath remains on him.

That's what the Bible calls hell. Now, these are hard words, and John's been building up to them. That's why he's reminding us, first of all, that Jesus isn't just anyone who's talking.

He's the bridegroom. He isn't just a random messenger. He isn't just any prophet. This is God himself saying these words. Responding to Jesus isn't the same as how we treat any other historical person who's lived.

What we think about Jesus matters for eternity. You know, you can... Jesus is a historical figure. Historians agree on that. Julius Caesar is a historical figure.

Now, you can believe that Julius Caesar existed, that he took over various countries, that he crossed the Rubicon. At the end of the day, that doesn't make a difference to your present now, does it? Because Julius Caesar died. Jesus made some big claims, bigger than Julius Caesar.

[22:07] He claimed that he was God. He claimed that life and death, eternal life and death, revolve around him. And he rose from the dead.

And he now ascended into heaven. And he now stands at the Father's side. And he will return one day to judge between the living and the dead. That's why Jesus matters, because he's not dead, that he's living.

And on that day, people will be separated into two groups. You will be like, guess who, in some ways. Do you believe in the Son? And half of the people will sit down. So why is Jesus a big deal? Because how we respond to him matters for eternity. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever rejects the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

The wrath of God doesn't need to remain on us. Even the word remain reminds us that it can be lifted. God's wrath doesn't just disappear, but God's wrath can fall on another.

[23 : 13] Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life present tense. God's wrath does not need to remain on us, because it fell on Christ. On the cross, Christ bore the full weight of God's wrath, so that whoever believes in him should not face God's wrath and perish, but have eternal life.

His death, if you like it, is like the heat shield on a rocket. You know, when a capsule reenters earth, it's going to be burned up, if it's just flying through on its own. And it's a heat shield that absorbs the heat, that deflects the heat.

Jesus is like the heat shield for all those who trust in him. He absorbs God's wrath. He absorbed the full weight, the full, fierce storm of God's wrath on the cross, so that everyone who believes in him can have eternal life.

We can choose to reject Jesus, and in that case, we'll face God's wrath ourselves. But if we believe in him, then he's faced it for us.

Why is Jesus a big deal? Because only he can absorb God's wrath in our place. Why is Jesus a big deal? Because he says, I will absorb God's wrath in your place.

[24 : 29] Jesus came to die, so that we can believe in him and have eternal life. Jesus finally is the bridegroom we belong with.

He's the ultimate envoy, and he's the son. Whoever believes in the son has eternal life. Whoever does, whoever rejects the son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Let's pray.