

Text: John 5:16-24

Title: “Explore God: Is Jesus Really God?”

We’re in a series called “Explore God,” and we’ve been dealing with some of the really big spiritual questions people ask. Today we’re asking the question, “Is Jesus Really God?” Watch this. VIDEO

Let’s open our Bibles to John 5:16. “Is Jesus really God?” If you were to ask your friends at school or work or in your neighborhood, you would get a lot of different answers. And we can understand that difficulty people have 2000 years removed from Jesus’ life. But we’re going to see that even personal eyewitnesses to the life and teachings of Jesus had difficulty accepting Him as equal to God. Here Jesus has just healed a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. But the fact that Jesus performed this healing on the Sabbath caused some of the Jewish leaders to be angry. And Jesus’ response to them made them even angrier. **Read John 5:16-24.**

ILLUSTRATION – We’re getting into the thick of the presidential election in our nation. Part of that is the news organizations like to talk about the favorability ratings of the various candidates. When the name of a particular candidate comes up how favorable are various groups to that person. And that’s their favorability rating. Well, for the most part Jesus has had pretty high favorability ratings through history, even among non-Christian religions like Islam or Hinduism. He’s one of the most admired and respected persons in history.

But if we accurately understand Jesus’ true identity we can’t just stop with admiration or respect. If Jesus really is God, then He deserves nothing less than complete worship and submission.

My aim today is for you, in a world filled with all sorts of religious figures, to see the unique beauty of Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. And as you see Him you will be drawn to Him to trust Him like never before.

STARTING POINT: In spite of the fact that Jesus lived 2000 years ago we still have abundant evidence that He is truly God.

I want to give you just four of many the evidences that Jesus is really God. First, we find evidence in...

1. THE FACTS OF HISTORY

No one can legitimately deny that Jesus of Nazareth was an historical person. Many non-biblical sources attest to the fact that Jesus of Nazareth actually lived. There was a well-known Roman historian by the name of Tacitus who was born about twenty years after Jesus died. In one of his works Tacitus wrote about Emperor Nero's decision to blame the Christians for the fire that had destroyed Rome in A.D. 64:

ON SCREEN QUOTE: “Nero fastened the guilt ... on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus (referring to Jesus Christ), from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of ... Pontius Pilatus (referring to Christ’s crucifixion).”

And this is just one of many references to Jesus outside the New Testament. Now this alone doesn’t prove that Jesus is God, but it’s a starting place. He can’t be God if He never lived at all. But there’s more evidence in...

2. THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST

Many people today will argue that Jesus isn’t God ... that He was just a good moral teacher whose wisdom, teachings and examples are worthy of following. Many skeptical scholars teach that Jesus never claimed to be God, but His followers made up that claim to prop up Jesus favorability rating. But that’s exactly the opposite of what Jesus claimed.

Now, from time to time this morning I’m going to refer to what the Bible says about Jesus being God. And I know that some would ask if the Bible is historically reliable. I’m going to deal with that question next week in such a way that you will see that it is reliable. But for today, I’m going to assume the Bible is a reliable historical source.

The NT Gospels contain many references we can point to where Jesus claimed to be God. You can do a Google search or look at concordance and find repeated references to Jesus claiming to be God. The passage we’ve just read is one of them:

John 5:17 - Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.”

John 5:18 - For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

There are people who say that Jesus never claimed to be God, and yet that is the very thing that caused His enemies to want to crucify Him. They knew exactly what Jesus was claiming and they despised Him for it.

On top of that Jesus allowed other people to claim He was God. Remember the occasion where Jesus was with His disciples out on the Sea of Galilee when a fierce storm arose? When Jesus calmed the storm the Gospels tell us...

Matthew 14:33 - Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

What kind of man would let people call Him God when He knew in His own mind and heart that it wasn't true? This brings me to the remarks of C.S. Lewis who wrote *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. (Boys and girls have you ever read the book or seen the movie?) Lewis was a former atheist who became convinced not only of the existence of God, but that Jesus Christ was God in human flesh. Listen to his reasoning:

ON SCREEN QUOTE: “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 the 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. Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God.”

Yes, Jesus was good, but He was more than that ... He was and is God. There's more evidence found in

3. THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST

Again, there are scores of references to Jesus' miracles. Just take the text we are looking at here in John 5. What started this whole thing off was Jesus healing a man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-15). This man had been paralyzed for 38 years, and it was evident to all. So when Jesus healed the guy, no one could refute it. And that's why Jesus' enemies came after Him. They could not refute the fact that He had healed the man. They could only protest that He did it on the Sabbath.

And so it goes with all the miracles of Jesus. They prove He is more than a mere man. Jesus said...

John 10:37-38 - Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”

One of the reasons Jesus performed miracles was to demonstrate that He was God ... a God who cared about the needs of people and who had the power to do something about it. But there's one more bit of evidence that clinches it all:

4. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Now this is what knocks the ball out of the park.

ILLUSTRATION – Think of it this way. The bases are loaded and it's the bottom of the ninth inning. Your team is behind by three runs. Three consecutive batters have come to the plate and hit a single that gets them on base and advances the other runners. Now the bases are loaded and there are two outs. Your team's big hitter comes to the plate and finds a pitch he likes and hits a homerun over right field fence. It's a grand slam. All the other runners score because of his homerun, and they win the game. Now if he strikes out or hits a pop up, it's all over. No one else scores and the team loses. But the homerun clinches it.

And that's the way it is with the resurrection of Jesus. If the facts of history showed that Jesus actually lived and the claims of Jesus and others were that He was really God. And if He performed miracles that only God could do, then those are all "hits." But if Jesus' enemies succeeded in killing Him then everything is lost. He must not be God if they killed Him and He stayed dead. But if they killed Him and then God raised Him from the dead then that's the game winner ... that's the walk-off grand slam.

Romans 1:4 – (Jesus) through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.

So why is it so crucial that you get this right about who Jesus really is? It is because of what Jesus says here in John 5.

John 5:21 - For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

Life is found in Him and in Him alone. If you miss Jesus you miss eternal life. I'm talking *real* life here. Do you need that life?

John 5:22 - Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,

This means that what you do with Jesus determines your future destiny. You are judged by what you do with Jesus. How you respond to Jesus determines where you will spend eternity and whether or not your sins are forgiven.

John 5:23 - that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

Now this is a big deal in our culture today where we have so many religions. People want to say that a Muslim worshipping Allah, and a Hindu worshipping Krishna and a Christian worship Jehovah God are all worshipping the same God. But what Jesus says here is you are not worshipping God if you are not worshipping God through Him. "He who does not honor the

Son does not honor the Father.” That separates the God who is the Father of Jesus Christ from all other gods and religions.

John 5:24 - “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

What an amazing claim! When you put your trust in Christ you not only *will* have eternal life, you *already* have it. And you will never face condemnation and judgment. Why? Because Jesus has taken the condemnation that you deserved and died for it. So when we trust Christ we are united with Him. Just as He rose again, we have passed from death to life.

We don't have the option of just saying he's a good moral teacher. We don't have the option of just liking Him. He's either all that He said He was, or He was not who He said He was.

BOTTOM LINE: Jesus is either the most beautiful, glorious, powerful, loving person in history, or He is nothing.

When it comes right down to it, everything hinges on what we do with Jesus. How do we meet Jesus? Through the proclamation of the Gospel. For those of us who know Christ today, it was because someone introduced us to Him when they proclaimed the Gospel to us. We learned that Jesus lived historically and that He still lives supernaturally because of His resurrection. And Jesus is here today. He has changed lives for 2000 years and He's ready to change your life today if you will trust Him.