

**Jesus, Who Does He Think He Is? – Matthew 28:18**  
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For the third time in the past ten years we have ramped up discipleship groups here, and our initial groups are doing really good.

If you're wondering what the discipleship groups are all about, I would suggest reading or listening to the message: "*Following Jesus With One Another.*" It is in our "Why Discipleship" series at **wordbymail.com** and you can easily get to it on the phone app by searching the title.

One of the best resources we've seen work well in these discipleship groups is, *Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple* – by Greg Ogden

And so, what I'd like to do for the next eight weeks is walk you through the eight areas that this little book covers. I'll just be following the same subject that this book addresses each week. Then, if you're in a discipleship group now, or if you'll commit to being in one, then you can read, watch, or listen to these messages as your group goes through this book and in eight weeks you will have a solid grasp on "*Becoming a Disciple.*"

And if you don't get into a discipleship group and you just commit to reading or listening to these messages, you'll still get a solid grasp on what it means to "*Become a Disciple.*"

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**Turn in your Bibles to Matthew Chapter 28.**

We'll start each message with a core truth and a question that addresses that core truth.

Our core truth today is in Matthew 28:18

**Matthew 28:18 (NLT)**

*18 Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth . . .*

Our core question today is two-fold.

**What does it mean that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth?**

**And how can Jesus claim this level of authority?**

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This verse (Mat 28:18) is at the beginning of the passage we call the Great Commission.

After the Resurrection, after all the proof, after all the work, after the victory over sin and death had been won; Jesus came to commission his followers and to give us marching orders to follow until he returns.

And Jesus begins this Great Commission with the most astonishing claim anyone could ever make about themselves.

***“I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.”***

The Bible says there is not a square inch in all of heaven and earth over which Jesus Christ does not have authority.

ALL authority, in ALL of heaven and in ALL of earth has been given entirely to Jesus.

**Have you ever considered what it means to you, personally, that Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth? If so, what are your thoughts?**

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How can Jesus claim that absolute level of authority?

On what basis does the Bible give this supreme authority to Jesus? Simply put, on the basis that Jesus is God. Jesus is the co-existing second member of the God-head.

But, it's not only on the basis that Jesus is God. Jesus also has this incredible authority because he created everything in heaven and on earth.

Jesus is the co-existing second member of the God-head, and he is the agent of creation.

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## **Turn in your Bibles over to John Chapter 1.**

In John Chapter 1, the title “The Word” is the Greek “logos.” The best definition of logos is “God in expression” or “God in communication.” This “God in expression” that John calls “The Word” – we call him Jesus.

### **John 1:1–4 (NLT)**

***1 In the beginning the Word (that’s Jesus) already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 he existed in the beginning with God. 3 God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him.***

Those are some vast truths, and it takes some real meditation on these verses to begin to grasp all that they mean.

And, not only was everything created *thru Jesus*, but verse 4 continues,

***John 1:4 The Word (Jesus) gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone.***

Jesus is “God in the flesh” the *co-existing second member* of the God-head. Jesus is eternally existing both *as* God and *with* God. Everything that has ever been created in heaven and on earth has been created through Jesus. And then Jesus *gave life* to everything that was created, and then his life *brought light* to everyone who was in darkness.

It’s important that we wrestle with the questions and issues that this incredible list of attributes of Jesus brings up because many people want to “accept Jesus” as something he is not and as something that he refuses to be.

*This* is who the Bible says Jesus is, and *this* is who Jesus claimed to be.

**What questions or issues come to mind when you try to wrap your head around these incredible truths of who the Bible says Jesus is?**

## **Turn over to Matthew Chapter 16 with me.**

The disciples had to wrestle with the same question, *who is Jesus Christ?* Only they didn't have the *Gospel of John* to read. They had seen Jesus heal the sick and raise the dead. They had seen him forgive sin and still the storm and cast out demons... *for over two years at this point.*

And then we come to Matthew Chapter 16, which is a parallel passage to Mark Chapter 8 – which is the scripture the book uses here.

Jesus was making his way to the farthest northern point of his earthly ministry *Caesarea Philippi* (one of our favorite places in Israel). It was a long trek from Galilee to the area known today as *the Golan Heights*. But Jesus was ministering along the way, including in the Greek area called the *Decapolis*.

Then, when he finally reaches his destination, we read in Matthew 16:13,

### **Matthew 16:13 (NLT)**

***13 when Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “who do people say that the Son of Man is?”***

***“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”***

Isn't *that* how our ideas about Jesus often start? With what we've heard others say about him?

Often, we get our first ideas about who Jesus is from the input we receive from others, from our environment, and from our culture.

Maybe that's why Jesus started with this question. Maybe he was helping the disciples see that the world's view of him might be impacting their own view of him.

The Bible says Jesus is *omniscient* (all-knowing), so he wasn't asking because he didn't know. Maybe he was asking in order to help his disciples *work through it*.

So, Jesus asks in verse 13 ***“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”***

Then in Matthew 6:14 we read,

### **Matthew 16:14 (NLT)**

***14 “Well,” they replied, “some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.”***

Isn't this similar to some of the crazy stuff we hear from the world today?

*"Jesus is the son of the Holy mother of heaven"* (though the Bible never says that)

*"Jesus was the brother of Lucifer"* (though the Bible *definitely* never says that)

*"Jesus is your servant, to give you what you want, if you have enough faith"* (though the Bible never, ever says that)

The Barna research group says, of the people they surveyed who believe Jesus was a *good spiritual leader*, 40% of them do not believe Jesus is God, *even though the Bible clearly says he is*.

And basically, the same 40% who believe Jesus was a good spiritual leader also believe Jesus sinned just like a normal man, *even though the Bible says he never sinned*.

I could go on and on, but the point is; we know all kinds of people who say all kinds of things about *who Jesus Christ is*. But the only thing that matters is, are we "buying in" to the world's opinions about Jesus?

**How has the view of others impacted your own view of Jesus?**

**How has our culture of relative truth (everyone gets to have their own truth) possibly influenced your view of the teachings of Jesus Christ?**

It's important to ask ourselves these questions.

It's important to determine where our current view of Jesus has come from because, in the end, each one of us must answer the same question Jesus asks next.

**Matthew 16:15 (NLT)**

***15 then he asked them, "but who do you say I am?"***

Why is this such a critical question?

Because the Bible makes it clear that your answer to this question and (more importantly) what you do about your answer, will ultimately *direct your eternity*.

That makes this a very critical question.

Fortunately, although Peter had heard who the world thought Jesus was, that is *not* where he got his answer to the question.

**Matthew 16:16 (NLT)**

***16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."***

Messiah (in Hebrew) and Christ (in Greek) mean basically the same thing: "*the anointed one*" or "*the one come from God to save.*"

Peter says to Jesus: "*You are the Anointed One who has come from God to save us.*" You are the *Messiah!*

And then Peter adds: "***you are the Son of the living God.***"

This title, "Son of God," does *not mean* Jesus was birthed by God – or made by God. It is a phrase that sets out the uniqueness – the one-of-a-kind-ness of Jesus. It means he is the only one who has *come forth* from God. It's referring to Jesus being God *in human form*.

So, Peter's response is;

- 1) *You are the one come from God to save (Messiah).*
- 2) *You are God, clothed in human form (Son of God).*

Guys, listen to me, please.

**Who we believe that Jesus is and what absolute authority we believe Jesus has, will determine everything about our relationship with him.**

If we don't see Jesus as who the Bible says he is, then we'll mix his teachings with other teachings and with our own ideas, because we see them all as equal with Jesus.

I have heard more than a few Christians say, “*I know that’s what Jesus says, but here’s how I see it.*” I’m pretty sure that indicates a real problem with how that person views Jesus *and* how that person views themselves.

The problem is, we are comparing God *who became man* - with man *who is just man*.

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From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible holds out Jesus Christ as its focal point – his identity, his mission, and his victory.

The first reference to Jesus Christ is in Genesis Chapter 3, and the Bible ends in Revelation 22 *still focused* on Jesus.

That’s 66 books, written by 40 different authors, on 3 different continents, over a period of 1,500 years. Add to that, too many miracles to count, too many fulfilled prophecies to doubt, and too many radically changed lives to refute. Not to mention over 25,000 archeological finds that support the historical accuracy of the Bible.

Together, that makes the Bible an indisputable authority that cannot be compared with the world’s ideas of who Jesus is, or our own idea of who Jesus is. There is no idea or document on earth that can be compared to the supernatural authority of the Bible.

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And, Jesus *functioned* as God in the flesh and as Savior from heaven on every page of the gospels.

- Jesus healed by touch or by command
- Jesus raised the dead
- Jesus commanded, and the demons obeyed
- Jesus ruled over nature
- Jesus forgave sins
- Jesus made it clear, he had the right to grant eternal life

Jesus healed leprosy and all other diseases. He made the lame walk and made the blind see. Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter, the widow’s son, and Lazarus all from the dead. Jesus regularly cast out demons – all of which obeyed him – including a legion of demons he sent into a herd of pigs.

Jesus ruled over nature. He stilled the storm. He walked on water, and he made the most fish the disciples had ever seen swim right into their net.

And Jesus forgave sin.

When Jesus said to one man, **“Son, your sins are forgiven”** the Pharisees responded, **“Who can forgive sin but God?”** to which (I imagine) Jesus might have raised his eyebrows and said, “Exactly.”

And Jesus made it clear he had been given the right to grant eternal life to all those who put their faith and trust in him as Savior.

**Do the truths in the bible about who Jesus is, convince you he is God, or do you still have questions? If so, what are they?**

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And one final thing... The only relationship Jesus offered his followers was one of *total allegiance* to him. Jesus made it clear that following him meant leaving our old life behind and walking in the new life that he gives us.

And that new life is driven by the authority of Jesus Christ as our Lord.

We serve and obey him, and we are accountable to him, because of *who he is* both in creation and in our lives.

That is so offensive to our *“self-lordship”* and to the *“relative truth”* culture we live in. Our culture tells us we are our own lord, we do what we want, our opinion is always right, and we’re offended when anyone suggests otherwise.

But Jesus confronts our *highly inflated* view of ourselves and our *relative truth culture*, and Jesus simply says, **“I am truth.”**

Jesus says there is a singular, absolute truth from God, and he is that truth. Jesus declares himself to be the unrivaled ruler of the universe, and Jesus expects all who claim to be his followers to genuinely submit to his Lordship over their lives.

In return for this, there is abundant life, and eternal life, and life in the presence of God.

But... we don't follow Jesus because of what we can *get from him*. We follow him because of *who he is*, both in creation and in our lives.

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The real issue is – *who do you say Jesus Christ is?* And the reason that is the real issue is that *how* we answer that question influences everything else we do with Jesus.

In becoming a disciple, the first question we must have firmly settled is this one:

**Who do you say Jesus Christ is? If you're not sure, write some reasons why you're not sure.**

**What would be the initial impact in your life (what would change) if you genuinely submitted your life to Jesus as your ultimate authority?**