

# The Word Became Flesh | Who is Jesus?

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: John 8:1-11

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Is Jesus. This is the most important question that any one of us will ever answer, who is Jesus, how we answer this question will greatly shape our worldview. It will determine our belief system.

It will determine our morality, what we consider to be right and wrong, and certainly, according to scripture, how we answer the question, who is Jesus will determine our eternity, way back in 2018, we started to study of a book where the author shares his answer to the question who is Jesus? For his entire book, he explains why he came to the conclusion that he came to.

And the amazing thing about this author is that he had the authority to answer this question, probably more than any one of us do because he had firsthand experience with Jesus while he was here. As he's writing in his book, he's not sharing secondhand stories that have been passed down through generations. He was there. And of course, we are talking about John. Now those of you that are familiar with the Bible need to know, we're not talking about John the Baptist.

We're talking about John Mark. It would be a lot easier if everybody just had different names, right? Scripture can get a little confusing. So we're not talking about John the Baptist. We're talking about John Mark. This is the same John who is the author of this fourth gospel. Matthew Mark, Luke John. He wrote the book of John. He is the brother of James. So you have James and John and Jesus affectionately gave them the title, sons of thunder. Do you remember this?

So this should let you in on a little bit of their personalities. James and John, if Jesus called them sons of thunder, he had a very close relationship with Jesus. If anybody knew who Jesus was, it was John, John is referred to not only in his own gospel, but in the other gospels as the one Jesus loved. There was a special relationship between Jesus and John.

This is the same John who was at the cross when Jesus died. And while Jesus was breathing his last few breaths, he looked down at John and he said, John, when I am gone, would you take care of my mother? That is a responsibility that you don't just give to anybody. Jesus and John had a very close connection. And so John is writing his account to answer the question, who is Jesus?

And so far, he's given us a few answers. We're only to chapter 8. I told you we started this in 2018. I don't want you to think that I've only been here if you're new this morning that I've only been in John. We just kind of jump out and jump back in, all right? But let me give you a little refresher since this has been kind of a 5 year long series. So far, John has said that Jesus is the word. If you remember, that's how John chapter one starts.

John said, in the beginning, was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God. And so he is claiming that Jesus is the living word. John also makes the statement that Jesus is life. Jesus is light. He refers to Jesus as the lamb of God, which certainly carries a ton of meaning talking about how he would sacrifice himself for us.

John refers to him as the son of God, the son of man, and John even claims that Jesus is the messiah, the Christ, the one that the Jews were waiting for to redeem us. For a holy God. So here we are in John chapter

8, and already he has given us very clear answers as to who he thinks Jesus is. But before we jump into John chapter 8, since it has been a long time since we have been here, let me give you a little refresher of where we are at as we finish John chapter 7.

At the end of John chapter 7, John tells us that Jesus is in Jerusalem. He has traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate one of the three feasts and celebrations that every Jewish male was supposed to gather in Jerusalem to celebrate. This one was called the feast of tabernacles. Now this particular feast, this particular celebration lasted 7 days, and the purpose of this feast was to celebrate and to thank God for his provision.

For providing for the Jews. It was during harvest season. And so all of them were gathering in their crops and they recognized that the only way they could gather crops as if they had rain. And the only way they were getting rain is if God provided it. And so they even had a name for God, Jehovah jireh, my provider. And so during this feast of tabernacles, they would celebrate God as their provider.

But even more than that, it was an opportunity for them to pass on stories to their children and their grandchildren of how God provided for the Israelites when he led them out of Egypt. This was an opportunity for them to celebrate when they were in the wilderness and God provided water for them. He provided manna for them. He provided for them while they were traveling to the promised land for 40 years.

And so during this 7 day celebration, not only did they thank God for his provision, then, but they also thanked him for his provision in the past. And so because of that, during this celebration and during this feast in Jerusalem, they would construct these places where they could stay tabernacles where they could stay that were made of sticks and leaf structures. And so these would be built all around the city and they would live in those shelters for 7 days to be reminded of when they were traveling in the wilderness.

Again, we all need reminders, don't we? Of what God has done in our lives. And so this was another opportunity for them to be reminded of God's faithfulness. So because of this feast, Jesus uses this as an opportunity to teach the people. There would be more people in Jerusalem at this time than any other time unless there was a feast taking place. And so there were big crowds and those crowds were eager to learn. They were eager to listen to what Jesus had to say.

They didn't have TVs and phones and iPads and everything else. And so when they gathered together, it was community. They would all go into the temple and Jesus would often teach them while he was there during these feast and during these celebrations. It was another opportunity for a group of people that existed in the temple area known as the religious leaders, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, that group of people, you see, they were upset at what Jesus had been teaching.

As we finished in John, chapter 7, he's been there a little bit during this festival. And these religious leaders believe that Jesus is a heretic that he is proclaiming blasphemy. Why? Because Jesus has made the statement multiple times that he is God. He is the great I am. And so next week I encourage you to come back if you're watching online to make sure you recognize this tabernacle, the feast of tabernacles and how important that is into what Jesus is saying and who he is saying he is.

We'll talk about that a little more. But he has made the claim he's God. And so these religious leaders believe that he is proclaiming blasphemy. And so they want to use this as an opportunity to trap him. Why? Because they know where Jesus is going to be at during this 7 day period. He's going to be in Jerusalem. He's going to be around the temple. It's not like today where, you know, you can track people. Whether you like to believe it or not, if you have a cell phone in your pocket, the government knows where you're at all times, okay?

We all have things in our homes like Alexa and other things, and they say they're only listening when you do the key word. It's not true. Okay, they're listening all the time. So they know where you're at. You can't hide

from the authorities. This is different, all right? 2000 years ago, Jesus could go off into the wilderness, go somewhere, and it might be hard to find him. And so the religious leaders say we have a chance now, we need to jump on it. And so they're going to use this as an opportunity to trick Jesus and arrest him so that they can stop him from speaking what he is. So what is the plan?

What are they going to do? Well, if you haven't already, you can open your bibles to John chapter 8 one. Matthew Mark, Luke John, John chapter 8 one. If you get to ask, you've gone too far, but we're going to jump into the story between Jesus and these religious leaders. Let me pray while you are turning there. Heavenly Father, I thank you for your word. Thank you for John and for his obedience to write down this testimony to answer the question, who is Jesus?

That we would have a firsthand account, somebody that lived and walked with him for over three and a half years. Saw the miracles, heard the stories, had conversations. And that he shares that with us today, 2000 years later, so that we can answer the question, who is Jesus? And it's in his holy name that we pray. Amen. John chapter 8, starting in verse one, John tells us.

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives the day before. And the next morning at dawn, Jesus appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people had gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. So here is the setting. This is what's going on. John tells us we're at the temple. It's already getting a little crowded. It's a little busy. It's early in the morning. He says, at dawn, the sun has just come up. But the crowds are already starting to arrive.

The picture that I have in my mind, just because of what I just got done doing, my family and I went on a vacation to the Gatlinburg, Tennessee area. And one of the things that we decided to do, which we have never done with our kids, was to take them to an amusement park called Dollywood. How many of you have ever been to Dollywood? Not many, okay? I don't blame you. But so we decided to take the kids to Dollywood. We had never done anything with that like that with the kids before with the roller coasters and the amusement park thing.

And we decided, you know what? We know it's going to be busy, which I'm an introvert. And so being around a ton of people, I would much rather be hiking in the Smoky Mountains, which we did that as well. That was a lot more fun for me. But we decided, you know what? We want to go to Dollywood early so we can beat the crowds. But do you know what everybody else is thinking? Let's get to Dollywood early so we can beat the crowds. So as we're going in, we have all this lines of people and traffic going there. And we are just crowded, you know, it's earlier in the morning. And so I have that image in my head.

Here we are early in the morning in Jerusalem and crowds of people are flocking to the temple. They're all thinking the same thing. Let's beat the crowds. Let's get there early. Let's get a good seat. And Jesus is there, and we want to hear what he has to say. And you know what, today we might even see a miracle. And so all of these people are crowding around Jesus. And so as a little side note, as I'm reading the story and thinking about my own personality and the way that God has created me and the struggles that I have, I am always amazed that Jesus always made time for people.

I can tell you that I don't do the best job at this. I often have a to do list and because of how I'm created and my faults and my failures, I am just as happy in my woodshop as I am being around a bunch of people, all right? I would much rather be by myself, but here is Jesus. He could have easily said, I've got a lot to do. There's a lot going on. I don't have time for you guys. I'm not teaching today, but that's never what he did. Here, he sits down and he teaches the people because he knows that that is much more important.

And so what's going to happen here in verse three? Well, Jesus is sitting there, and the people are surrounding him. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman who was caught in adultery. They made her stand before the entire group, and they said to Jesus, teacher, this woman was

caught in the act of adultery. And in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now, Jesus, what do you say? Imagine this scene in your mind if you can.

You're at the temple, the crowds are gathering. Jesus is beginning to teach. People have gathered around him. It's getting louder. And all of a sudden, if you're sitting in the crowd that day, there's a ruffle, of people walking and all of a sudden, you hear noises and all of a sudden, this woman has brought through the crowd as these religious leaders bring her to stand right up in front of everybody. There's a commotion. It's an awkward moment.

John tells us that this woman was caught in the act of adultery. Now, nobody knows for sure, but there are certain questions that go through my mind as to how was she caught, you know, how did these religious leaders know that this was taking place and nobody can prove this? But as the story plays out, I do tend to believe that this was a setup for her. I believe that the religious leaders and the teachers of the law knew that Jesus was going to be there. And so they were looking for a way to trap him.

And so they came up with this great scheme. What do we do? And how is Jesus going to respond? If we bring this person before him that has been caught in the act of sin and our law commands that that person is supposed to be killed, now there's other reasons why I believe this was all kind of conjured up by the religious leaders and the teachers of the law because what they are quoting here saying that in the law, Moses commanded us to stone the woman, they leave out some really important details like the fact that the man is also supposed to be brought.

And if they caught her in the act of adultery, the man was there as well. And so why wasn't he brought? Was he a plant? You know what? What in the world happened there? And so he's not brought before them. It's also interesting that if you go back to Leviticus 24, you can find out that, yes, the woman is supposed to be killed. The man is supposed to be killed, but they don't say by stoning. And so they're setting up this gruesome scene for all of these people to trap Jesus to know how is he going to respond?

Some theologians even believe that this woman being caught in the act of adultery that they literally ran in, grabbed her out, and she wasn't even clothed. And so they're just setting up this awkward scene. How is Jesus going to respond? What is he going to do? This was their trap. And let me tell you why it was a trap. It was a trap for two reasons because no matter how Jesus responded, it gave them an opportunity to try him.

The first was if he said yes, okay, we're going to go ahead and stone this woman. She can't fight that she didn't do this. She was caught in the act. And so we're going to stone her right in front of everybody. There's two problems with that. Obviously, problem number one is they are under Roman authority. And because of that, the Jewish people had no right to kill anybody for breaking one of their religious laws.

So if Jesus did that, he would be tried by the Romans because he did what he was not supposed to do, not to mention the fact that if you're trying to gather a group of followers and you're claiming that you are God and that you're loving and caring, stoning a woman in front of the whole crowd might have scarred some people, right? And so they're thinking, okay, so if he follows the law, you know, that Moses told us, then we trapped him.

If he decides because of, you know, his love for people and whatever else that he's not going to have her stone, well, now he is violating the Old Testament law that has been given through us through Moses and he is going to lose credibility with everybody because we are supposed to follow the law no matter how hard or difficult it is. So here he is between a rock and a hard place. How is he going to respond? Look at this. John tells us, of course, that they were using this question as a trap.

In order to have a basis for accusing him, of course they were. So this is what Jesus does. But Jesus bent down and he started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him. So this is one of the things I love about Jesus in this moment. I love how calm he is. They're making all of these

accusations and he just takes time. He bends down. He starts writing on the ground, right? I love wondering, what was he writing? What was he writing on the ground? I'll give you a possibility, one that I like to believe, nobody can prove it.

But as I read a little further, he just bends down on the ground and starts writing, and they continue to make accusations. And so Jesus straightens up and he says to them, let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her, and again, after he makes that statement, he stooped down and wrote on the ground. I love how calm he is. But what in the world was he writing on the ground? What are some of the possibilities?

One of the thing that I like to believe that just gives Jesus some character and maybe some attitude, which is maybe wrong for me to think. But wouldn't you love it if he was just writing the sins of all the people on the ground, you know? The religious leaders and the Pharisees, the teachers of the law, maybe even wrote their name next to him like, yep, you've done this one. You've done that one. I don't know what he was writing. I love that he's just calm, he takes us as an opportunity to get out of the trap that they have set for him because he doesn't negate the law.

He allows for her to be punished. He said, listen, if anybody's without sin, you go ahead and fulfill the law that's in Leviticus 20:10 that Moses gave us. If you're without sin, go ahead and throw the stone. He questions those who actually have the authority to fulfill and follow the law. Their plan to capture him had failed. He sees through their deception.

And so John tells us in verse 9 that at this point, those who heard began to go away, one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left with the woman still standing there. Not only did Jesus avoid their trap that day, but he taught a valuable lesson.

Not just to the religious leaders, not just to the crowd that was there, but also to us, 2000 years later, he taught a valuable lesson, and the lesson is this, we are all sinners and need of a savior. Religious leaders, peasant person, whatever. We are all sinners in need of a savior.

There was not one person left standing there that had the opportunity to cast a stone of judgment, because not a single one of us can do that. So what is going to happen to the woman? Only he and the woman are left. How is he going to respond to her? Well, John tells us that Jesus straightened up. And he asked her, woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? No one, sir, she replied, then neither do I condemn you, Jesus said, go now and leave your life of sin.

I don't know how long. It took for everyone to leave. John does tell us that they left one by one. It wasn't like a mass exodus of everybody walking away. But one by one, people are leaving. And I wonder while he's squatting down was Jesus looking up and was he making eye contact with every individual person as they left? Some of the people that were there that day just wanted to hear Jesus teach, they were just looking for him to do a miracle. They weren't looking to stone a woman who had been caught in adultery.

And yet after everyone leaves, and it's just Jesus and the woman standing there, he speaks to her. Now, as I read these stories, I try to put myself in the positions of the people there. And I think about being that woman who was caught in adultery. I imagine that in that moment, she feels shame, she feels guilt, there's some confusion as to what is taking place. There's certainly fear involved.

And I think we all can put ourselves in that story because there's not a single person in this room on the stage watching online. That couldn't be paraded to the front and have certain sins pointed out. Every single one of us. We have struggles. We have failures. We have ways that we have not honored God with the decisions we've made. And so we can put ourselves in the shoes of that woman.

Imagine the fear, the shame, the guilt you would have if you were paraded to the front in the midst of committing your sin, and everybody knows what you've just done. One moment, she thinks she's going to be

executed. And the next moment she is standing there alone with Jesus, and then he opens his mouth. Everyone's gone. No one is watching anymore. No more ridicule. I'm sure there's still a little fear. What's going to happen?

What is Jesus going to say? And Jesus says, neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin. I have to imagine she was speechless. We all would be. For standing before Jesus, and he says, I do not condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin. It was a new lease on life. Now granted, this woman still would have had consequences for her actions.

I'm sure there would have been people that would have been talking about her behind her back. There would have been people that would have avoided her in public or rumors would have begun to spread. But this woman knew she was clean before a holy God. And eventually, maybe by God's grace, she could get her reputation back. One of the amazing truths that we learn about Jesus in this story as well as many other that John shares with us is this.

Jesus finds the perfect balance between truth and grace. He finds this perfect balance between truth and grace. And we all land on that spectrum somewhere on that line of truth and grace. And I know individuals that fall and land more on the side of truth. And so they read the scriptures and they want to make sure that you know what sin is and what is wrong and how to honor a holy God and we need people like that. We need to know what truth is, but sometimes that can be so harsh that it's just difficult for us.

I know other people who fall more on the side of grace. And they just want to say, oh, God loves us. It's okay. Just do whatever you want to do. And they're forgiving and they're loving and they're caring. And we need people like that too. But isn't it amazing that Jesus finds that perfect balance between truth and grace? Here he looks at this woman and he looks at every single one of us. And notice the grace part, neither do I condemn you. That's the grace.

She deserved according to the law to be stoned, and Jesus was the only one that could do it. She deserved to be killed, but Jesus says, I will not condemn you. That's the grace part, but then comes the truth. Now go and leave your life of sin. Sin no more. And so that's what he says to us. I'm going to offer you the grace, but I'm also going to share the truth. He had that perfect balance. Today, Jesus wants to offer you grace and truth.

You need to know that Jesus is not here to shame you. He's not here to point out your sin so that you can live the rest of your life in guilt and shame. It's not his goal or his priority to parade you around in front of everybody and show all of the things that you have done wrong and how messed up you are. But he does want you to see your sin for what it is. He doesn't want you to go on sinning because he knows the end result of sin.

He knows the outcome of sin is death. Not only physical death, but spiritual death. He also knows that if you go on sinning that you're going to experience things in this world that he never intended for you to experience. And so he is willing and able to point out your sin to you, even though it hurts, even though it brings shame and guilt and consequences. He is willing to point those things out to you because he's so desperately wants you to experience his best.

I think about being a parent. And sometimes I have to allow my children to experience consequences that are painful. So that they will learn from them. And make a better decision the next time. I think that God often allows us to experience consequences that are painful. So that we can learn from them and grow, and in the midst of learning, he offers us grace.

He simply wants you to see sin for what it is. He wants you to leave a life of sin and to turn to him. That's the truth. But he also wants to offer you grace. Letting you know that you will be forgiven of your sins and you will be offered freedom through him through Jesus Christ. As we've begun doing, we'll have people on the sides of the front of the sanctuary this morning.

If you want prayer, it doesn't even have to be about this. We're just there to pray with you. You could just have something going on in your life that has nothing to do with what we just talked about and you say, I want prayer. I encourage you to come up and receive prayer. And just for a moment, I want you to be reminded of the accusers in this story. And learn a valuable lesson from them. These accusers were ready to cast judgment upon this lady, as well as trap Jesus, and their net of deception.

But in the end, the accusers leave having their own guilt exposed. I'm reminded of what Jesus said, be careful, pointing out the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye. When you have a log in your own. I know that one of the things that stops us from coming up front and doing business with God is the fear of what everybody else is going to think. So when somebody comes up front, please don't dare judge that person.

Don't be thinking to yourself, oh, I wonder what that person did. Because every single one of us has a history. We all have a story. We are all sinners. That need a savior. Don't be so quick to point out the failures and the lives of others, because we all have our own. If you just want to do business with God and you don't want anybody bothering you, the altars are always open as well.

And so if you come up front and do your business with God, you can just come to the altar and you can leave whenever you want and no one will bother you. But if you want prayer, we'd love to pray with you. Let me close in prayer. Heavenly Father, we all come before you. Sinners in need of a savior. We've all done things that bring shame and guilt. There's certainly not a single one of us that wants to be brought up front and have all of those pointed out for everybody to see.

There is truth. That our sin does bring death, it has consequences. But we are so grateful. That you were also a God of grace. And that if we will humbly come before you and admit our faults and failures, you will forgive us. You will look us in our eyes. You will hug us, and you will say, neither do I condemn you.

Thank you for your grace. Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for your truth. It's in Jesus name we pray. Amen.