



Jesus 101

Las Vegas, Nevada

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OPENING

This week we are continuing a series called Dismantled. It's all about reconstructing our faith. We are in a time of deconstruction where many people have been disillusioned by the church or by Christianity and they are drifting from their faith in God. The goal of this series is to tackle some of the reasons they give for this happening so that they can find Jesus who is the master builder capable of reconstructing a new life for them.

SCRIPTURE¹

Mark 4:41 They were terrified and asked each other, "*Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!*"

John 1:18 *No one* has ever seen God, but the *one and only Son*, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in *no one else*, for there is *no other name* under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. *No one* comes to the Father *except through me*.

John 8:46a Can any of you prove me *guilty* of sin?

Romans 5:6-8 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, *Christ died* for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone *might possibly* dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were *still sinners*, Christ died for us.

Acts 2:32-33 God has *raised* this Jesus to life, and we are all *witnesses* of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

1 John 2:1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody *does* sin, we have an *advocate* with the Father—*Jesus Christ*, the Righteous One.

Matthew 16:24 "Whoever wants to be my disciple must *deny themselves* and *take up their cross* and *follow me*.

¹ The NIV translation unless otherwise indicated.

OBSERVATION

It's amazing how people who are long gone like Elvis or Kobe Bryant or David Bowie can continue to have influence and be relevant to a new generation. But those people are nothing compared to the life and influence of Jesus Christ. He was born to a peasant girl in an obscure village. He never went to college or visited a large city or traveled more than 200 miles or wrote a book. His enemies succeeded in convicting and crucifying Him, He died at age 33 and was buried in a borrowed grave. So, what is it about Him that has influenced our world for more than 2000 years? Even His followers tried to answer their question: "Who is this?"

QUESTION: How do you answer the question, "Who is Jesus to you?"

People ask today if Jesus really existed, but there is overwhelming evidence that He did. There are many non-Christian historians who wrote about Him within just a few years of His death. Josephus was a first century Jewish historian who mentioned Jesus several times; Tacitus was a Roman senator, also of the first century, who tied the execution of Jesus to Pontius Pilate; Pliny the Younger was a Roman governor who wrote about Christians worshipping Jesus as God. No credible historians question Jesus' existence.

QUESTION: What more evidence do you need to believe that Jesus was who He said He was?

APPLICATION

People love Jesus' compassion for others and the way He went after the hypocrisy of religious leaders, but they do have difficulty with His claim to be the only way to heaven. This tends to sound bigoted and narrow-minded and judgmental, but His Word says no one can be good enough to earn salvation on their own. God loved us so much that He planned a way for us to be reconciled to Him – but the price would be enormous. He sent His Son to pay the price for our sin!! So, it is our heart of gratitude we extend to God, not judgment or narrow-mindedness toward others when we speak of the immeasurable love of God. The Apostle John believed every word Jesus spoke about this after spending three and a half years hearing His teaching, seeing His miracles, and witnessing His resurrection. He saw Jesus raise the dignity of women, accept the outcast, have compassion on the sick, come to find the lost. Peter also believed that Jesus was "the only way heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." This sounds like an exclusive claim but we **all** have the choice to be one of those included!

QUESTION: When you reflect on the sin in your life, what is your plan to rid yourself of the guilt you feel and gain forgiveness for it?

QUESTION: What is it about God's plan to do that for you that you don't understand?

There is no doubt that He lived and made extraordinary claims about Himself – His life backs up His claims. **1) He lived a perfect life.** Even His enemies couldn't find one point of moral failure in His life; **2) He willingly laid down His life for us.** We have all sinned and while we were still sinning, Jesus died for us. He could have opted out, but **chose** not to; **3) Jesus rose from the dead.** The proof is in the empty tomb. If it wasn't empty His enemies would have paraded His dead body throughout Jerusalem. It is in eyewitness appearances after the resurrection. Jesus appeared at least twelve times to hundreds of people – one time was before 500 people. It is in the radical changes were evident in His followers. Ten of the Apostles died terrible deaths for their faith in Him as they refused to recant their faith. (Judas had killed himself because of his own betrayal of Jesus, and John died of old age.) No one willingly dies for a lie. **4) Jesus is**

advocating for us before His Father today. He is leaning over to God, whispering “They are with Me.”

QUESTION: What changes have you seen in others who have accepted Christ? What changes do you want to see in your family members that Jesus could bring about?

QUESTION: What radical changes have you seen in yourself since accepting Jesus as your Savior?

C. S. Lewis said that Jesus was either lying and a lunatic or He is the Son of God. There are no other alternatives. So, if we can find anyone who is advocating for us before Father God and dying for our sins and rising from the dead after living a sinless life - we need to **FOLLOW HIM!!**

QUESTION: What leaders of other religions can you name who can say the same?

There is no coercion in Jesus’ invitation – no pressure. It is our free choice to decide to become a Christian and allow Christ to guide our lives from His heart of love. But we don’t get to make the rules when we choose Him. We have to deny ourselves, die to ourselves and follow Him. That’s the deal but not everyone has the courage to join the journey with Him.

QUESTION: DO YOU?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we come to You in gratitude for making a way for us to reconcile with You. Jesus sacrificed His all to enter our evil world, live a sinless life and endure incomprehensible pain to save us. That kind of selfless love is a model for the love we need to extend to others in Your name, and in return, to enjoy Your presence into eternity. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION: How do you answer the question, “Who is Jesus to you?”

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