

## Stairway to Heaven John 1:43-51

### Intro

A quick google search of the phrase “life’s most important questions” will yield 10s of millions of responses - an endless parade of articles with titles like “The 15 Most Important Questions You Must Ask Yourself Right Now”, “The 2 Most Important You Can Ask Yourself”, and “101 Questions to Ask Yourself In Life”

An exercise in self-reflection and self-criticism for people who want to get the most they can out of their lives.

I would like to humbly but firmly insist that there is actually one question that is more important than any other.

**There exists no more important question than the one Jesus asked his disciples, ‘But who do you say that I am? (Matt. 16:15). No query has been more hotly debated, completely or partially misunderstood, ignored to one’s peril, and answered correctly to one’s great gain. The right answer to this question is simple enough to save a child, and at the same time complex enough to keep theologians busy for all eternity. If eternal life means knowing Jesus Christ (John 17:3), we cannot afford to be ignorant about the one who is ‘chiefest among ten thousand’. (Mark Jones)**

This Gospel of John is a gift, generously given to us by God, as a means to know Jesus Christ. It is given to correct our ignorance about the one who ‘chiefest among ten thousand.’ And our text this morning we have the privilege of observing Jesus Christ and hearing from Christ himself as he interacts with his disciples and we learn more about who he is.

Not merely interesting, ancient, story - given so that we can believe and in believing have life - eternal life - in his name. Given so that we can answer that most important question

Three titles for Jesus Christ that inform us about his identity and why he came to us to help answer the most important question we can ever ask: who exactly is Jesus Christ? I. The Son of God II. The King of Israel III. The Son of Man

### I. The Son of God

- A. We are still in the first week of the ministry of Jesus. Kevin served us well as he led us through chapter 1:35-42 where John the Baptizer declared to his disciples as Jesus entered the scene “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” - revealing his identity and his purpose and reason for coming - to sacrifice his life for sinners
  - 1. And Jesus called his first disciples to himself - Andrew and Simon Peter and John’s disciples become Jesus’ disciples

- B. The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee and there he finds Philip and calls to him “follow me” - Philip who happened to be from Andrew and Peter’s hometown - Bethsaida - Fishertown
  - 1. Philip finds his friend Nathanael and informs him “We have found the one who is prophesied to come in the law and prophets” - the OT - Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.
    - a) Nathanael’s reply is pretty snarky - “can anything good come out of Nazareth” - pretty harsh dude
      - (1) Nathanael was from Cana and there was a rivalry between cities

**Illustration:** As a die-hard Eagles fan - I like Jalen Hurts - Eagles brethren inform me that there is this great QB - humble, smart, hard-working, cares about others but he’s on the Dallas Cowboys Can anything good come from Dallas

- C. v. 46 in the face of Nathanael’s cynicism, Philip repeats the words that Christ used to call his first disciples - “come and see” - we find here really the Genesis of the church’s mission

**Philip found Nathanael and witnessed to him. That has been the foundational principle of truly Christian expansion ever since: new followers of Jesus bear witness of him to others, who in turn become disciples and repeat the process. (D.A. Carson)**

- D. Nathanael - though notably skeptical - takes Philip up on his invitation and we read in v. 47 that Jesus saw Nathanael heading his way and declared “behold an Israelite in whom there is no deceit” - no pretension
  - 1. Confused - he replies “how do you know me?” Jesus in that moment gives us a glimpse into his divine power as he replies “before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you”
  - 2. A stunned Nathanael clearly knows what Jesus is describing and changes his tone - Rabbi - teacher - more respectable - you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!
    - a) In that culture a fig tree represented something of home - it was common to pray and meditate under the family fig tree - whatever the scenario Nathanael understands that Jesus saw into his private home life, maybe even when he was having devotions and Nathanael understands that only one who possesses the power of God would have had the ability to know and observe that moment
- E. In that moment he is convinced that he is in the presence of divinity - this is the Son of God - King of Israel in the next point
  - 1. This a moment where Jesus briefly pulls back the veil of his humanity and reveals something of his divine glory
    - a) While in his incarnation he clothed himself in frail humanity - Phil. 2 laying aside his glory - humbling himself - taking the form of a servant - in so doing he did not rid himself of his divine power and glory but rather veiled his power and glory by adding a human body to himself as he lived humbly and lowly dependent on the Holy Spirit’s power

**b) THE Son of God - not A Son of God**

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)**

**F. Application**

1. Here we find Jesus, the Son of God giving a glimpse into his divine nature as he calls Philip and Nathanael to be his disciples
2. Take note that Philip - who invited Nathanael to come and see the Christ - while notable for the role he played here, is not highlighted as a remarkable man - perhaps most famous from his contribution to the loaves and fishes' discussion in John 6 was skepticism to Jesus

**[5] Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" [6] He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. [7] Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." (John 6:5-7)**

3. And yet we find in this Gospel and throughout Scripture that it is ordinary, unremarkable men and women who struggle with weakness and doubts - yet who Jesus is pleased to call his own

**Some of the apostles were undoubtedly men of great ability, but Philip compels us to realize that others were perfectly ordinary people. Jesus had (and has) use for such followers. (Leon Morris)**

4. Ordinary people who follow an extraordinary savior - we get the grace - HE GETS THE GLORY
5. And we find that it is often the simple testimony about Jesus and the invitation to come and see him that God is pleased to work through

**Few are ever moved by reasoning and argument. Still fewer are frightened into repentance. The man who does the most good to souls, is often the simple believer who says to his friends, 'I have found a Savior; come and see him.' (J.C. Ryle)**

**II. The King of Israel**

- A. Nathanael declares that Jesus is the Son of God but also the King of Israel. Clearly Nathanael was a man steeped in the OT Scriptures as we observed in his response to Philip that this Jesus is the one of whom Moses in the Law and prophets wrote. His impression of Jesus in his divine power would have connected his thoughts to texts that prophesied of a coming King over Israel

**The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil. (Zephaniah 3:15)**

**Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9)**

- B. This revelation of divine omniscience left quite an impression on Nathanael - divinity and royalty perceived in this man from Nazareth
- C. v. 50 Jesus does not reply by shrugging off these remarkable claims - he presses more deeply in - you think that the revelation of my divine insight was something to see - you ain't seen nothing yet - just getting started - you will see greater things than these - GOSPEL OF JOHN - SINLESS LIFE, MIRACLES, MERCIFUL MINISTRY, DEATH AND RESURRECTION - GREATER THINGS
- D. So, in Nathanael having been identified as an Israelite indeed - an implication in Nathanael's declaration that Jesus is the King of Israel is his submission to this King - this King of the Israel of God -
- E. The people of God in the new covenant expands to include not only believing Israel but people of every tribe, tongue, and language - not born of ethnicity or heritage - born of God by the Spirit through faith - through submission to this King.
- F. Application
  - 1. How good to be reminded that the Savior we serve is also King - the disciples would come to understand as we have through God's Word that his resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven was a coronation
  - 2. The King of Israel is the King over all - He reigns over all world leaders - all world events - having completed his work to bring salvation to all who put their faith in him - he is now seated at the right hand of the majesty on high with all authority
    - a) Are you anxious about wars and rumors of wars? Are you fearful of the future? Are you tempted to bitterness over the state of your life?
      - (1) Always remember who is actually in charge - not Biden, not Putin, not Zelensky - the one who reigns over all things is NONE OTHER THAN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST - THE CRUCIFIED AND RISEN AND REIGNING KING
  - 3. We serve a great King - so it is with deep reverence, wonder and awe that we hear Jesus speak as our text concludes and informs us that not only is he the divine Son of God, the King of Israel, but he is the Son of Man

### III. The Son of Man

- A. Last verse in this text in the context of a somewhat bizarre statement - we hear Jesus identifying himself as the Son of Man those Jewish men would have immediately made the connection to what was prophesied of in Daniel 7:

**[13] "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. [14] And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)**

- B. Understandable for he is the King prophesied of in OT - but we find in his fulfillment of Daniel 7 as the Son of Man that Jesus broadens our understanding of his glory as that of both royalty/authority and abject humility for the Son of Man was born as both ancient of days and suffering servant - he came as a man to die as a man for sinners like you and me.
- C. This is Jesus favorite title for himself in the Gospels as he identifies as one of us - as the Son of Man who came to seek, and to serve and to save
- D. I am the Son of Man he says to his disciples - plural you - all present and all who read and understand and hear the voice of Christ
- E. Truly, truly - AMEN - with authority - you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man - MAYBE A LITTLE WEIRD - Jesus is connecting the nature and reason for his coming with the story of Jacob in Genesis **[10] Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. [11] And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. [12] And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!...And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (Genesis 28:10-12, 17)**
- F. HERE IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS DISCIPLES - JESUS DECLARES THAT THE VISION JACOB SAW OF THE GATE OF HEAVEN OPENED ONTO THE EARTH - IS NOW PHYSICALLY, VISIBLY IN OUR PRESENCE
- G. Here is the deal - there have been many prophets and holy men who have come declaring they know the way to heaven -Jesus did not come to point the way to heaven - he IS the way to heaven. He is the place where heaven touches down visibly, physically upon the earth - he in his atoning work at Calvary is the stairway to heaven
- H. The Son of man - who in stretching his hands on the cross spans the expanse between heaven and earth as a mediator

**For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (1 Timothy 2:5)**

1. As John concludes chapter one of this Gospel, he has worked to ensure that we are clear in answering that most important questions about who Jesus is and why he came to us. In chapter 1 of this Gospel as we head towards chapter 2 and his first miracle at the wedding at Cana
2. Eternal Word of God
3. God himself
4. The Light of Men

5. The True Light
6. Only Begotten from the Father
7. Greater than John the Baptist
8. Jesus Christ the Lord
9. The Lamb of God
10. The one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit
11. The Chosen One
12. The Son of God
13. Rabbi - the teacher of heaven
14. The Messiah prophesied of old
15. The King of Israel
16. The Son of Man who became one of us - like us in every way yet without any sin - to die as one of us - bearing our sin, judgment, the wrath of God - rising bodily and victorious from the grave.
17. The one who is coming again to redeem all things and to raise our bodies to be like his glorified body - we will see him and be like him save in one way - THE SCARS ON HIS HANDS AND FEET THAT STILL ADORN HIM IN HIS RESURRECTION GLORY

#### I. Application

**There is no God talk without Christ. All talk of religion, all talk of spirituality or spiritual things, all talk of God or gods is nothing if it is not rooted in and mediated by and through Christ. Our discipleship is rooted in Christ as well as our evangelism. To speak of God without Christ might be socially more acceptable, but it is entirely unchristian. Without the "Son of Man," the rest of men cannot know God. (Edward Klink)**

1. Written so that we would believe - Exclusive SAVIOR - UNBELIEVERS
2. NOT THROUGH OUR PERSONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS - NOT BASED ON THE RECORD OF OUR WRONGS AND GOOD THINGS WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED - ONLY IN AND THROUGH CHRIST WE HAVE ACCESS TO HEAVEN ITSELF - THE WONDERS OF HIS GRACE!

**Close**

**There exists no more important question than the one Jesus asked his disciples, 'But who do you say that I am?' (Jones)**

He is the Son of God, the King of Israel, the Son of Man. He is greater and more glorious than we can possibly comprehend but we have come and we have seen and we have tasted of the unshakable, unspeakably great goodness of God in Christ. We are just getting started! PRAY THAT HE WOULD BECOME MORE BEAUTIFUL AND MORE BELIEVABLE AS WE STUDY HIS WORD.

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