

***Who Is This Man? : The Son Of God***  
***By Jason Huff***  
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***Psalm 72; Galatians 2:20; John 20:19-31***

Our final Scripture reading today is from John 20:19-31. May God add His blessing on the reading of His holy, inspired, inerrant Word. “On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.” A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Over the last several weeks, we’ve been talking about the roles of Jesus. Now when I hear the word “role,” I usually think of an actor in a movie. There are some actors that always kind of play themselves – Tom Cruise and Harrison Ford, whenever they show up in a film, I always know it’s them. They rarely play villains, and they’re known for playing variations on a theme – Tom Cruise is the know-it-all hotshot who learns something along the way; Harrison Ford is the good-natured scoundrel. (In his later films, Harrison Ford has become the curmudgeon scoundrel.)

On the other hand, there are really incredible actors who dive so deep in their roles that you forget their personality entirely. I remember watching Daniel Day Lewis in the movie *Lincoln* a few years back and several times during the movie I thought, “How did they get Abraham Lincoln back to portray himself in this movie?” It was just a fantastic performance. But in every circumstance, it’s just a role. An actor goes back to his normal life once the production of the movie is over.

We have roles, too. In America, the most typical question we get after “What’s your name?” is “What do you do for living?” Work is one of the biggest roles we have. We have other roles too – son or daughter, maybe student, maybe husband or wife, maybe being a mom or a dad. Sometimes a role lasts a season, like “driver to all of my kid’s soccer practices” or “caregiver to an elderly parent.” Sometimes last a lot longer. Sometimes we define ourselves by what we like – the role of a gamer, a film buff, a sports enthusiast, a music lover, a reader.

But what happens when those roles are stripped away from us? Who are we when all of the things we do no longer define us? Losing those things can be dangerous to our health – which is why doctors are most concerned about patients at the beginning of retirement. If work has played a major part in a person’s definition of themselves, once they finally stop, they may no longer have a reason to go on. Who are we, really? Are we just the sum of our interests and activities and roles? Or is there something deeper that defines us? We’re going to look at that in just a minute or two.

We’ve talked over the past six weeks about the roles Jesus was known for, the roles that in many ways aren’t actually very controversial, roles that even His critics agreed He was known for. During His earthly life, He was a healer, removing illnesses no one thought possible to cure. He was a teacher, pointing people back to God and helping us understand our relationship to Him. He was a provocateur, using every means possible to get people’s attention off of themselves and onto what really matters. He was a friend to sinners and the poor, the outcasts of society and the outsiders. He was a suffering servant who died a painful, contemptible death at the hands of his enemies despite spending His life in the service of His people.

But strip away those roles, and what do you have left? While we learn from Him even now, there will be a time when we meet God face to face – we will no longer have to be taught. They will be a point when healing isn’t necessary. Someday, God will not need extraordinary means to get our attention. While Jesus came as a suffering servant, that role is complete; He made a sacrifice for us “once for all,” Hebrews says. The role came to an end on the cross.

What is left is Jesus’ core identity, beyond anything He does, beyond anything He said, beyond healing, teaching, preaching, befriending. He is the Son of God. And what we celebrate today, Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, declares it boldly. He is not only the long-awaited Messiah come to rescue Israel from her sins. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords come in the flesh, God the Son sent by God the Father, who offers redemption and salvation to all people.

This is where the controversy comes. The records from believers and unbelievers alike agree on Jesus’ roles – there’s little doubt He did the things Scripture records during His life. It’s the resurrection that’s the sticking point. And yet everything hinges on whether or not the resurrection is true and Jesus is the Son of God. So let’s look at the evidence. Let’s look at whether or not we can believe that He could be the Son of God, and then look at we can believe the reports of the resurrection.

One of the greatest points in Jesus being the Son of God is His unwillingness for that title to be proclaimed to the masses. I remember sitting in the church library as a teenager going through my Bible trying to find where Jesus says He is the Son of God. I was frustrated because I couldn’t find it. Even when Jesus is on trial, His accusers asking Him to state plainly if He is the Son of God, and His answer is, “You yourselves have said so.” (This is technically a “yes” answer, and the Pharisees took it that way, but it’s indirect.) I just wanted Him to come out and say it. Then I got to be an adult, and I realized that if someone goes around claiming to be the Son of God, you put that person away somewhere. People who claim to be the Son of God are dangerous because they think they are something they aren’t. And if Jesus had gone around claiming it directly, He would have been stoned immediately for blasphemy.

Jesus didn't want anyone to think He was the Son of God because He said so. In fact, many times Jesus asked those who He'd healed and helped to keep silent about who they thought He was. He wasn't interested in people hearing, "Oh, this guy thinks He's something special." While sometimes He drops clues, He wanted to interact with people, for them to know Him personally, to see His servant's heart and all the extraordinary deeds He accomplished, the power given to Him by the Father to heal and to teach, and then for them to come to the conclusion, "This really is the Son of God." Over and over again, that's the conclusion of people in the New Testament – not that Jesus went around saying He was God's Son, but that those He met were convinced of it.

And who else in history has the deeds to match Jesus? He performs miracles that no one can explain away. You can say that the disciples told the stories wrong, that it was all smoke and mirrors. If you are unwilling to believe that miracles are possible, then your mind is made up. But what's convincing about the miracles in the Bible is the reactions they receive. They actually make a great deal of sense.

Jesus is in a boat with the disciples and there's a terrible storm on the sea. Jesus wakes up, rebukes the storm, and immediately it's still. You might expect them to cheer Jesus – "yay, our fearless leader stopped the storm, go God!" Instead, they are terrified of Him. Who can command the winds and waves and them obey except God? Even the prophets of old had to ask God for the miracles they performed; Jesus has the power to make it happen by Himself.

Jesus drives out demons from people, puts them in their right minds again, and what do the townspeople do? They drive Him out; they say, "please leave ASAP." 5000 people are fed from Jesus hand in such a way that they know a miracle has happened, even though they can't quite tell how. But those same 5,000 people drop Jesus like a hot potato when the next day He pulls out some really hard teachings. Ten men are cured of their leprosy by a miracle; only one comes back to thank Jesus. The Pharisees aren't mad at Jesus for doing miracles; they are upset because they want a sign just for them, not to heal a sick woman or feed a poor and hungry crowd but on demand for their pleasure.

The miracles are not believable just because Jesus does them, but because the reactions to the miraculous make perfect sense. These are not made-up reactions of a bunch of cult leaders trying to make themselves look good. The disciples' reactions to the miracles at best make them look like really bad pupils who don't understand what Jesus had been teaching them. For guys who hung out with Jesus for three years, they are clueless, petty, argumentative, and in the end disloyal to a man – with their leader actually denying that he even knows Jesus. And as we heard together today, the disciples believed it only when they saw Jesus for themselves. Thomas wouldn't believe until he felt the nailprints himself.

When we start a church, we want someone up front who's friendly, charismatic, charming, but also reliable and faithful, a man of God who's able to win hearts but beyond reproach. What people starting a religious movement would start things off by saying, "The guy I believed in? I disrespected Him, dishonored Him, didn't understand Him, and didn't fully believe Him." Is that the guy you're going to choose to be your pastor? He's not the guy whose resume floats to the top!

But that's what shows us it's all true. The early believers didn't change the world because they were good people at all! They spread a faith that claims two billion followers around the world because they met the risen Jesus who gave them the Holy Spirit. They wouldn't have stuck with a movement that had the whole Roman world, Jews and Gentiles alike, mad enough at them that they were in constant danger unless they had seen the resurrection of Jesus themselves and knew it to be true.

The resurrection is the proof positive that Jesus is not just human but divine. Because we all know the pattern of things – we're born, we sin, we die. From the moment we come into this world, we are totally self-focused. A lot of things change as we get older, but not that one. Without God's influence, we never get past ourselves. We sin because we want what we want rather than what God wants. And because we sin, because we are broken in body, mind, and spirit by our disobedience to God, we eventually die.

But Jesus was different. He was without sin. He never displeased the Father. He was always in perfect communion, in perfect harmony, with Him. He's a man, but more than a man because no man lives like He did; in not sinning, He does what no other person in history has done. He was like us in every way but sin. That ability to perfectly do the will of God shows that He is also divine.

The resurrection is not a stretch to believe once we realize this. It is impossible to believe in a resurrected man who will not die again because we've never seen it. But Jesus, while fully human, is also totally different from us in that central way. Because He is divine, because He is perfect and proved it through a sinless life and a perfect, self-sacrificial death, resurrection makes sense. Death cannot hold down the perfect One. Resurrection is truly the only thing we should expect when the Son of God dies. If Jesus was not resurrected, we would have proof that we live either in a cold, godless, indifferent universe or in one where whatever god exists is unjust. Instead, we have the resurrection – proof that God is in fact just, He's the God of the Scriptures, and Jesus is His Son.

That's the whole reason Christianity exists. It's the reason we rejoice today. Jesus was raised to life. It vindicates Him. It gives power and authority to His teachings. It proves that He is Lord of all. It proves that He is the gateway to God's Kingdom. It proves He is worthy of all our praise, our love, our dedication, our devotion, and our affection. And it proves there is hope for us.

Let's go back to where we started. When all our roles are stripped away, what's left? What defines us? If we take away our jobs, being a student, being a mom or dad, take away all your interests and hobbies, even all the things you do, who are you at your core? You're human. You're imperfect. Even if you've never believed there was a god or any outside standard to live up to, you've not always held up to even the standards you set for yourself. You may consider yourself measuring up as nicer or kinder or morally better than some other people in the world, but you don't measure up to any standard of perfection. If there's no god and no afterlife, it doesn't matter. But if there is, and you are held to the standard of perfection, of what you could have been had you been obedient to Him, you are in trouble. As everyone who ever lived is!

The good news is, we don't have to be judged by our core of imperfection. We do not have to be defined by our darkest impulses and our worst days. And that's because of the resurrection, which proves that at His core, Jesus is the Son of God. Because of the resurrection, Jesus can forgive your sins. Because of the resurrection, God can look upon you with favor, seeing His Son's reflection in you and giving you a new and permanent role as His child.

Because of the resurrection, you can have the Holy Spirit living within you and guiding you, pointing you on the path of Jesus each day. Because of the resurrection, everyone who believes on Jesus' name and follows Him becomes part of "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" according to 1 Peter 2:9. Because of the resurrection, you can declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Because of the resurrection, according to 1 Corinthians 6:11, all believers are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. Because of the resurrection, you can start to live a life free from the curse of sin; you'll fight it every day, but the battle has already been won on your behalf at the cross. Because of the resurrection, as Revelation 21 and 22 reveals, God will make His permanent home with us. Because of the resurrection, every tear will be wiped away and there will be no grieving or pain or suffering. Because of the resurrection, the faithful will see God's face – the one thing no one still under the curse of sin can do.

If you're not convinced but are willing to seek the truth, take a copy of the free book we have in back – Lee Strobel's *The Case For Christ*. Strobel was a Yale-trained journalist, an atheist, who wanted evidence to dissuade his wife from her new-found beliefs. His investigation convinced him instead, and the book tells what persuaded him. It won't answer every question, but it helps to put a lot of the big questions into perspective. And if you'd like to know more, talk to me. I want to help you understand the resurrection of Jesus and what it means for you.

Because today is a day of decision. The truths are right in front of us. You can decide it's all nonsense and live as if there is no god, and see how that plays out. You can choose to wait and see, but that's a choice too. Or you can put your life in the hands of Jesus, the only person in history that compelling evidence suggests did return from the dead, which would prove that He spoke the truth and that He was and is the Son of God.

That's not an easy decision. It's a decision only God can lead you to make. It's a decision that will change the course of your life, force you to walk a different path, to choose different directions than the ones the world would send you. But it's a decision worth any trouble it causes. Because if you come to Christ, you will know the truth, and it will set you free. You'll begin a relationship with the God who loved you enough to send His Son for your sake, who gave Him willingly so that you might become His child. You will find that, at your core, you've changed. When all the earthly roles fade away, you'll be defined by a few simple words. Forgiven. Free. Chosen by God. Called His child. Made perfect in the righteousness of Jesus and guaranteed to enjoy the joy of His presence always. And that's worth celebrating.

Jesus is alive! May we give Him all praise, glory, honor, and power in our hearts and lives today – because our King is risen! Amen.