

# The Biggest Question

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Preacher: Foley Beach

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     the Archbishop is the shepherd of the whole province. So just as the bishop is a pastor to the clergy in his diocese, so the Archbishop is also the pastor to the bishops of the province.

That's a quick overview, but I could spend 30 minutes telling you what I do, but you don't want to hear that. No, that's great. And we've heard about your province, some of us, about the excitement of how busy that is with church planting and desire to see the gospel grow and advance.

But you're in Scotland, so you're obviously a busy man in North America who's come here. What have you been doing in the UK? I have been here because I am part of GAFCON, which stands for the Global Anglican Future Conference, a group of Anglicans that represent the majority of Anglicans all around the world who are trying to uphold the historic biblical Christian faith.

We live in a time where even in the church it seems to be dissected and pulled apart. And so we're here to encourage, to build up, and to encourage folks who are trying to stand for the truth of the Bible. Joy, well, thanks, Foddy, for being with us.

Can I pray for you now? Sure. And then we'll have the scripture read. Okay. You can preach for us. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for Foley Beach. Thank you for saving him by your grace and sustaining him as a Christian and in ministry.

[ 1 : 1 5 ]     We thank you for his visit to the UK and his opportunity to encourage and strengthen churches here. We pray for his ministry among us as your word is read and proclaimed, Father, that your spirit will be powerfully at work in our hearts.

We pray for Archbishop Foley that you will enable him to be courageous and godly, that you'll keep him from scandal, and he will be a faithful servant of you as he goes on from Scotland.

And, Father, that you give him great joy that his name is in the book of life. That will be his first joy and love. For Jesus' name's sake. Amen. Thank you.

So Emma is going to come and bring our Bible reading from Mark's Gospel, and then Foley will preach for us. Thank you. The reading is taken from Mark chapter 8, verses 27 to 38, and that can be found on pages 1012 of the Church Bibles.

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way, he asked them, Who do people say I am? They replied, Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others, one of the prophets.

[ 2 : 3 2 ]     But what about you? He asked. Who do you say I am? Peter answered, You are the Messiah. Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed, and after three days rise again.

He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside, and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. Get behind me, Satan, he said.

You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns. Then he called the crowd to him, along with his disciples, and said, Whoever wants to be my disciple, must deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow me.

For whoever wants to take their life, will lose it. But whoever loses their life, for me, and for the gospel, will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

Or what can anyone give, in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me, and my words, in this adulterous, and sinful generation, the Son of Man, will be ashamed of them, when he comes in his Father's glory, with the holy angels.

[ 3 : 42 ] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Well, good evening.

Good evening. It's kind of weak. Good evening. Good evening. Just make sure you're still awake. I don't know if this will work. Let's see. Maybe I'll come down here. Is that better? Everybody see me okay?

All right. Great. Well, first of all, I've come all the way from Atlanta, Georgia, to share with you tonight. Thank you, Martin, for the invitation. I want to make sure everybody knows who Bishop Andy Lyons is.

Would you kind of just stand up, so everybody sees who you are? Okay. Great. He has been consecrated as a missionary bishop to Europe, and he's here also visiting today.

This text is an important text, so before we look into it, I want to pray again. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word, and as we open it tonight, I ask that you'd send forth your spirit.

[ 4 : 40 ] Come to each of us. Be our teacher. Help us, Lord, to hear from you. Use this, your servant, to speak your word. Help us all to then apply it in our lives as we leave this place tonight.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. There is a question which ranks high above every other question. There is a question which is so important that it determines quality of life on earth.

There is a question in which the answer divides humanity into two groups. Those go into heaven and those not go into heaven. There is a question which cuts to the heart of our religiosity.

There is a question that each person must answer on our own. Your friends can't answer it for you. Your parents can't answer it for you.

Your spouse can't answer it for you. Your employer can't answer it for you. Your children can't answer it for you. Only you can answer the question. So if you have your Bibles I want to encourage you to open back up to Mark chapter 8 and let's look at this passage together and see if we might understand the context and also the application of this important question.

[ 6 : 03 ] Mark chapter 8 beginning in verse 27. And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. So the context of the passage is that Jesus and his disciples are up in the northern part of Israel.

They're in a place near Caesarea Philippi a pagan city near the headwaters of the Jordan River. The springs bubbling up from the ground which create the Jordan River are right at that place.

You can still visit it today. It's beautiful. Sitting up on the carved section of the mountain sat a pagan god a statue and pilgrims would come to pay homage to this statue.

The entrance of the cave was also to believe to be an entrance into the lower regions of the earth called hell. So there were pagan gods to the underworld as there as well.

And many sacrifices were often offered in that place. So it's in the midst of this environment that Jesus asked his disciples this important question.

[ 7 : 14 ] Verse 27, part B. And Jesus said to his disciples, Who do people say that I am? Matthew's translation, by the way, Matthew, this is the Cliff Notes version, the abbreviated version of the story.

Matthew gives all the detail of it. But Matthew says, he didn't just ask, who do the people say that I am? He says, who do the people say the Son of Man is? And the Son of Man was a way he referred to himself.

Oftentimes, other people would refer to him as the Son of God, but he often referred to himself as the Son of Man. For you see, from our human's perspective, if you think of it, he's the Son of God who came down.

But from his perspective, he was God that came down into humanity, so from his perspective, he's the Son of Man. He entered the human race and from his perspective, he became the Son of a human, the Son of Man.

So Jesus asked, Who do people say that I am? And his disciples replied, we look in verse 28. They said, John the Baptist, and others say Elijah, and others, one of the prophets.

[ 8 : 29 ] Some say John the Baptist. Now we must remember, a few chapters earlier, John the Baptist had been executed or beheaded by King Herod. And many people thought that his spirit and anointing had come upon Jesus.

Actually, Herod himself thought Jesus was John the Baptist resurrected. John, excuse me, Mark 16, just the chapter before, tells us this.

Look at Mark 6, 16. But when Herod heard of it, he said, John whom I beheaded has been raised.

I'll start at 14. King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. This is why these miraculous powers are at work on him.

Others said, no, he is Elijah. And others said, no, he's a prophet, like one of the prophets of old. But when Herod heard of it, he said, John whom I beheaded, he has been raised.

[ 9 : 33 ] But then Jesus was told that some say you're not just John the Baptist, some say you're Elijah. Now remember, Elijah was that awesome prophet from the Old Testament. He lived hundreds of years before Jesus and had a tremendous prophetic ministry.

Remember, it was he that passed his mantle on to Elisha. And the same powerful Holy Spirit came upon Elisha that was on Elijah. There were prophecies about Elijah.

That his spirit, his mantle, would be on the Messiah. That he would come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord, Malachi 4.1 tells us. And now Mark has not told us yet, but what is going to happen in the next chapter, you may remember the story of the transfiguration just a few verses later.

Jesus goes up on the mountain with Peter, James, and John and this glory cloud descends and envelops him and his disciples. And who appears? Elijah and Moses.

The prophet Elijah does come. But then others said, and Matthew gives this version, that maybe it may have been Jeremiah. Well, he was also a great prophet from the Old Testament who lived hundreds of years before Jesus.

[ 10 : 49 ] And many Hebrew scholars associated Jeremiah with the coming of the Messiah. Jeremiah 1.10 says this, See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down to destroy and overthrow and to build and to plant.

They saw this as a role for the Messiah. And they associated Jeremiah with it. And of course here it says, or one of the prophets. Because of what Jesus was saying and doing, many thought that he had to be one of the prophets of the Old Testament.

Their Bible talked about these prophets. Surely Jesus was one of these prophets. Bible scholar Matthew Henry adds this, he says, Rather than allow Jesus of Nazareth, one of their own country, to be such an extraordinary person as his works bespoke him to be, they would say, it's not he, but one of the old prophets that's doing this.

Now to get a sense of what was in the news at the time and the public thinking about Jesus, listen to this discussion about Jesus in Mark 6.14. Well, we just read that, Mark 6.14-16.

You know, they're talking about Jesus, they're hearing his name, and they're just speculating about why he is doing what he's doing, why he's doing these miracles, why all these people are flocking to him, and why he's speaking of the things of God so well.

[ 12 : 14 ] So Jesus asked his disciples, who do people say that I am? Who do the people in our culture say that he is? Your friends, your business associates, your family members, who do they say that he is?

Now we probably don't have to take a survey this evening, but I would be confident that we might hear some of the following answers. Some would say, well, he was a religious guy.

He started Christianity, he makes people dress up on Sunday and be religious. Some others would say, well, he was a great moral teacher. He had some brilliant things to say.

He brought ethics and morality to a new level of sophistication. Others would say, he was one of the greatest political reformers of all times. I mean, his teachings actually brought down the Roman Empire.

Others would say, well, he was just a myth. There's no real historical data to prove that the guy even lived. You Christians can't prove any of this. Others would say he was just a cuss word.

[ 13 : 28 ] Very popular in many circles. And in those places, that's really all they know about him. Some would say, well, he's a cosmic genie. He gets me what I need.

He's the Santa Claus in the sky. Others might say, well, he was an interesting fellow. I mean, lots of folks seem to be attracted to him. He obviously had something to say.

He seems very interesting. But no relevance to my life. I don't see what all the fuss is about. I don't know why all these people get so hyped up about him.

So what? Who do people say that Jesus is? Who do your friends say that he is? You know, this is actually a very important question for you to know the answer.

Because how can you share the answers to them about who Jesus is if you don't know what they're thinking about who Jesus is? Then Jesus gets personal with his disciples.

[ 14 : 31 ] Verse 29. And he asks them, but who do you say that I am?

Who do you say that I am? James, who do you say that I am? John, who do you say that I am? Peter, who do you say that I am? Philip, who do you say that I am?

He asks all his disciples but only one answers. And Peter says, you are the Messiah. Matthew's version says, you are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

Some people thought he was John the Baptist. The disciples know him as the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Some people thought he was a prophet. The disciples know him as the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

Here in the presence of all these dumb and stiff idols at Caesarea Philippi, they acknowledge him as the Messiah, the Living One from God.

[ 15 : 38 ] It's about faith in Jesus. Faith in Jesus the Messiah. Faith in Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. One other important thing to note here.

Jesus here is in front of what many in that day thought was one of the entrances to hell. And he tells them that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church and the bedrock of faith on which it's built.

In Matthew's version, he says to Peter, on you I will build my church. All that hell can throw at the church, it will never be overthrown.

It may change. It might be persecuted. It might be deceived. It might be in despair. But the true church will never be prevailed against. And of course, the past 2,000 years of history has shown this to be true.

So, what about you? What about you? Jesus asked, who do you say that I am? This is the most important question you and I will ever answer.

[ 16 : 46 ] All of us have to answer one way or another. We may put it off. And in this itself is an answer. But all of us have to answer the question at some point.

Who do you say that I am? He says. Peter's confession is the most simple, most solid, most direct creed of the Christian faith.

Jesus, you are the Messiah. Or as Matthew adds to it, Jesus, you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. That's it. It summarizes it all.

We often say the Nicene Creed in church on Sunday, that wonderful confession of the faith or the Apostles' Creed. And yet you could repeat Peter's confession and it says it all. Jesus, you are the Messiah.

However, no one can confess this for you. Like Peter, it has to be your confession, your answer to this most important question.

[ 17 : 51 ] Only you can respond to it. You can't do it for your friends. You can't do it for your kids. You can't do it for your parents. It has to be something you do for you.

Well, I want to examine this question from two perspectives. First, who do you say that I am? In other words, what do you really believe about Him?

What do you really understand and know about Him? I mean, this is the faith which changes eternity. This is the faith which the gates of hell will not overcome.

In John 3, 16, we're told that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.

1 John 5, verse 11, the apostle writes this, and this is the testimony. God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son.

[ 18 : 49 ] He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

And of course, the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10, 13, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. So who is He to you?

Who do you say that He is? Is He your Messiah? Is He your Savior? Is He your Lord? Who do you say that He is? Secondly, who do you say that He is?

How do you speak of Him? Do you speak of Him? Who do you say that He is? Some people have faith, but they're afraid to ever mention the Lord.

They're afraid to talk to Him about others. They're afraid to defend Him in public. They're afraid to speak good of His name. They're afraid to even claim that they belong to Him.

[ 19 : 58 ] in Matthew 10, 32, but actually in this text as well, we find this at the end of it. Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, this is verse 28, whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of Him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in glory with His Father, with the holy angels.

for me, I began my public confession of faith at age 12. And then by age 17, I was ready. I submitted my life to the Lord. Yes, it's been a growing experience. Yes, I haven't been perfect. Yes, there have been times where I haven't wanted to admit that I belong to Him. But I can't do it anymore. I have to acknowledge that I am His. He means so much to me. He's changed so much in me.

He's done so much through me. And I can't explain it other than His miraculous power. Who do you say that I am?

[ 21 : 12 ] It's the most important question that you will ever answer. One last thing here. Peter got it. And so often we don't.

Ask the Father in Heaven to help you get it. Ask Him to help you to see, to open your eyes. Ask Him to help you to give you ears to hear. Ask Him to give you the faith to believe.

And like Peter, He will. You will be able to say, you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And not just be something you're articulating intellectually, but something that's inside you.

Who do you say that I am? It's the most important question you'll ever answer. Let's pray together. And as we pray, I want to invite you to just quietly pray your own prayer.

Perhaps you've never acknowledged Him as your Messiah, your Lord, your Savior. Savior. Perhaps you have done that, but you've walked away from it, or you've put Him on the shelf, or you've decided to discount His role in your life.

[ 22 : 33 ] I want to invite you just to pray a simple prayer acknowledging where you are and asking for His help. For some of you, you need to confess some sin.

Confess it to Him. He'll forgive you. For some of you, you need to ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Ask Him. He will. Pray in your own way for the next few moments.

Our Father, we ask in Jesus' name that You would meet every person where they are this night.

Touch them, empower them, strengthen them, fill them with Your presence. Help us all to be able to answer this most important question that You are the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God, My Messiah, My Lord, My Savior.

And this is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks for allowing me to share with you tonight. Bless you.