

Intro

Matt 16:13-17 As you know, Redemption Hill, along with over 300 other churches in the area are going through a series called Explore God where we are discussing some of the harder questions about God, Jesus, the Bible, and Christianity. We've looked at life's meaning, God's existence, the problem of evil and suffering, and the exclusivity of Christianity. But today we want to take a closer look at Jesus and ask a question that people have been asking for centuries about Him "Is Jesus really God?" This question is an important one, one that both skeptics and believers alike have wrestled with. And the answer to this question is important as well because whatever conclusion we make about Jesus carries implications that reach into every area of our lives. The answer that we arrive at isn't as important to a pastor, or a church, or even Christianity as a whole, as it is to Jesus. He actually asks us the same question - whatever our association is to Him. For a moment we can place ourselves in a conversation that happened over 2000 years ago at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus asks his 12 closest followers "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They answered "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." To which Jesus responds with an even more direct question "But who do you say that I am?" This is the question that is presented to all of us. Was He just a good teacher? A prophet? A lesser god?

In an attempt to answer this question, we'll look largely at the historical information about the man, Jesus. Information has its benefits, but this becomes just another history lesson if all I do is give you enough data for you to make your own conclusion about Jesus as a historical figure. This question isn't simply a historical one, it's a spiritual one, - it has implications on every aspect of our lives - because "If God exists", as Raymond wonderfully pointed to a few weeks ago, then what this question implies is that the All-powerful, and All-wise Creator and Designer of the Universe has done far more than simply bring into existence everything that is and then stand outside of it...it implies that this God actually entered into time and space,into this world during a particular period of time, as a particular individual, interacted with His creation, and spoke particular things

to people about how we regard Him, how we live amongst each other, and about life after death. If Jesus is God, then this truth has massive spiritual implications for every person that has ever lived and it means something for every person on this earth as to how we consider Jesus.

My aim today is to answer this question in the affirmative by giving you proof for why I believe this.. This is a sermon and not a lecture, and so part of this time will be spent presenting proof for the existence of Jesus as a man and examining the statements that He made about Himself and the statements that others have made about Him historically. Like proof for any other historical figure or event, I want to present the data concerning Jesus and what has been recorded about Him. I then want to spend the rest of our time answering the question of “What difference does it make: whether Jesus is really God or not?”

Jesus' Exists

So before we answer this question about Jesus and Divinity, let's take a look at the man Jesus. Did He even exist? Was He a mythical figure?as some people have proposed. The majority of modern scholars and historians, both Christian and secular will readily affirm that Jesus was a Jewish man who lived over 2000 years ago in first century Palestine. This is largely due to the many extra-biblical sources that chronicle the person of Jesus. For example, Tacitus, a Roman historian in the first century, records that the Roman emperor, Nero, blamed the Christian community for the fires he started in Rome which would eventually burn nearly the entire city. Tacitus states that *“Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea...but even in Rome”*

Furthermore, Josephus a Jewish priest and historian who was captured and later employed by Vespasian the emperor of Rome records (in an Arabic version of his writings) *"At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. His conduct was good and (he) was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive; accordingly he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders."*

There are many more historical recordings about the man Jesus, from first and second century politicians and historians, but for time's sake we'll look at one more: The Babylonian Talmud (one of Rabbinic Judaism's collection of writings), which states, *" On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Any one who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.' But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover!*

So based on these three extra biblical sources: 1) Jesus was a wise man who was good and virtuous. He had disciples 2) He was a controversial figure, who allegedly did wonderful works or "practiced sorcery" and led Israel into apostasy" 3) and He was condemned to death by suffering the extreme penalty by Pilate on the eve of the Passover...4) and He was reported by his disciples to be alive 3 days after his crucifixion.

The Reliability of the Gospels

While many of these historical accounts only contain brief sentences or observations about Jesus, we do have data that gives us a deeper look into his life. That data, for most of you, is right at your fingertips today: the gospels: the accounts many of us refer

to as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. While these gospels weren't written by historians or Roman officials of that day, they were recorded by eyewitnesses and those who were closely associated with eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and ministry. Matthew or Levi was the former Jewish tax collector who was one of Jesus' 12 apostles. John Mark, an African pastor who founded the church in Alexandria and who was believed to be at the Last Supper and at Pentecost, was a close companion to Peter. Luke, who is also the author of The Acts of the Apostles, was the Apostle Paul's physician in the days of early church, and the majority of scholars believe that the author of John is the son of Zebedee who was also an apostle of Jesus.

The information about Jesus presented in the gospels therefore all comes from people who were in direct connection with Jesus or were associated with someone who was directly connected to Him. Furthermore, Matthew, Mark, and Luke were all written within 30-40 years after Jesus' death and John's gospel was written roughly 60 years after. Concerning modern scholarship, scholars, both secular and Christian, liberal and conservative, conclude that these four gospels are the earliest and most reliable sources for the life and ministry of Jesus. While many objectors deny the reliability of the gospels and accuse them of being written with a theological agenda rather than a historical one, this doesn't mean that the authors' neglected historical accuracy in the pursuit of communicating spiritual truth.

One scholar in particular is the late Michael Grant, a secular classical historian and author states that *"The consistency, therefore, of the [Jesus] tradition in their [the Gospels] pages suggests that the picture they present is largely authentic. By such methods information about Jesus can be derived from the Gospels....(page 204) And even though Grant rejected the traditional authorship of the gospels, he also states "the main lines of [Jesus'] career and thinking and teaching can to some considerable extent be reconstructed." through the gospels.*

So the gospels are historically reliable "biographies" or accounts of Jesus the man.... we can know that what's recorded in them are truly the words and actions of Jesus. The gospels record both the teaching ministry of Jesus and several miracles and exorcisms that He performed. Often referred to as a rabbi, Jesus' teachings centered on topics such as the Kingdom of God, prayer, money, loving one's neighbor, forgiveness, mercy, and the meaning of the law of Moses. Overall, based on what we read in the gospels about His life and teachings, Jesus was a benevolent, rational, virtuous, logical and sensible person. But according to these same historical gospels, he also made some controversial statements during His day.

Jesus' Claims of Divinity in The Gospels

He said things like *"Tear down this temple and in three days I will rebuild it."*... *"Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."* In that same conversation Jesus also said that He had come down from heaven.

"Whoever loves father and mother, son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

Statements like these and many more made by Jesus, if this were all He said, or if these were all we had to make a conclusion about Him, we might be in trouble. **These aren't things that people just say in the course of everyday conversation.** These are the types of things said by people who are either unhealthily and overly empowered to their own deceit (such as a King or a Pharaoh) or those suffering mentally, completely desensitized, or not particularly in what we would call "their right minds." But here is Jesus, a man we've already concluded both historically and biblically, who was wise, logical, and benevolent...someone who, if he were like most logical, wise, and benevolent people we know... and cared even the slightest about his reputation amongst others....*wouldn't* say these sorts of things. And yet He does, with the same genuineness, sincerity, and grace as He does when He says things like "Love one another just as I have loved you." And still He says even more controversial things....

Let's fast forward briefly to the hours before the end of Jesus life, the gospels tell us as many of us know that Jesus was arrested during the week of The Jewish Passover, and he was given a speedy and unjust trial by the religious authorities who would ultimately condemn Him and hand him over to the Roman Government to be killed by crucifixion. But what was Jesus on trial for exactly? Look at Mark 14:61-64.*Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"* ⁶² *And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."* ⁶³ *And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need?"* ⁶⁴ *You have heard his **blasphemy**.*

Jesus was arrested and condemned for blasphemy, particularly for equating Himself to be God, and ultimately in the eyes of the Romans, making Himself to be a rival King to Caesar. In John 10, John records when the religious leaders once picked up stones to throw at Jesus because as they said *"you being a man, make yourself God."* This answer given by Jesus in the moment of his trial was no vague statement. The religious leaders and the people present knew exactly what he meant by what He said. In answering affirmatively *"I am the Son of God, who is the Blessed"*, Jesus has again equated Himself to be God and He goes even further with the next part of His answer. When Jesus states that "you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven" he's again saying that He is much more than a mere human, but this time He references an Old Testament picture to further back His point that He is claiming to be God. The words of Jesus here point to The prophet Daniel, who lived centuries before Jesus during the days of the Babylonian exile of the Jews. In Daniel 7:13 he recounts a vision that he's seen and describes it as follows: 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. 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."*

In using the language that He does, Jesus intends to point to Himself as this Son of Man (another term He used frequently to refer to Himself) who comes with the clouds of heaven who is given authority and a kingdom and everlasting dominion, and who sits at the Right hand of God. But this isn't the only place where Jesus says something so explicit and controversial in claiming to be God. John's gospel highlights several particular sayings of Jesus in an effort to prove something about Him. During his teachings, Jesus would say things like *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never go thirsty."*

Later on, Jesus proclaims *"I am the Light of the world, whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

"I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved." "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."

"I am the Way, the Truth, and The Life, no man comes to the Father but through me."

Lastly, *"I am the vine, you are the branches. If any man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit."*

While each of these things communicates something about Who Jesus is saying He is in relation to us and to God, statements like these say much more as well. Notice that Jesus starts off each of these statements by proclaiming "I am". This is no coincidence. These words "I AM" point to an Old Testament event in which God revealed His name to Moses while speaking to Him through the burning bush. God says His name is "I AM WHO I AM"... "tell them I AM" sent you. And so in the gospels Jesus is invoking the intimate name of God upon Himself through the use of I AM. His audiences would have recognized this as He spoke. John also records another moment in the ministry of Jesus when Jesus is having an intense discussion with the Jews about their relation to Abraham. After the Jews retorted against Jesus for claiming that He (a thirty three year old man) had been around long before Abraham (who lived roughly 2000 years earlier)...Jesus said "Truly, truly, I say to you before Abraham was, I am." There it is again!! and so now, after this long and heated dialogue in which Jesus said many things

they disagreed with, they now, after *this* statement pick up stones to kill him. Why? He had taken the name of God...for Himself.

“Liar, Lunatic or Lord”

So What is this? Who talks like this? You’ve heard the popular statement by C.S. Lewis from his book “Mere Christianity” “ *A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic...or else he would be the devil of hell.*” From these words by Lewis, we get the shorter “Liar, Lunatic, or Lord” reference about Jesus. He’s not just a good moral teacher. He’s either the worst kind of deceitful cult leader who makes these sort of statements purely out of selfish gain and complete disinterest in others. Or He’s insane. He’s completely irrational, and not just that but powerfully irrational and unstable. One minute he is speaking wisdom that hasnt been heard in the history of the world and shortly after He’s talking like the unwisest person ever....if what He says isn't true. But look, no matter what category you place Jesus in today....the point is that you can't just leave him in the category of “good.moral.teacher.” He takes Himself out of that category in making such statements. But even more than His words, His actions and the actions of those who lived and interacted with Him have taken Him out of this category as well.

If we look at the gospels we see the reactions of those who encountered Jesus. How did they perceive Him? Well, from the very beginning of His earthly life, Jesus was revered and worshipped. John the Baptist joyfully leaps in the womb at the presence of Jesus at the earliest stages of his physical development in the womb (Lk. 1:41-45) . Angels proclaimed His birth to shepherds (Lk.2 :8-21). Wise men who didn't know Jesus from the next stranger came from foreign countries to worship him (Matt 2:1-12). Voices from heaven proclaim Him to be the Son of God at His baptism (Matt 3:13-17). Demons proclaim Him to be the Holy One of God as they beg for mercy (Matt 8:28-40). Roman centurions proclaim Him to be the Son of God and even recognize his authority. Blind men recognized Him as the promised Son of David. The disciples called Him the Son of

God and even died for their profession of it. They regarded Jesus as sinless. After His resurrection Jesus is worshipped by some of the first people who saw him. These kinds of responses to Jesus are consistent throughout the gospels. Furthermore, if we look at the witness of the Old Testament Scriptures - documents that both Jesus and Jewish religious authorities relied on concerning the identity of the foretold Messiah - Jesus fulfills each of the over 350 prophecies concerning the Messiah.

And in addition to this, the gospels tell us that Jesus Himself backed up His claims by demonstrating power that could only belong to God. He displayed sovereignty over nature in the calming of storms. He displayed sovereignty over demons. Power over sicknesses and disease in healing people. He possessed power over the elements in turning water into wine. He displayed power over life in raising the dead. He displayed omniscience in several interactions with people, knowing both the thoughts of their hearts and specific information about them without being told. He knew who would listen to Him and believe and who wouldn't. He forgave sin - and not in the way that a priest does. After telling a paralyzed man that his sins were forgiven, the scribes responded "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" . Furthermore, Jesus Himself professed to be sinless and was called "Holy" from conception.

So do the gospels think of Jesus as divine? Yes. Some have thought "No" because the gospels never record the specific words of Jesus saying "I am God", but Jesus affirms His divinity in several places in the gospels along with the words and the reactions of others, friends and foes, who either believed Him to be Divine or perceived him to be a man who claimed Divinity. *********I'll give you the words of Bart Erhman, an agnostic-athiest scholar and professor who focuses on the historical Jesus and textual criticism of the New Testament. Erhman recently stated this after he wrote a book entitled "How Jesus became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee", a book that claimed that the all of the gospels except John *didn't* portray Jesus to be God. He states *"in doing my research and thinking harder and harder about the issue, when I*

(a) came to realize that the Gospels not only attributed these things to him, but also understood him to be adopted as the Son of God at his baptism (Mark 1:9-11), or to have been made the son of God by virtue of the fact that God was literally his father, in that it was the Spirit of God that made the virgin Mary pregnant (Luke 1:35), and (b) realized what “adoption” meant to people in the Roman world (as indicated in a previous post), I finally yielded. These Gospels do indeed think of Jesus as divine. Being made the very Son of God who can heal, cast out demons, raise the dead, pronounce divine forgiveness, receive worship together suggests that even for these Gospels Jesus was a divine being, not merely a human.

To be fair to Erhman, he believes that the sense in which each gospel displays Jesus’ divinity is different, but overall the gospels portray Jesus as God in the flesh. *****

The Resurrection

Before we move on, there is one last piece of historical data that points us to Jesus and His claims of Divinity: The resurrection. If Jesus is really God, it is most clearly seen in His being resurrected from death. If He has been resurrected, this validates all the claims that He has made about Himself. As we know, Jesus was condemned to death by crucifixion on the eve of The Passover. The gospels tell us that there was darkness that covered the region from noon until three in the afternoon - all of which has been documented by ancient historians. Jesus was buried in the tomb of a rich member of the Sanhedrin. Three days later His body is admittedly reported to be missing by both Romans and the Jews who then sought to make a conspiracy of it, and the women who followed Jesus and who visited His tomb in the days after his death - who proclaimed that He had been resurrected.

Gary Habermas, a New Testament scholar at Liberty University has composed up to 12 facts that the majority (over 3400 sources) of New Testament scholarship agree upon concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus. Several Liberal, skeptic, and Christian scholars all affirm through historical data and evidence that 1) Jesus died by crucifixion. 2) The disciples of Jesus were sincerely convinced that He rose from the dead and

appeared to them. They were transformed from doubters to bold proclaimers. 3) Saul of Tarsus, also known as Paul - an avid and violent enemy of Christianity, suddenly changed his beliefs towards Christianity. 4) James, the brother of Jesus, who did not support his brother's three year ministry, changed his beliefs about Christianity and lastly 5) (a point that doesn't have the majority of affirmation from NT scholars, but up to 75% of NT scholars would affirm its reliability.) The tomb of Jesus was found empty three days after his crucifixion.

Now, some will say that it takes faith, and that alone, to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, as if its merely an unexplainable part of history that is quickly resolved with a spiritual solution - and faith in the resurrection is important, but there are also some very credible historical reasons for believing in it as well. First, just look at Jerusalem in the days following the crucifixion and the empty tomb .Look how quickly Christianity spread throughout the city and how a body is never exhumed to disprove the resurrection. But also look at the lives of Jesus' disciples. Men like Peter: a man who went from standing cowardly at a distance from Jesus during his trial - denying Him , to standing boldly for Jesus in front of over 3000 people just 50 days later. These men, in a relatively short period of time went from -at minimal- confused and even somewhat unsure about the identity of Jesus to bold and unwavering witnesses of Jesus in just over a period of fifty days - men who would die for this belief in His deity. Or look at Paul, a man who wrote two thirds of the New Testament; a man who was formerly one of Christianity's earliest and most powerful opponents - see how quickly, not even twenty years after the death of Jesus - how quickly his entire perspective changed towards Jesus. This is a well educated, cultured, theologically robust, Jewish Pharisee who goes from persecuting the followers of Jesus so harshly that he probably would have crucified Jesus himself, to writing to Gentile audiences that Jesus is the image of the invisible God, one whom the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form (Col 1:17,2:9) Or James, Jesus' own brother. Whereas the disciples lived with Jesus for only 3 years, James probably spent well over 10 or more years with His brother Jesus, observed His 3 year ministry and rejected it for

much of the time---only to change His mind as well soon after His death. What happened? What causes this sort of instant reaction in sensible and rational men and family members? Well, lets ask one of them.

From Information to Implication

Turn to 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, a portion of a letter written by Paul. He writes to the Corinthians in verse 3 that “... *I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that **he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.** ⁶ **Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.** ⁷ **Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.** ⁸ **Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.***

He appeared. He appeared. Jesus appeared to Paul, to Peter, to the disciples, to 500 people (most of them still alive and able to tell you about it!), and to James. They saw Him. This what changes everything for these people. But why? *Why* does this change things for them?

Listen, based on the evidence presented, you may or may not be convinced that this event happened -maybe you're not,.... if you are, thats a step in the right direction. But have you asked yourself *why* this is significant for you? Sure, perhaps you leave here concluding that there was something more to Jesus than mere humanity - maybe He is more than a moral teacher. Maybe He is God. But if that is the case, what does that mean for you? Let's let Paul keep talking. Verse 12

*Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. *****¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God,*

*because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. ******

What Paul is saying here is that Jesus' resurrection has everything to do with us. Whether he was resurrected or not is directly connected to our lives, our beliefs, our hope, our purpose. Which is why this can't just be **information** to you - it has **implications**. There's no need to further elaborate on Paul's words here. If Jesus has not risen from the dead, He's not God - because God lives. And every claim of divinity Jesus made about Himself was a lie. If He's not resurrected then I'm wasting my time standing here speaking to you, even worse I'm lying about the God. If Jesus isn't resurrected you're wasting your time being here this morning. You'd be better off watching football, or as Paul says later "eat, drink, for tomorrow we die!" This life is all there is. If Jesus hasn't risen, the verdict is still out on where we stand with God. The judgment still remains, and we've been exposed to be severely narrow minded, there's no purpose in our suffering, there's no meaning in life. We are immensely pitiful.

Verse 20....*But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead...* and it has everything to do with you. Listen, **If Jesus has been resurrected from death, then He is God**. This is because If Jesus is resurrected, it points to the greatest Cosign in history. As God, it confirms as Jesus said in John 10:18 that He has power to take His life up again. Furthermore, God the Father has stamped His approval, His ultimate affirmation on all of the words and the works of His Son Jesusby raising Him from the dead. As Romans 1:4 says , Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness, by His resurrection from the dead." If Jesus has been resurrected, then it means that He is The Way, The Truth, and The life...there is no other way to God but through Him. If Jesus is resurrected, then the words of Paul in Colossians are true: that

it is by Jesus, the eternal Son of God, that all things were made and all things are held together. If He is resurrected then *all things* were created through Jesus and for Jesus - which means you. If He is God, then it means that Jesus is your Creator, the one to whom you're accountable, and that when He speaks, He speaks authoritatively, sovereignly... to you. If He is God then it means that our lives have meaning and purpose - His purpose, and our suffering is not in vain - it means that the sufferings we experience as humans are not solitary and purposeless - but God has felt and endured the very same sufferings for an eternally good purpose.

Jesus Must Be God

The question is asked "Is Jesus really God"? The answer is Yes. But I would follow that answer with a stronger statement. **Jesus must be God.** We know that he was indeed a human like us who lived in this world, but he must be fully God because that is our only hope. Just look at this world that we live in. Hurricanes take the lives of over 800 people in Haiti. Our world experiences earthquakes, famines, natural disasters. We all agree that this is not as it should be. And One look at ourselves will tell us the same thing. Violence, fear, anxiety, murder, theft, adultery, sicknesses, genocide, racism, poverty...and on top of it all, suffering and death comes to all of us and yet it never ceases to shock us. We know that this is not the way God originally made things to be. The disobedience of our first ancestors to God's commands has plunged this world, this universe, and all who live in it into condemnation and into a condition of brokenness and sinfulness. And as a result everything and everyone remains under this sentence of judgment. We are eternally, infinitely, and justly indebted to our Creator and we have nothing by which to pay for our crimes and there is nothing we can do to change our condition. Because of our sinful human condition, redemption can only come through human perfection. And because of our condemnation, redemption can only come through our bearing the full weight of our punishment: death and eternal separation from God. We can do neither. On our own none of us can live in perfect obedience to God

and none of us can overcome the penalty of death that we deserve. **And this is why Jesus must be God.**

He must be fully human in order to represent our condition and plight as humans - but he must be perfect in order to be our substitute. He must be fully Divine in order to bear the full weight of the penalty for sin, and He must be fully God in order to conquer the death we've earned. For us, if we are to be saved, forgiven, delivered from death - if creation is to be redeemed and restored - Jesus must be God.

And this is what He has done. Jesus has lived the perfect God-honoring and obedient life that you and I **should** live, but fail to everyday. Through His life, He achieves for us a perfection we could never earn. And through His death, He bears the punishment for the life that we chose to live instead, and He dies - not for His own sin, but for our sin, taking upon Himself the judgment and the death that we deserve. In being resurrected from death, He proves that He has abolished our sentence of death and has shown Himself stronger than it - giving us new life, reconciliation with God, the forgiveness of our sin, and the removal of our punishment.

Conclusion

"Who do you say I am?" Jesus asks. Peter's response is *"You are the Christ! The Son of the Living God."* *And Jesus answered Him, "Blessed are you Simon Bar Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven."* The answer to "Is Jesus really God?" is one that can ultimately only be revealed by God. But in the words of CS Lewis *"You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God..."*

**As we close, consider again this question that Jesus asks His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" The historical information presented today alone will not be enough to

convince you of Jesus' Divinity, but like Peter, The Father reveals Himself through the words and works of His Son. Listen to one more claim that Jesus makes about Himself. As He sits down with His disciples for the Passover meal during the last week of His life, Jesus breaks bread with His disciples and tells them "This is my body which is given for you" and then He takes a cup of wine and tells them that it represents his blood which will be poured out for the forgiveness of sins." Take a moment whether you're a believer or skeptic to reflect on and look at the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Through His Son, God offers for the forgiveness of your sin, He offers new life, He displays His love, His grace, and mercy and extends it to those who will trust and believe that this sacrifice of Jesus was for them.

Today, if your hope is in this sacrifice that Jesus has made for you, be refreshed and reminded that Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself and died, for you. He achieved what you couldn't and removed the penalty you could never escape. Turn from sin, Receive His grace and celebrate what He has accomplished.