

In Mt.16 Jesus asked His disciples two very poignant questions.

Question #1: "Who do the people say that I am?"

Question #2: "Who do you say that I am?"

The two answers were very different – one was right and the other was wrong.

And those people who had the wrong answer were lost – even though they knew Jesus personally.

Have you ever thought about that?

There were people who knew Jesus personally – shook His hand, hung out with Him...

, maybe even knew Him from the time He was a baby and watched Him grow up, but they were lost.

You see unless you believe the truth about Jesus, you don't really know Him and you are not really a Christian.

Paul was worried about the Corinthians going astray for this very reason.

2 Corinthians 11:3-4 But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴ For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached ... you put up with it easily enough.

He was afraid they were going to be led astray because they were willing to give a hearing to people who were preaching a different Jesus.

They weren't preaching against Jesus.

They weren't preaching someone else instead of Jesus.

They were calling people to come to Jesus, but anyone who did was not saved because the Jesus they were calling people to was not the real one.

Just because you call someone Jesus Christ and worship him does not mean you are saved, because there is such a thing as a false Jesus.

If you put a banana on the table and call it Jesus and trust in that banana 100% to save you...

, you can have all the faith in the world in that thing and on Judgment Day it will do you no good at all.

So who is the true Jesus?

What do you have to believe about Him in order to be saved?

If you are ever foggy about who Jesus is, Christmas time is the best time to get that straightened out in your mind...

, because when God announced the birth of His Son He made it very clear who Jesus is.

The Magi knew who He was.

God let the whole world know who this little baby was by the gifts that were presented to Him by the Magi.

They weren't your typical baby gifts.

They weren't made by Fisher Price.

They didn't give Him a pacifier or a toy or baby clothes.

11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

Gold

God is a gift for a king.

You don't read about kings w/o reading about gold.

The book of Matthew is all about presenting Jesus as the great King of kings, and so it's no surprise that he mentions the gold first.

Mt.2:1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?"

Jesus was called the King of the Jews at His birth and at His death.

He died under a sign that said, "This is Jesus, King of the Jews." (Mt.27:37)

Who is the real Jesus?

Revelation 19:11-16 ¹¹ I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. ... ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. ... ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him ... He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

He is the great King – the supreme authority of the universe.

To Him absolute allegiance and obedience is due from every created being.

Any Jesus who is not the supreme authority over all is not the real Jesus.

Some people preach that you can accept Jesus as Savior but not Lord.

They say He can come into your life as Savior, but you don't have to submit to Him as Lord until the day finally comes when you make Him Lord of your life.

A Jesus who is a savior but not the Lord is not the real Jesus.

A Jesus who is not the King on the throne is not the same one who was born that day in Bethlehem.

He's the great King before whose feet all other kings must bow.

Myrrh

The second gift was myrrh.

That is a very strange gift to give a baby.

The gold was unusual enough, but to give the gift of myrrh would border on the offensive.

Because myrrh was what they used to embalm a dead body to prepare it for burial.

If a young couple has their first child it should be a happy occasion.

And if you show up with a gift of a little coffin, the parents might ask you if you got a gift receipt.

A few of the women in this church are pregnant right now.

How would you feel if God sent someone to the hospital room with a gift of some embalming materials for your baby?

Jesus was born to die.

The other day some of us were discussing at what point the process of dying begins.

After you're born you increase in life and health and strength as you grow and mature.

But then you reach a certain point where things start going the other direction.

Nothing is getting stronger or healthier – everything is getting weaker and less healthy.

I don't know what that age is when you crest that hill and start going down (although whatever the age is, I know it's an age that's in the past for me).

The shadow of Jesus' grave was looming right from the time He was born.

In fact, it was looming hundreds of years before He was born.

The prophet Isaiah told us exactly what was going to happen to Him.

Isaiah 53:1 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. ⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had

done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

This baby was born to someday bear all the sins of the world, suffer the infinite wrath of God on the cross in our place, and die that we might have life.

And so if anyone comes to you with a Christ who never died, it's a different Christ.

The Muslims teach that Jesus never died on the cross.

Some teach that the Christ spirit came down on Christ at His baptism and left Him prior to His death, so Jesus died but the Christ did not.

Any kind of teaching like that is a different Jesus, and that phony Jesus can't save anyone.

Because if no one died in your place for your sins, you can't be saved.

Another thing the myrrh implies is the perfection of Jesus.

In order for a sacrifice to be acceptable to God it had to be an unblemished lamb.

Jesus' death in our place was able to pay the price for our sins only because Jesus was sinlessly perfect.

He never did or said or thought anything that wasn't absolutely perfect – ever.

And so when someone makes a movie or writes a book about a Jesus who had lust in His heart or any other sin, that's a different Jesus.

Incense

So no doubt the gold was a surprising gift.

And the myrrh was an even more surprising gift.

But perhaps the most shocking of all was the third gift – incense.

Because incense is something you offer to God, not men.

Incense is for worship.

And worship is for God alone.

We are absolutely forbidden to worship anyone but God Himself.

Scripture forbids worship of anyone else in the strongest possible terms.

“But did the Magi know what they were doing when they offered incense as a gift?”

Sure they did.

They knew that was an act of worship, and they weren't one bit shy about worshipping this little child.

That was the whole reason they came!

Matthew 2:1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

They knew He was God.

If anyone comes to you with a Jesus who isn't the eternal, Almighty, Creator God, they are peddling a phony Jesus who cannot save you.

When the Magi arrived and asked where the king of the Jews was to be born, they answered them by quoting Micah 5.

Micah 5 is a prophecy that was written hundreds of years earlier about the birthplace of the Messiah.

Micah 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose goings out are from of old, from ancient times."

Those who try to deny the pre-existence and eternity of Christ explain this passage away by saying, “It just means that his ancestry goes way back into ancient times.”

To me that almost sounds like a joke.

Doesn't everyone's ancestry go way back?

I don't want to brag, but I happen to know that my ancestry goes all the way back to Adam.

Of course His ancestry goes way back, but this isn't talking about His ancestry.

It's talking about His **goings out**.

“goings out” is a term that refers to the conducting of one's activities.

He was not yet born when that was written, and yet He had been carrying out His activities since ancient times.

How can someone be carrying on His activities for centuries before He is born into the world?

That can only be a description of God.

And that shouldn't have been a surprise to those who paid close attention to the prophecies about the Messiah.

It's pretty clear in Daniel 9 that the Son of man would be a divine being.

And if they missed that, Isa.9:6 is really clear:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God...7 He will reign on David's throne

Jesus is Almighty, Eternal, Creator God.

He is worshipped by the angels as God, He has the attributes of God, and He is called God.

Heb.1:6 when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says...8 But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever..."

Ro.9:5 ...from [Israel] is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Tit.2:13 the blessed hope-the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ

2Pe.1:1 To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

Jn.1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Jer.23:5-6 "The days are coming," declares Yahweh, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. ... This is the name by which he will be called: Yahweh Our Righteousness.

There is absolutely no question that Scripture teaches that Jesus is God.

Last Sunday in the Welcome Lounge some of us were in a conversation about the question of whether a person has to believe that in order to be saved.

The answer is – absolutely!

Exodus 3:13 Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

God calls Himself "I AM" (*ego eimi* in the Greek).

That name refers to His self-existence.

Everything in the created world depends on God for its existence.

Only God has self-existence.

That is, only God has the power to cause Himself to exist.

And so He calls Himself "I AM."

Now listen to the words of Jesus in Jn.8.

Jn.8:58 - Before Abraham was born, I AM (*ego eimi*)

Jn.8:24 - if you do not believe that I AM (*ego eimi*), you will indeed die in your sins.

Jesus Himself not only claimed to be God, but He said unless you believe that you will die in your sins.

If anyone comes to you with a Jesus who is a created being – that’s a different Jesus, a false Jesus who cannot save you.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses have invented a Jesus who is a created being – an angel.

The Mormons preach a Jesus who is Satan’s brother, and not the one true God.

Those religions are false religions because they preach a false Jesus.

Conclusion

Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do you say I am?”

That’s the question of the ages.

Answer it wrong and you will die in your sins and be lost for eternity.

Only those who answer it right can know the Lord Jesus Christ and have their sins forgiven forever.

Who is Jesus?

He is God, the Creator of all things who owns you and to whom you are ultimately answerable.

He is the Lamb of God who was born to die.

So that if you place your confidence not in how good you are but in His sacrificial death in your place, you can be saved.

And He is the King of kings, before whom every knee must bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The one who knows Him as king will submit to His will and obey His commands, and repent when there is failure to obey.

If that is the Jesus you know, you have done what the Magi did – you have found the true Christ.

MT 2:9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

Let’s go from this place tonight overjoyed, and let all our celebration tonight and tomorrow be a celebration of the fact that we know and love the true Christ of Christmas.

