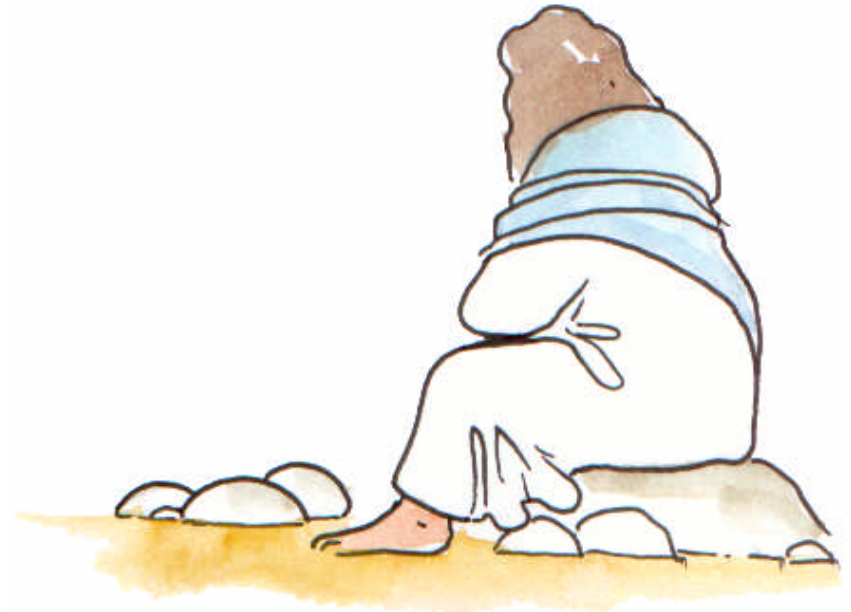


LIAR, LUNATIC OR LORD?



*What do you think
about Jesus Christ?*

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“Liar, Lunatic Or Lord?”

In Matthew 22 and verse 41 we read: *“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither dared any man from that day forth ask him any more questions”*.

I want to ask you the question that is posed in this passage before us, and it's found in verse 42. It's a question that the Lord Jesus asked of the people who He was speaking to in this passage. But we would be foolish to think that He only asked it of these people He was speaking to. Because we today have the word of God, we have the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and it's not just applicable to the people who it was originally written to, but we believe - as is true - it is also applicable to us today.

The question before us

This question, therefore, that the Lord Jesus asked these disciples - He did not simply ask them the question, but He is asking you this question today, and He is asking every person across the face of this green and blue earth this one question. It's almost as if no other question mattered, it's almost as if out of every question that the Lord Jesus Christ wanted to pose to planet earth, that this was the question that was foremost, this was the question that meant everything to Him. So in verse 42 He says these words: *“What think ye of Christ?”*. What do you think about Jesus Christ? That's the question I want to ask you, whether you're young, middle aged, or old - no matter what age you are - that question is so relevant to you: what do you think about Jesus Christ? Not just what do you think about Him, but why do you think it?

Some people believe He was a prophet, some people believe He was a good man, Paul Daniels thinks He was a magician, some people see Him as a guru, the Muslims think of Him as a great teacher and preacher and prophet, some people think He was an imposter - the Jews thought He was an imposter, someone who was wanting to take worship and glory for Himself and worship and glory away from God. But what do you think? Not what have you been taught, not what do

C.S. Lewis, that great writer, said these words: *‘In a civilisation like ours’*, he said, *‘I feel that everyone has to come to terms with the claims of Christ upon his life or else he is guilty of inattention or pervading the question’*. Do you know what he means? If you don't come to terms with the claims of Christ upon your life today, you're avoiding the question! You're burying your head in the sand, and how often Christians are accused of that - but listen - if you don't come to terms with these things and walk away as if you don't care, you're avoiding the question of life! Don't ignore Christ - you may ignore Him tonight, but God His Father will not allow you to ignore Him forever.

Will you not yield to Him this evening? Will you not come and bow to the claims of Christ upon your life? One day the Lord came and asked another question of one of His disciples, Peter. He said to him, *‘Who do men say that I am?’*. Peter thought for a moment and he said: *‘Well, some people say that you're one of the prophets back from the dead, Elijah. Some people think you're John the Baptist, risen from the dead’*. Jesus looked at him right in the eye and said to him, *‘But Peter that's not what I'm asking you, I'm asking you, who do you think that I am?’* Peter said these words - he didn't say what other people were saying, and don't you think or say what other people are saying, think about this for yourself, he said, *‘Thou art the Christ! The Son of the living God!’*.

Young person, older person, backslider, unsaved person, you must bow the knee today and say those same words: *‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God and take my life into Thy hands’*. Will you do it now? Think about the reality of God and Christ...

If God has been speaking to you this moment you've got to respond. You've got to admit your sin, and say: *‘Lord, I am a sinner. I confess my sin, and I acknowledge and believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and God, and He died for me at Calvary. I put my faith in Him for salvation. Lord, save me’*. Whatever you do, my friend, you are making a decision at this moment: Liar, Lunatic or Lord?

problem within themselves called sin, it means that - whether you like it or not - you do have that problem within. You have a problem of sin, it means that that is true! It means that when Jesus said that if we did not trust in Him, if we do not trust in His sacrifice and His death, and follow His way, we would end up in a place called hell - a place of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, a place where there is no hope! It means that when He said that, it was true. It means that there is a place that we cannot see with the naked eye, that we cannot hear with our ears, where there are millions of people screaming and crying in punishment for sin! It means that it's all true - but it also means that when He said He went to the cross, and when He said He would shed His blood for our sins, and when the word of God says that He took our sins in His own body on the tree, that we wouldn't have to be punished for it, and that we could go to a place called heaven - do you know what it means? It means that He was right! It means that when He said that if you trust Him, you give your whole life to Him, you put it all into His hands, and you come to Him by faith and trust in His death - it means that if you do that, you will be guaranteed of life here and now, and life in eternity. It means that when Jesus said that the world doesn't know what living is all about - and remember that young people, they think they know it, but they know nothing - when they say that, the truth is what Jesus said, when He said 'I will give you life to the full, and give you life in more abundance'.

That's what it means to you - this fact about who Christ is, friend, it changes your life tonight whether you like it or not. It changes it one way or the other. Philippians 2 says that there is a day coming, there is a day coming - now that doesn't mean we think there's a day coming, it doesn't mean there's a story that says there's a day coming, it means there is a day coming! On that day every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Now you mightn't do that in this life, but this verse in the Word of God says that one day, when Christ returns, you will bow the knee - whether you want to or not. In fact the meaning of that verse is this: that everyone willingly bows the knee.

Do you know what the tragedy is? Possibly - and I hope to God that I'm wrong - but possibly there are some reading this and you will bow the knee on that day - but you will have bowed it too late! Suddenly on that day the awesome and awful realisation: that what Christ said about Himself was true, that He was God, that He was Lord, that He was who He said He was - it'll all come home and the penny will drop, but it'll all be too late! You'll not be able to get out of it! How tragic that will be, when people at last bow the knee, to be sent to a lost eternity.

you hear at school, not what you have read in books, but what, after evaluating this whole person Jesus Christ, after thinking about Him, what He did, who He said He was, after all of that: who do you think He was?

You know there's a lot of people in the world today and they think a lot of things and they believe a lot of things, but they couldn't tell you a reason why they believe it. Sad to say that Christians are often guilty of this, they believe things because they've been taught them, because their mother or father have believed them, but they don't really deep-down know a reason why for the hope or the belief that is within them. That's my question to you tonight, what do you personally think about Jesus Christ? I'm going to give you the answer tonight because there are only three possibilities about who that person was - you see, He could only have been one of three possibilities. There is no sitting on the fence tonight, there's no way of getting out of these three categories, He either had to be one of them or He was non-existent. We know that He wasn't non-existent because there's more proof that the Lord Jesus Christ lived than there is that Julius Caesar lived - and we don't dispute his life, do we? We're sure - as sure as we can be about anybody in history - that Jesus Christ was a man, that Jesus Christ lived and that Jesus Christ died - and I am sure today, and we're all sure who are saved - that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

The three possible answers

But I don't expect you to believe that right away. What are those three categories that I'm talking about tonight? Well they're these: first of all, Jesus was either a liar, He was a lunatic or He was Lord. Have you got those three? He was either a liar, in other words everything He taught, everything He was, everything He did, it was all a pack of lies. He was either a liar, or He was a lunatic, He believed everything He was saying, He believed it about Himself but He was mad, He was away in the head. And the only other alternative is this: that He was who He said He was.

Was He a liar?

Now you might think that this is a very contemporary issue, or this is the real issue today about who Christ was - if you go down to NPO or Easons you'll see shelves of books about who Christ was. Some say that He had children and His grave can be found in France, some say that He was a prophet and a teacher but He had a family and He lived and died like any other man. There are so many

stories about this man Jesus - who do we believe? Well don't think that this is a contemporary issue, don't think that this has just come out today, because the early Church, the first Christians that ever lived - right just after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ - they were faced with the same issue, in fact they came across this argument so much that they coined a phrase in Latin that went like this, it went "Out deios out homos mallos". Now I don't know whether any of you do Latin, I did Latin but I can't remember any of it - but that means this: "Jesus was either God, or He was a bad man". Have you got that? Quite simple: Jesus was either God or He was a bad man, and they reasoned in their minds like this, and they said this: 'Jesus was God - if He didn't lie of course - and if He did lie well, that makes Him what? It makes Him a bad man'. But they looked at Jesus' life, they looked at His words and His teaching and they thought to themselves, well Jesus obviously doesn't get on like a bad man, so that must mean that He is God.

You might say to me, 'Well David, hold on a minute, that's quite simplistic reasoning there, you don't expect me to accept that?' - well you're right, I don't. But I want you to bear with me for just a few moments, and to read on - don't just put a barrier up to what I'm saying, consider what I'm saying, read on and see if these things are so. I'm sure there are few people reading these words who would say that the Lord Jesus Christ was not a good man, I'm sure there is no-one perhaps, maybe there is one, but most of us would believe that Jesus did good things, He said good things, He taught good things, He lived a good life - in fact many say that He lived a perfect life as a man. And that is true, you read in the Gospels, but you read it in other historical records, that the Lord Jesus Christ went about doing good. He healed the sick, He preached freedom to the captives. Some see Him as a revolutionary, some see Him as a person who helped the poor, who healed the sick. But I want to make something very clear this evening, and it's this: that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself did not claim to be a good man. Now take that in this evening, Jesus never ever claimed to be a good man, but in the Scriptures, in the New Testament we find another claim - we find that this man, Jesus, Jesus Himself claimed to be God. Have you got that? He didn't say He was a good man, He didn't say He was just a prophet, He didn't say He was a guru, He never claimed to be a magician or a rabbi - Jesus Christ claimed to be God.

You remember on one occasion they came to Him and they called Him good, and He said to them: 'Listen, there is none good but God'. And when they looked at the Lord Jesus Christ of course they could see that He was good, so what was He

know a liar? Do you know any? I know a few, and I can tell you one thing, they're cowards, and they wouldn't die for their lie. But Christ went all the way, if it was a lie, He went all the way to die for His lie and to suffer for His lie - it brought Him nothing! He wasn't a liar, because He had the wrong psychological makeup, His teachings don't point towards lies it was all about truth, what the truth was and exposing hypocrisy and exposing error. There's no understandable motive for this man to have been lying all of His life, why? Because it didn't bring Him riches, it didn't bring Him success in the eyes of the world, what did it bring Him? It brought Him nothing but death!

He couldn't have been a lunatic, because a lunatic lacks the very things that Jesus Christ had. I don't know whether you've ever come in contact with a lunatic, but when you come in contact with someone who is mentally retarded, often - and it's our fault - often we feel uncomfortable, and the reason why we feel uncomfortable, psychologists tell us, it's because that we feel superior to them. We feel superior to them. Now if Christ was a lunatic - He could not have been a lunatic, because everybody who came into contact with Him felt the exact opposite. They knew that He was far superior than they were, why? Because He knew their inner feelings and thoughts, He knew everything about them.

He is Lord!

What do you think about Jesus? That was my question, I ask you it again now and answer it honestly: what do you think about Jesus Christ? Well, I'll tell you what is the truth from the Word of God, and from plain common sense, and it's this: that He was not a liar, He was not a lunatic - He is Lord and He is God! That is the truth, there is nothing else, there's no in between, you can only have one of these and the truth is this: He is who He said He was!

Do you know what that means for you? Do you know what it means? It means when Jesus Christ was on the earth and He said, '*I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but by Me*' - that's not very popular today - but what He meant was this, the only way you'll get to heaven is through Christ and Christ alone. It means that when He said that, that was the truth. It means that there is no way to heaven, not through your church, not through a lodge, not through an organisation, not through a system, not through a philosophy, not through good living - there is no other way, but through Christ! It means that He was right.

It means that when He said that everyone in the world was a sinner and had a

knew their problems, He knew their desires - He knew their thoughts! Friend, wherever you sit, here and now, Jesus Christ can see right into your heart of hearts. He can see every problem that you have, He can sympathise in it, He can see your sin and it pains Him - all your pretense, in the sight of Jesus Christ, all of it goes down the drain, He can see everything!

This wasn't a man who was predictable, because this was a man who made the impossible possible. This was a man who was totally unpredictable, the scribes and the Pharisees who knew their Bibles inside out couldn't tell what He was going to come out with next. In fact the word of God says that everyone who came into contact with this man, it says, they wondered - they marvelled at Him. But this man, far from being selfish, this man was full of love, do you know why He was full of love? Because, He laid His life down for His followers. I don't mean in death now, I mean in His life. He said 'the foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head!' He didn't have a home, He hardly had any clothes, He didn't have money - the Creator of the universe, as He claimed He was, gave up everything for the ones that He loved - He wasn't selfish and He wasn't loveless.

Someone has said: *'Lunatics are not wonderful people, but Jesus was the most wonderful person in history. And if that were lunacy, lunacy would be more desirable than sanity!'* Have you got that? It would be better to be a lunatic tonight and follow Christ, if that were so, but Christ is not a liar and Christ is not a lunatic. If He was a liar do you know what that makes Him this evening? It makes Him one of the most cunning, deceptive, cruel, wicked, evil, devilish men that ever walked upon the face of the earth. Because He would have conned all of the men and women through the centuries who gave up their lives for Him, who followed Him - He conned them and led them into a lost eternity, or simply to lose their lives and not enjoy themselves - it would have been all for nothing! Christianity, one of the greatest faiths in the world, would have been the biggest deception of all time. But the truth is this: that the enemies of Christ when they came to take Him - and believe me they wanted to take Him, and they wanted to put Him to death - when they came to that place of getting hold of Him and taking Him to kill Him, do you know what the Bible says? It says that they couldn't find a fault in Him - and they were the ones, if they wanted to, if there was any fault in Him they would have found it, believe you me, and they would have crucified Him for it! But even they, even Pilate said, 'I find no fault in this man'.

But not only that if He was a liar - listen, He would have died for His lie. Do you

saying? He was saying 'I am God, there's no man alone that is good, but I am the God-man, I am God incarnate'. Sure even the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ, they came to Him on one occasion and they accused Him of blasphemy. What did they say? They said: 'We will stone you!' and they bent over, as it were, to pick up stones and throw them at Him - and their reason for doing it was this, they said: "For thou being a man makest thyself God".

I hope you're not going to tell me tonight that the Bible doesn't try to tell the story of this man Jesus being God - because it clearly does. But I want you to think for just a moment here, because if Jesus claimed to be God - mark this - if He claimed to be God and He was not God, He could never be described as a good man. Do you believe that Jesus was a good man? You can't! If you don't believe He was God, you cannot believe that He was a good man, because it only makes Him a liar if He was not who He said He was. It eradicates that possibility - He could not be a good man if He was a man who lived a total lie from His birth to His death. You could never describe a liar as a good man.

Of course it's fashionable today to say that Jesus was only a good man. You go to our universities, many of them, you read academic books, sometimes theological books and those books tell us that Jesus was a good man. Do you know why they say that? Well, they don't want to offend Christians. Yet they don't say that Jesus was God, because if they claim that Jesus was God well, that would offend everyone who wasn't a Christian. So what they do is they say neither and they think that that offends no-one. But do you know what the truth is? And we are only interested in truth - the truth is that by doing that and by claiming nothing about Christ, they offend not Christians, or non-Christians but they offend pure common sense and logic! Now I have more faith in you than the academics do, and I want you young person, older person to think about these issues in your own mind. Jesus could not be described as a good man if He said He was something that He was not.

Was He a lunatic?

You might say, 'Well I don't think He is a liar now, David. You can't push me that far to say that He was a liar. He maybe wasn't a bad man, perhaps...perhaps He actually believed what He was saying about Himself, perhaps He really - deep-down in His heart, in His mind - He really believed that He was God?' Well you're right in a way, well that wouldn't make Him morally bad. It wouldn't make Him morally bad, because it would mean He didn't really know what He

was doing, He didn't know that He was lying. But listen, if it doesn't make Him morally bad, do you know what it does? It makes Him mentally bad, why? Because He would have deceived Himself, He would have conned Himself into thinking that He was God on earth, that He was something that He was not. Not only would He have conned Himself, but He would have conned thousands of people to follow a madman - to follow a lunatic.

Was He a liar? Well you can't trust a liar, sure you can't? I'm sure you can conjure up in your mind a few liars that you know, you couldn't trust them could you? Well let me ask you: could you trust a lunatic anymore than a liar? You couldn't, you can't trust a liar, you can't trust a lunatic. Now listen: you can only have one of these three, there's no outside of it, and you can't sit in between, you can't just sit there, it's too big an issue to just sit there and say, 'Well I'm not sure David. Well I don't know, I haven't made my mind up and I've a bit of my life to live and when I get older and I'm wiser and I've looked into these things a little bit more - well then I'll decide about this issue', you can't do that! Because there are serious life and death issues at stake, because if Jesus is who He said He was: you must listen to His claim. And if He was a liar you can throw it all out, if He was a lunatic you can forget about it because He was mad.

Look at His character

Well I want to say to you this evening, on the authority of the Word of God - and upon plain logic and common sense - that Jesus Christ was not a liar, and Jesus Christ was not a lunatic. 'David how can you be so sure? How can you be so sure that He wasn't lying - were you there? How can you be so sure that He wasn't a lunatic and that He was who He said He was?'

Most people, as they read the Scriptures, as they look into the history books and the accounts of the life of Christ, will admit that Jesus Christ had two characteristics. And I want to build everything that I'm saying tonight upon one thing and it's this: the character of Jesus Christ. There are two things that we see in His character - and most people will admit it - first of all: He was wise. He was wise, He was a wise man, He was wiser even than Solomon who was one of the wisest men that ever lived - everyone admits that He was wise. But secondly, we also look and we see His life, we see everything He said and we see that this man was, indeed, good. Now, if He was wise and He was good - a lunatic is not wise, and a liar is not good.

You know, in the mental hospitals about our land and in mental hospitals all over our world today, there is a condition - and this is the truth - and this condition is called 'Divinity Complex'. Believe it or not - I know it seems astounding - there are people in our land today, at this very moment, and they actually believe that they're God - and I mean literally. They actually believe that where they are on the earth, in this hospital ward, they believe that they are God. Now there are certain symptoms to this condition, doctors tell us that they show egotism - it's all 'I, my, me', it's all selfishness - they're self-centred people, everything has to revolve and centre around them. The doctors tell us that they show self-love, they show inflexibility, they are people who are dull to look at and dull to be with, they are people who are absolutely predictable - they're like the soaps on the TV, you can tell what's going to come next, everything they do, you know exactly what's going to come - they're inevitable, they are understandable, but they show within themselves a complete lack of ability to understand others and to love others, and they have a lack of creativity.

Now let me ask you, and be honest about this, does that describe Jesus Christ to you? Listen: egotism, self-love, inflexibility, dullness, predictability, an inability to understand and love others, a lack of creativity? Young person answer me, does that describe Jesus Christ to you? No! Of course it doesn't! Surely as you read the word of God, surely as you read the historical records about this man, surely you can see that Jesus Christ was the exact opposite of this. You read about Him, and Christ fulfilled perfectly all of these things: He was a man who was filled with love, He was a man who was filled with compassion, He had an immense creativity. What other man is there in the world who could touch blind eyes and make them see? What other man is there in the world who could touch lame legs and make them walk? Who could make food for thousands out of five loaves and two small fish? What other man in this world could be so creative as to walk upon water? What other man could do these things? What other teacher, what other wise man, and guru in the world has exceeded the wisdom and the knowledge of the teaching of Jesus Christ, there is no one!

But further than that, this man did not have an inability to understand or appreciate other people. But more, far more than this, this man was able to look right through people! He was able to look through the masks that we put up, the personality shields that we have, so that we can cover our pain, so that we can cover our darkest secrets and our anguish. Jesus could come in contact with a man, and even without coming in contact with them, He knew their thoughts, He