

What About You?

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Preacher: Dr. Daniel Heeringa

[0:00] Chapter 8, sometimes people ask questions that appear to have a whole lot simpler answers than they really do. For instance, members of the jury, have you reached a verdict? Now there's a lot to that question. If you've ever been on a tough jury, you understand that? If you've ever faced a tough jury, you understand that? Not only is it a question of whether you made it out of the jury room alive or not, and in some type of agreement, but the bigger question is, is this fellow going to the big house? Another question that appears simple, but's really not, is when airport security asks you, is this your bag? That's a loaded question, and your response should not be, maybe, or why? By the way, never leave your bag unattended.

Another question that seems obvious, but is pretty big, is, will you marry me? Somebody would say, well, why, of course, I see our family hiding behind the trees. Of course, I'll marry you.

But in reality, it's a question that, will you spend the rest of your days with me? In sickness and in health? In ill moods and good moods? When you're hungry and tired, and you have a minivan loaded down with kids driving down the interstate?

To our next destination? To our next destination? When you're committed to all that? My mom and dad got married 66 years ago. They celebrated their anniversary in June, and they got, as soon as they got married, I think they got married in the past living room, I believe you said.

And right after they got married, they got married, and right after they got married, they got married in the past living room, and right after they got married, they got married in the past living room. And my mother, they left so my mother could meet her mother-in-law 800 miles away. There were a few interstates between here and that place, and she hardly had left the upstate.

[2:04] She might have traveled to Greenwood. We had some relatives down there we didn't claim, but they, she said she didn't know how big the earth really was. She said, no, she didn't get there. And my grandmother, well, I'll just tell you, when we visited my grandmother, the farm was gone when she was with grandmother in about two days.

And I was her grandson, not her daughter-in-law. You know, grandchildren are that gift that God gives you for not killing the kids. And so, ladies, you need to think hard before you say yes.

Sometimes there are loaded questions.

Sometimes they're a lot bigger than they appear. And Jesus asked, well, he asked a lot of loaded questions, big questions.

And he asked one in our passage today. It was loaded for the ones that he asked that day. It's loaded for us as well.

It's found in Mark chapter 8, beginning verse 27. And it says, and Jesus went on with his disciples to the village of Caesarea Philippi.

[3:14] And on the way, he asked his disciples, who do people say that I am? And they told him, John the Baptist, and others say Elijah, and others one of the prophets.

And he asked them, but who do you say that I am? And Peter answered him, you are the Christ.

And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. Caesarea Philippi is a beautiful spot.

In the midst of a land of deserts, it is an oasis with a river flowing through it that is clear as crystal. The area was called, after this time, Panias, in reference to a Greek god named Pan.

On the base of the Mount of Mount Hermon, a spring emerges and flows out of a cave underneath that mountain and forms a river that feeds the Jordan, which is the source of the Sea of Galilee.

[4:30] Philip the Tetrach and the son of the awful King Herod ruled this area. He restored this city, and he named it after Caesar.

He wanted to make a distinction between the Caesarea that Herod had built in the Mediterranean, so he called it Caesarea Philippi, not only naming it after Caesar, but also naming it after himself.

It is a beautiful area, but it was a wicked area. It was marked by a temple that was built at the base of that mountain, Japan.

It was filled with fertility cultic action that committed indecent acts at the foot of that mountain. It was also a place that was known for human sacrifice.

And the cave that you see those people gathered at was where this river seemed to flow out of the belly of the earth.

[5:40] At that time, it was before a devastating earthquake, and that river flowed freely from that mountain down to that lower area that you saw earlier.

Today, after an earthquake, the river is covered from the mouth of the cave several yards until you can see it emerge from the ground.

It became subterranean with that earthquake. But before that earthquake, when they would sacrifice someone, sadly many times children, they would place them in that river and let them float down from there.

They called that cave the Gate of Hell. If you look closer at the side of that mountain, you see surrounding those caves, it allows you to see, still today, the shelves that they build, the niches that they put in the side and the face of that cliff to insert man-made gods of all sorts to enhance their worship.

It was a wicked place of solid rock. And it was there, in the midst of all of the wickedness of the world where they live, that Jesus asked a pertinent, life-changing question.

[7:10] Who do you say that I am? So let's ask our own questions today. One is, who is Jesus?

Well, I'll tell you, Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, and that means that He is the one and only. He was born sinless, He remained sinless, and although fully human, He never ceased being a holy God.

He lived a life that we could not. He never sinned. He obeyed the Father perfectly. He died a death that we deserved, and by it, He bore our sins on Calvary, and after three days, He arose from the grave.

Forty days later, He ascended into heaven to be at the right hand of the Father, and today, He reigns, He intercedes, He's preparing a place for us, He's waiting to come back and receive us to where He is we may be also, and one day, He will return in power and glory to judge the living and the dead and establish His eternal kingdom.

That is who Jesus is. Perfect Lamb of God, only begotten Son of God. He paid the penalty of our sins, and He's the soon-coming King.

[8:28] And you can actually put all your eggs in one basket, if your basket is salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. You can rest it all in Him.

That's Jesus. Now, what about you? Who do you say that Jesus is?

People have often misunderstood Jesus. It's always been. They struggled with what to do with Him. They struggled with who He is.

They did in that day. They do today. And when He asked them, Who do people say that I am? He answered them. They mentioned John the Baptist. The message of John the Baptist was repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.

In other words, you need to get your life right, because your opportunity is coming right now. John the Baptist was not the Messiah, and He knew He was not the Messiah, and He simply prepared the way for Christ to be the Messiah.

[9:42] That's what He was here for. That's what His responsibility was, and that's what He did. But some believe Jesus was John the Baptist.

Some believe that He was Elijah. Elijah is the foremost of the Old Testament prophets. Toward the end of the Old Testament, in Malachi chapter 4, verse 5, it is announced that Elijah will be sent back before the great and awesome day of the Lord.

Therefore, there was an expectation of His return. He did come back in the transfiguration. We'll look at that in a couple of weeks. It's in Mark chapter 9.

But an Elijah-like figure came back in John the Baptist as well, and many believe that Jesus was Elijah. Some believed He was Jeremiah, another great prophet.

But then Jesus asked the question, But who do you say that I am? And that's the real question. Who do you say Jesus is?

[10:47] Because I can share with you factually, from Scripture, who He is. And I can tell you about my own belief about who Christ is. And I can tell you about from my own experiences that have fortified and grounded my faith in who Christ is.

But none of that is really a question today. Because my faith does nothing for you except maybe urge you on.

Maybe encourage you. I hope it encourages you. But what somebody else believes is not what decides your eternity. What somebody else believes is not what dictates your life.

It don't matter what your daddy thinks. It don't matter what your granddaddy thinks. Their belief does not determine your course. Who do you say that Jesus is?

And we can run from that question for a while, but we have to answer that question. We have to deal with that. That decision will make an eternity of difference. Literally, it will make an eternity of difference.

[11:53] I want you to think about this question. Who is Jesus to you?

Matthew writes about this event at Caesarea Philippi as well.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are the synoptic gospels. They write about a lot of common things. Mark wrote in a hurry. He didn't give as much detail as some of the others did.

Matthew gives more detail about this event. And I want you to see this. It's in Matthew chapter 16, beginning in verse 13. It says, Now, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, Who do people say that the Son of Man is?

And they said, Some say John the Baptist. Others say Elijah. Another is Jeremiah or one of the prophets. And he said to them, But who do you say that I am? Simon Peter replied, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

[12:57] And Jesus answered him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah. Bar-Jonah means that Simon's daddy's name was Jonah. I don't believe it was the one with the fish.

That was quite a ways before his time. But his daddy's name was Bar-Mean son of. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

And I tell you, You are Peter, and on this rock I'll build my church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. I'll give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

And then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. Matthew takes this passage one step further into a conversation.

And when Peter gives his powerful response, Jesus is quick to point out that you cannot see this truth so clearly by yourself, that it only comes directly from the Lord.

[14:03] The Lord showed Peter who he was. And you'll be amazed at what God will show you, what God will tell you, what God will use you to tell others if you'll listen to him, if you'll listen to his voice, if you'll do what he says.

And Jesus then speaks that powerful statement using his surroundings as illustrations. Before the face, standing before the face of the rock, he says that the statement of faith that Peter has made is what he'll build his church upon.

Now some believe that Peter, he is calling Peter the rock.

And upon this rock, I'll build my church. It is interesting that the name Peter means rock. A different word is used here when he says rock.

One's small rock. One's large rock. The Catholic Church interprets this to mean that the church will be built upon Peter. And the whole concept of papacy upon that statement means that the church is built upon Peter.

[15:19] Peter. That Peter was the first pope and that every pope falls from ancestry from him.

That's their whole belief based upon the statement. However, my faith is not based upon Peter, nor is the church.

Some believe Jesus was speaking of himself, even pointing back to himself. I had a professor who was a Greek scholar and he said, I believe if we could see what happened that day when he said, and upon this rock, I'll build my church.

He pointed to himself. Upon this rock, I'll build my church. You're a little rock, but upon this rock, I'll build my church. And he very well may have done that.

However, I know that the strength of the church stands upon the proclamation of the gospel that Jesus Christ is Lord.

That's what the church is built upon. That's how we shed light on a dark world. And let me tell you something. There's a lot of former churches that are now sacrificing that on the altar of a lot of cultural correctness that have lost their testimony, lost their vision, and to use the terminology of revelation, have lost their light.

[16 : 48] You want to know what frees people's lives? It's when they surrender their life to the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel is what the church is built upon. The lack of understanding and submission to the gospel is what keeps too many bound.

You want to know what loosens people? What loosens people is when they give their heart and life to the Lord Jesus and he frees them for all of eternity. Faith in Christ is our hope.

The church is founded upon the rock of the gospel. But the question is, who is Christ to you? I'm not asking about your theology. I'm not asking you to fill some spiritual blanks in with the right answers. I'm asking, what place does Christ occupy in your life?

And I'll just tell you that I don't like asking you questions anymore. I've pastored for 33 years and I've got sermon schedules from every sermon that I've preached over those 33 years.

[17 : 59] I know what passage that was, what day I preached it. Most of those sermons I can put my hands on either digitally or on paper.

A lot of them I don't need to put my hands on. Shouldn't have preached them for the first time. You may think the same today. Sometimes when I look back on them, I realize I ask questions different today than I used to.

I used to preach a lot over you. Today I preach a lot of we. I think it's possibly as a young pastor I was a little concerned about you knowing and I'm human.

The reality is that's quite hard. It's a we matter. But today I kind of break that rule.

It's not really about me. It's not really about us. It's about you. It really, the question is not where your parents stand on a matter.

[19 : 43] The question is not where your church stands on this. The question is not where your pastor stands on this. Is Christ your Savior?

Is Christ your Lord? Meaning that is He the ruler of your life? Is He the greatest priority of your life? Do you trust Him above all else? Who do you say that Jesus is? And how does that dictate your life? Is it a life changing belief? And the reality is no one can answer that for you. I just hope as we come before the table of the Lord.

We can all honestly answer that question. Is Jesus truly the Lord of my life? What limits have I put on Him in my life?

[21 : 06] Or let me say I've attempted to put on Him in my life. Does He rule and reign in my life? If that is a priority to you then we come before the table clean before the Lord.

Scripture warns us the Apostle Paul warns us to take it seriously and to be clean before the Lord. He said some of you are sick because you didn't do this right.

So whatever is not right let's get it right. Let's get this right today.

In our lives but specifically in your life. With every head bow and every eye close.

I ask you this morning the most pertinent question and that is do you know the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior? And if you don't I want you to know that is most important.

[22 : 22] We're going to stand in just a moment. We're going to have a short invitation. And I encourage you that if you've never given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ that you step out as soon as we begin to sing and walk down this aisle and say Pastor I need to give my life to Christ.

Before we leave here today we'll make sure that you're shown what it means to give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus. Maybe you're here today and you have made that decision privately but you've never made it publicly.

You've never been baptized as a believer. Jesus by his commission as well as his example shows us that's the first step of obedience to follow Christ upon salvation.

So if you've never done that I encourage you today. We'll line that up in the days ahead. Maybe God's drawing you to Pickens First Baptist Church.

This is the place that God would have you to serve. I don't want you to misunderstand we're doing something different at the close of our worship but that does not affect how we follow the Lord's direction when he leads us to do what we do.

[23 : 27] We have time to come. Maybe you're here today. You just need to do some business with the Lord.

We often stand and sing through a hymn and if we can just get through a couple of verses of it maybe the burden will be lifted and we can walk out the door as the Spirit speaks to us.

Today we're going to stand and we're going to sing one verse and after we sing one verse I want you to bow your heads and I want you to close your eyes and as they continue to play I want you to deal with making sure you're clean before the Lord comes into the favor.

Lay it all down before you. Admitting is part of it. Repentance is the full part of it. Don't only admit it turn from it.

Heavenly Father I pray today that you'll be honored as we remember you. Help us to be faithful to do it right.

[24 : 44] In Jesus precious name Amen.