

Matthew 16:13

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[0 : 00] But I want us to look really at the fantasticness of the Lord Jesus. In Matthew 16 verse 30. Let me read the word of God to you. Now when Jesus came to the district of Caesarea Philippi.

He asked his disciples. Who do people say that the Son of Man is? That's a title that the Lord Jesus uses for himself. The Son of Man. And they said. Some say John the Baptist.

Others say Elijah. And others Jeremiah. Or one of the prophets. He said to them. But who do you say that I am? Simon Peter replies. You are the Christ.

The Son of the living God. Beyonce's album. It was released without any publicity. I think 12 weeks ago. And it went straight to number one.

It's fantastic isn't it? Rihanna. Do you know her? She is fantastic isn't it? I don't know whether you saw. Some of the goals that were scored over Christmas.

[0 : 56] Wayne Rooney. He is a fantastic popular. Andy Murray. He is fantastic. James Corden. As a comedian. I don't know whether you like him or not.

I think he is fantastic. We are interested. Are we? In those people. Well probably you are not interested in Beyonce. Rihanna. And those kind of. But you know what I am getting at.

We are interested. In people who. We would call fantastic. We read about them in newspapers. And in magazines. Sometimes.

If they are really really famous. We put a statue up to them. Don't we? In their memory. And in these three or four talks. What I want to do. Is talk to you about the most fantastic person. Who has ever lived. And his name.

Is Jesus Christ. Now. Maybe. You are a sceptic. It's brilliant. That you are here this morning. If you are. Maybe you are a sceptic. And you think. How can a Jew. Who lived so long ago.

[1 : 53] Be more fantastic than. Beyonce. Or something like that. How can they be more fantastic than that? Well let me throw four facts at you. Here in Europe. There were people that started counting the years.

From the year of his birth. And we still do that. Don't we? Somehow. I doubt. That that is going to happen to Wayne Rooney. Is it? We are probably not going to count the years from his birth.

Somehow I don't think that will happen.

You may say. He is old hat. He is not news anymore. He is not. Everybody knows about the Lord Jesus. He is a swear word. But do you know. Eight percent. Of Londoners. Will be in church this morning.

He is still very popular isn't he? More people. Go to church on Sunday. Than go to football. On Saturday. Did you know that? So.

You may have followers. You may be on Twitter. And you might have. A certain amount of followers. I don't know many followers you have got. Well. What is the size of the Lord Jesus? Is his fan club? How many followers.

[2 : 50] Does the Lord Jesus have? He has hundreds of millions. Of followers. How many? Today. They estimate about 2.1 billion followers. Of people who would call themselves Christians.

People who in some form. Or another. Have an allegiance to him. What about the biographies? Have you read them? You know you go to Waterstones. And you go to the biographical section.

In our bookshops. And it is huge. All the actors. All the singers. Who are slightly past it. And need to revive their career. They all bring out a book for Christmas. Don't they? Books written on the story.

Of their lives. How many are sold? But what about the Lord Jesus? His biography? Tens of thousands. Hundreds of thousands of biographies are sold every Christmas.

Well the book that tells the story of the Lord Jesus. Is still the best seller in the world. 2,000 years after the events. How many buildings have been opened by David Beckham?

[3 : 50] Well quite a few probably. Quite a few buildings have been. There is a plaque on the wall probably. Same isn't there? Opened by David Beckham. But how many buildings are there in the world.

That are put up in the honour of Jesus Christ. Chapels. Churches. Cathedrals. Universities. Hospitals. Hundreds of thousands of them.

And they are still being built. And hope to be built. In West England. Whatever we make about him. He is a fantastic person. I quite like sporting heroes.

And film stars. But I think you have got to admit. I think you have to admit. That when you come. To talk about the Lord Jesus Christ. You are moving into a different league. Altogether.

And our subject this morning is going to be. Who was he? Who was he? And there is nothing that is more important than this. Those of us who are Christians. Well we are fans aren't we already?

[4 : 48] We are followers. We are friends of his. We are saints already. And it seems to me that there is nothing more important. That we could do. At the start of a new year. Than to remind ourselves.

Of the wonder. And the glory. And the sheer. Fantasticness. Of Jesus Christ. We have become. We are so. Secularised.

We live in an increasingly materialistic age. Where boxing day online sales. Are bigger than ever. We face great pressure isn't it? As you go back to work tomorrow. Or as you went back last week. Great pressure. Morally we face great pressure. We live in a pluralistic age. Where people believe in all sorts of things. And anything. And they have their doubts. About our faith.

And we see the icons. Of modern society. Those who dominate the media. Who gather their fans. And gather their followers. Who make their pronouncements.

[5 : 45] And it's just so easy isn't it? I don't know for you. But it's very easy for me. To lose sight. Of the fantasticness of Jesus Christ. And I wonder whether. Our Jesus as a church.

Is a pale shadow. Of the one that's portrayed. In the New Testament. We've lost sight. Of the fantasticness of Jesus. And that's what I want to try and do. For the next two or three weeks.

What was true of him. What is true of him. And what will be true of him. Now so. Turn with me to Colossians chapter one. And let me just read those words to you again.

Colossians chapter one. From page 983. It's talking about the Lord Jesus. And it says this. He is the image of the invisible God. The firstborn of all creation.

For by him all things were created. In heaven and on earth. Visible and invisible. Whether thrones or dominions. Or rulers or authorities. All things were created. Through him and for him. And Jesus is before all things.

[6 : 42] And in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body of the church. He is the beginning. The firstborn from the dead. That in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God. Was pleased for death to dwell.

And through him to reconcile to himself. All things whether on earth. Or in heaven. Making peace by the blood of the cross. Jesus. Now who was he? Who was he? Do you remember the question we read?

In Matthew chapter 16. And in Mark chapter 8. Jesus Christ poses that same question to his followers. Who do people say that I am? Who do people say that I am? I want some info.

I want some research. What's the opinion of the general population? And the answers are quite bizarre aren't they? They say well some say you're John the Baptist.

What had happened to John the Baptist? He'd been a Baptist. He'd preached. He'd soaked people in water. He'd preached to King Herod. And yet he'd gone into trouble.

[7 : 41] And he did his head chopped off just a few weeks ago. Others say you're Elijah. Another prophet. It's even more bizarre isn't it? 800 years before Elijah had lived.

And some people thought he'd reappeared. Still others thought he was Jeremiah. Another prophet. That he was one of the prophets. One of the people who had been there in the past.

And smoked the message of God. And they came up with these answers. And they're strange answers aren't they? They are very rational. They're very irrational.

They're not very sensible at all. Who do people say that I am? They think you're a guy who was beheaded a number of weeks ago. They think you're a prophet who lived 800 years ago. They think you're a prophet who lived 400 prophets.

Or what are the other dead prophets? They're not rational. But quite clearly Jesus was an intriguing figure wasn't he? People were discussing about him.

[8 : 40] People, though they were trying to find him. They had these strange, strange, strange answers. And it's the same thing that is true today. Jesus is still a fascinating character.

How many films have been made about him? Why does he fascinate so much? All those books that have been written about him. Jesus Christ's superstar had a sellout to her last year.

More has been written about the Lord Jesus in the last 20 years than has been written in the previous 19 centuries. Why all this writing about this man?

Why? Because they're trying to find the answer to who he was. And the answers that people have about who Jesus was. Who do people say that I am the Christ from Matthew 16?

Well, it's equally as bizarre. So this may be obvious. Some say he was a good man. Some say he was a moral teacher. Somebody else says he was a guru-like figure.

[9 : 43] Somebody else says he was a magician who marries Mary Magdalene. The ideas are endless, aren't they? And they are strange. And they are bizarre. Who is this man who has influenced history in such a dramatic fashion?

And then Jesus turns to his disciples and says, But what about you? Who do you say that I am?

And our passage gives us the answer. So can you look at just Colossians 1 verse 15?

It says he is the image of the invisible God. You want to see the invisible God? Well, see Jesus.

That's where he puts it to the Colossians. In 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 4 he says something slightly different. He says, The glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

And when you go to Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 3, you have another statement. The Bible says he is the radiance of the glory of God. Do you remember what Peter's reply was?

[10 : 49] Peter's reply was, you are the Christ. You are God's anointed king. You are the Messiah. The son of the living God. Well that answer is the most bizarre of all, isn't it?

Surely. Isn't it? What is Peter saying? He's saying, you are God on earth. You are deity here upon earth.

It's an incredible statement. It is more remarkable than to say, John the Baptist, who was beheaded a number of weeks ago, is back. And Elijah, who was around 900 years ago, is back.

Or Jeremiah has reappeared. Now to say to the person standing in front of you, Here is the son of God, walking around in the land of Canaan. That is what Peter declared.

That is what Paul is telling us in the New Testament. That is what the writer of the Hebrews is telling you. What a fantastic idea. Where did he get that idea from? What was Peter?

[11 : 45] Peter was just a fisherman. A fisherman working on the Sea of Galilee. And he comes up with this idea that Jesus Christ is the son of God. Now where on earth do you get such an idea?

Those ideas don't just suddenly come to you, do they?

They don't. What planted this idea in his mind? That Jesus of Nazareth was the son of God walking around on earth. Where did he get such a remarkable idea?

Peter was a Jew. He was brought up in the Old Testament Bible. And the Old Testament expects a Messiah. So you read at Christmas, if you're here at Christmas time or in a church at Christmas time, His name will be called Emmanuel.

God with us. Isaiah 9. He will be called Mighty God. That's what was predicted. The Messiah. The one the Jews were looking for would be more than man.

He would be deity. He would be God with us. And Peter picked that up from the Old Testament teacher. Lots of Jews hadn't though. But Peter had been confronted in it.

[12 : 51] Of that fact. By the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Peter had heard him speak. And as he'd listened to Jesus. He had realised that Jesus was saying fantastic things.

Jesus said, I and the Father are one. He was identifying and uniting himself with God the Father.

He who has seen me, Jesus said, has seen the Father.

If you want to see God, look at me. It's astounding. He said, don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.

And all things have been committed to me by my Father. And no one knows the Father except me. And those I choose to reveal him to. Jesus was continually making statements like that.

It was impossible, didn't it? And it wasn't just Peter that picked it up. So the Jews of Jesus' day, they knew what he was saying as well, didn't they? They believed in God. They believed in one God.

[13:57] And here was this guy, this man, Jesus of Nazareth, saying, I and the Father are one. And the Jews say, no, no, no, no. You can't say that. You cannot say that.

Who do you think? You are Jesus. You cannot make yourself one with God. And call yourself the Son of God. The Jews say, we have a law against that. And by that law, this man must die.

Why must he die? Because he claims to be the Son of God. So it's quite clear what Jesus was doing. He was saying, as you read the New Testament, read it for yourself, the Gospel.

He's saying, I'm different to everybody else. I'm the Son of God here on earth. And Peter not only heard, but Peter saw.

And what he saw was that Jesus seemed to be doing the things that were normally the prerogative of God. So he forgave sins.

[14:54] If we asked the Jews of Jesus' day, who can forgive sins? They would say, God alone. Who does Jesus think he is? Does he think he is God?

So they say in Luke 5.21, who is this man who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone? Does he think he is God? Yes.

Who gives life? Who gives life, we ask the Jewish people. God is the orphan of life, say the Jews. And we find Jesus saying, just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, so the Son gives life to anyone he wants. And then he walks to the tomb of a dead man.

And he says, Lazarus, come out. And Lazarus gets out of the grave and walks. Who does he think he is? He thinks he's God. Let's ask them, who teaches truth?

[15:55] Well, the Jewish God is the author of truth, isn't it? They would say that. Every Old Testament prophet began. They began by saying what? They began by saying, thus says the Lord.

But as you read through the Gospels, Jesus never said that. He started by saying this. Truly, truly, I say unto you. Or verily, verily, I say unto you.

He speaks with authority. And so the Lord Jesus says, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Then judgment.

Who is the great judge? The Jew would say, well, God is the judge, isn't he? Jesus teaches a parable where he says, I will be the judge and I will divide the followers of God from the non-followers.

I will divide the sheep and the goats. And they think, who does he think he is? Who does he think he is? Now, what do you make of that?

[16:51] What do you make of that? So let's say you're on your way home after this. You go into Ealing Broadway. You bump into a man. And you say to the man, who are you? Slightly unusual in London to do that, I know.

But you say, who are you? And the person says, well, I am the son of God. What would you do? You'd run, wouldn't you? Or you'd ring the police. One of the two. But let's just say, you think, here is a theory that needs to be tested.

Let's just play along with this for a minute. What could this person who says, I am the son of God. What could be the options? Well, number one, he could be talking the truth.

It's unlikely. But he could be talking the truth. Number two, he could be a liar. He could be a deceiver. Or number three, he could be unwell.

He could be deluded. So how can you decide which option is true? Which option is right? Whether it's true that he's saying that he is the son of God. Whether he's a liar or a deceiver.

[17:53] Or whether he's unwell and deluded. Well, let's put a few tests there. You would say, well, I wonder whether he practices what he preaches. Is he genuine? He says he's the son of God.

Is he genuine? Is he for real? You and I can see through the hypocrites, can't you? A hypocrite is somebody who's different on the inside than they are on the outside. And is Jesus genuine?

He claims to be the son of God. Is he for real? Is he up to it? Peter looked at the life of this Jesus.

And that was the first thing that Peter had to confront. So Jesus says this, doesn't he?

Can anyone prove me guilty of sin? Can you imagine David Cameron saying that on the news? Can anyone prove me guilty of sin? There would be journalists, wouldn't there?

They would pursue him. They would pursue him just to disprove the fact that he said it. And I have a feeling that there were investigative journalists in Jerusalem as well. They were called the Pharisees. Can anyone prove me guilty of sin?

[18:53] And Peter watched him for three years. Now my wife has lived with me for nearly 14 years. And she could tell you I sinned.

I saw the lads that I used to live with this week before I got married. And they could certainly tell you that I sinned. You could spend about half an hour with me. And you would know that I sinned. I'm not perfect. Neither are you. But Peter, years after Jesus died, wrote a letter. And in Peter's letter, he said this. He committed no sin.

No deceit was found in his mouth. The Lord Jesus made this claim. And Peter says, I've got to give it to him. I've got to give it to him.

He is genuine. There was a purity. And there was a perfection about him. And you might follow around our guy on Elam Broadway. Who says he's the son of God.

[19 : 51] To see whether he is pure. And whether he is perfect. The apostle John. Who lived with Jesus for three years. Said this. If we claim to be without sin.

We deceive ourselves. But in Jesus' case. In him. There is no sin. Hebrews chapter 4 verse 15 says. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses.

But one who in every respect. Has been tempted as we are yet. Is without sin. So he passes the first test. Doesn't he? The test of genuineness.

And integration between what he says. And what he is. And Peter says. I'm convinced by that. I can't get my way around. I can't see my way around that. So let's give the second test.

You say to the man on Elam Broadway. Let's have a miracle. You are the son of God. Let's have a miracle. Show us some action. Show it to us. Well Peter saw lots of them.

[20 : 48] Didn't he? Jesus pacified a storm. He turned water into wine. He healed the sick. He fed 5,000. With a few bread and a few fish.

Mighty acts. Acts of grace and compassion. And love. But also signs of who he was. And then finally you have the resurrection.

How did they respond to it? If you have Paul's logic. The apostle Paul's logic. In Romans 9. He speaks of his human nature. It says this. Jesus who was descended from David.

According to the flesh. With skin and bones like you and I are. And was declared to be the son of God. In power. According to the spirit of holiness. By his resurrection from the dead.

Jesus Christ our Lord. Do you see that? Was declared to be the son of God. In power. According to the spirit of holiness. By his resurrection from the dead. Here is phenomenon.

[21 : 48] Upon phenomenon. Fantastic. Upon fantastic. You want the clinching argument. What Paul gives it to you. Here it is. Declared to be the son of God.

With power. By the resurrection from the dead. So Peter came to this conviction. He heard the strange claims of Jesus. He saw the strange behaviour.

Of doing the deeds. The works of God. On earth. He saw the perfect life. He saw the miracles. He witnessed the resurrection. And said no. He is not deluded.

He is not a fraud. He is the genuine thing. He is more remarkable than John the Baptist. More remarkable than Elijah. More remarkable than Jeremiah. It is amazing.

That is who he is. He is the son of God. And that is why the buildings have been built. And that is why the book is still being read. And that is why the fan club is so big.

[22 : 45] The son of God. And as we begin to see this. The word fantastic begins to come into its own. Doesn't it? Wayne Rooney. James Corden.

Beyonce. Tiger Woods. They pale into insignificance. Don't they compare to him? Jesus Christ. He is the only one who truly deserves to be called fantastic. Here is a person who existed before he came to earth. That's what the books call his pre-existence.

There's many verses about this. Jesus who was there before he came to earth. In the beginning. John begins his account. In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God.

And the word was God. And the word became flesh. But he was in the beginning. He was pre-existing.

[23 : 42] Before he came to this world. John 17 speaks of the glory that Jesus had before the world began. And so as we speak about the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we think about him. We are talking about an eternal person. We are talking about the second person of the Trinity. One who was almighty. One who is all powerful. One who is all knowing.

That is who we are speaking about. So Philippians 1 says. Who being in very nature God. He was God. And being in very nature God.

Did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. Something to grab hold of. But he took on the nature of sinful flesh. And he dwelt among us.

He became our servant. Colossians 2 verse 9. For in Christ. All the fullness. Of the deity dwells.
[24 : 41] In bodily form. Or read from our passage. Colossians chapter 1 and verse 19. For in him.
All the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. Now are you taking that in this morning?

You are dealing with the most fantastic truth. That has ever faced humanity. The most phenomenal truth. That Jesus Christ. Was the son of God.

As the creeds put it. Very God. Of very God. Greater. More fantastic. Than any hero will ever be.
There is an incident. There is an incident. There is an incident. Isn't there? Let me close with this. In the gospels of him being transfigured. His outer form. Was changed.

And God spoke from heaven. And said. This is my son. With whom I am well pleased. Listen to him.
[25 : 40] Listen to him. Listen to him. In another place. More touchingly. In Matthew chapter 11.
Jesus says this.

He says. Come to me. Come to me. All you who are wearied. And heavy laden. Come to me.
All you who labour. And are heavy laden. And I will give you rest. You're weary this morning. Life is low.

Great shakes. You're weary of life. Jesus says. Come to me. Come to me. All you who are weary.
And heavy laden. And I will give you rest. And then he says this.

Take my yoke upon you. And learn from me. I've always thought of this passage. Of the yoke. As a kind of farming instrument. You know. That you have a.

[26 : 33] A yoke that's put on the cows. And they plough in the field. You have two cows together.
And I think it is that. But it can also mean. That of a tutor. So you know a tutor.

Posh. Young person. Let's call him Jono. And his parents get him a tutor. He's struggling in school.
And the tutor comes along.

And puts his arm around him. And says. Come. Come and learn. Learn with me. Come and learn with me.
The tutor comes alongside him. And learns from him. It's a picture of a tutor. With a little boy.

And he puts his arm around him. He says. Let's go to the museum. Let's go to the museum. And let me teach you.
Let's learn something. And he puts his arm around him. And takes him. And why don't you.

At the start of this new year. Let Jesus put his arm around you. And teach you. God the Father. God the Father. Says to you.

[27 : 29] This is my son. Listen. To him. And that's what I need to do this year. And so do you. I need to rediscover the glory of Jesus.

And it seems to me that the son of God. Here on earth. Is something worth talking about. Isn't it?
And that evangelism.

Actually speaking to others. About the Lord Jesus Christ. Begins with being amazed by who he is.
Let's pray.