

# IDENTITY CRISIS

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## The Real Jesus

John 7:37-42 // Kip Nanninga

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**| Kip //** All right. Good morning. It's great to see everybody.

Welcome everyone at our campuses. Take the Bible and turn to John 8. We are continuing our series. Pastor Craig has done a good job getting to this point. If you need a Bible, there is one in the seat back or take your smart phone and follow along. The Pharisees and Sadducees are having an identity crisis, the religious leaders 2,000 years ago are struggling and have an identity crisis. The crowd is beginning to move and follow Jesus.

They are recognizing something supernatural and powerful about this man calling himself the Son of God, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. They are struggling with that because everything they have learned and have been brought up with is causing tension with this man that grew up in a small town. The gloves come off at John 8, going at Jesus character and humanity and they begin to attack him. They say things like, Jesus, our group the religious leader club, got together last nights. We began to recognize who you are and what you are about. First of all, you are a Samaritan. Understand, 2,000 years ago that was a racial slur. That's like calling someone white trash. Jesus, as we begin to watch you, we begin to notice there is something supernatural about you. In John 4, a public official came to Jesus and said, my son is sick. Can you help him? Can you heal him? Before the official made it home, his son was healed. There was a woman in the crowd that was bleeding for 12 years. She touched the back of Jesus robe and she was instantly healed.

There was a man, a paralytic that everyone knew and camped out at Bethesda. Everyone knew about that man.

As the water stirred, there was a myth that if you touched the water, you would be healed. He tried to get closer and closer to dip a finger in and he never had the chance for 38 years. Jesus walked on to the patio and saw this man that couldn't walk for 38 years and Jesus said get up and walk and go home and he walked for the first time in 38 years. The crowd began to talk and buzz about the man that had this supernatural gift. Because they wouldn't recognize him as the Son of God, they said he must be possessed by a demon. They said Jesus, you are a white trash devil child, your mother slept around so you are illegitimate. What I know, you never talk about somebody's mama. You never make jokes about somebody's mom. When I was in fourth grade, I had a paper route in small town Nebraska. My dad said if you deliver papers, save up money, you can buy things you want. The pair of Lee jeans where your belt went through the leather strap, right? You can buy whatever shoes. I saved up my money and bought the USA Nikes. You know what I'm talking about. There's a picture right there. Those things were supernatural. If you put those on, I believed in fourth grade I would turn into Carl Lewis, "Chariots of Fire", "Forrest Gump" all at the same time. You have to try them out. I got to school that day and found the fastest kid -- his name was Clay. I said it's on. Recess, we are going at it. We got out there after school Andrew a line in the dirt. I was here, and Clay was here. And another kid named Jamie was down a hundred yards and he had his hand in the air, when he dropped it, it was the cue to take off and run. I thought these shoes would win the day. My identity was wrapped up in these things. The arm was down, I took off and I was like, yes! I realized clay smoked me. I lost the race. You have to be kidding me. The work I did on the paper route. These shoes were supposed to perform.

My two best friends walked up to me -- you run like a girl. The second one runs up. Yeah, give those shoes back to your mom. Oh my gosh, you never joke about somebody's mom, right? Let me ask you this morning, have you ever been made fun of? Someone attacked your character? I'm not talking about when you were a kid in fourth grade. I'm talking about right now. Maybe some ladies have been vicious with you or guys at work, you are struggling with things said behind your back. Your character is on the line. This is what I know about Jesus. He was fully God and fully man and when they attacked his character, it stung. That's what we are talking about today. Pray with me.

Father, thank you for the opportunity to open your Word. You tell the religious leaders over and over that you bring life. The wage of following you and finding you is life. When we try on our own to control our life, to control the things in our life, the struggles that we face, we try to hold those and keep those tight, father, you remind us that, that brings trust in relationship, peace, trust in death and trust in forgiveness. Remind us, tap us on the shoulder today, that you bring life.

**John 8:48.** They mocked Jesus, attacked his character. He can easily retaliate here, right? He's Jesus. They don't know what they are up against. Jesus says this, I'm not possessed by a demon. Understand the source of my power. I honor and glorify my Father and you are dishonoring me. Jesus is running at the idea of religious works today. My I.D. is secure in God. I'm not the ultimate judge, but you are seeking your own glory as religious leaders because you believe your works will save you, you checked the correct boxes. Jesus says, I'm not doing this to seek glory for myself. It's not about me.

There is One that seeks it. He is the judge. Then Jesus gets the attention of the Pharisees and Sadducees and he's getting our attention today in 2018 as we start off this new year. He's saying listen to me, focus in on this, don't miss these words. "Verily, verily, I tell you, whoever obeys my words will never see death." Jesus is talking about our eternal souls. We'll never see death. The Pharisees said he must be talking about physical death. Jesus said, no eternal life. Your soul will live forever. Listen to me and understand this, Jesus is saying whoever obeys me. In other words, he's saying when my voice becomes your voice, my ways become your ways, when you treat people like I treat people, you will find the will of God. You will find life, Jesus is saying. The pinnacle of chapter 8, though equal with God, he did not seek his own glory but did everything to bring God to the Father. The Pharisees labeled God as Yahweh of the Old Testament as the source of their glory.

There is a new resurgence, the idea called free falling. Have you ever heard free falling? Some of you think you love that song from Tom Petty. That's not what I'm talking about. It's a great song. Free falling is a parachute in a backpack and they go to the highest bridges in all of the world, New York and Dubai and all these places and they get out on the edge of these skyscrapers and they jump, they free fall like the guy in the picture. I can't do that. I get on a stepladder and my knees start shaking -- and I'm almost 7'. These guys do this. It's the idea that for a few seconds, they have the complete control of their life and they are free before the parachute comes out. I was talking to a guy at the Saturday night service. He said, Kip, I did that. I jumped off of a bridge. For a second, it's the idea that you are in complete control. David Platte, a writer and author says this, it is crazy for a believer of Jesus Christ to envy freedom like those that pitch themselves out of a skyscraper of a window of sin and use free fall greed, drugs, free fall sex, free fall fame, free fall power, free fall luxury, free fall religious works, free fall pride, but they are oblivious to the Jesus in front of them. That's what Jesus is saying to those in front of him. You have a free fall pride, you have thrown yourself out in religious traditions and works.

You don't understand the Messiah right in front of you. The Word became flesh. I am here, and you are oblivious of me because of pride. Your free fall out of the skyscraper roadblocks your way to the king. Jesus is trying to get their attention. It's amazing that we substitute man made works for abundant life that Jesus gives us. We do. You do it, and I do it. I have had seasons in my life I jumped out of the skyscraper of sin with the exhilaration of thinking if I controlled my life, I have a better way than Jesus does. If I hold on to the things really tightly and don't let anyone in, I can control that. I can control my destiny. Jesus, I don't want you to interrupt that. There have been dark moments in my life where I jumped out of the skyscraper, but God has been kind. God has restored me, but when I made that jump, Jesus says the way to that jump is death.

When we try to hang on and control our lives, the wages of death is destruction. We destroy relationships. We destroy forgiveness. We destroy trust. We destroy peace. We destroy our fellowship with God. The reason we exist is to worship and bring glory back to the Father. We interrupt that. We destroy the fellowship, not our relationship but our fellowship with God and it can only be restored through Christ.

At this they explained that now Jesus, we know. We are certain you are demon possessed. Abraham died and so did the prophets. They are thinking about physical death. Again, Jesus says you are missing the point. I'm talking about eternal life. Abraham died and so did the prophets. Yet you say whoever follows you won't taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died and so did the prophets. This is the challenge they put to Jesus, who do you think you are? Who do you think you are? That question has permeated our culture for thousands of years and is still alive in 2018. Who do you think Jesus is? You have to answer that. I have to answer that. Whether I'm a follower of Christ or not, somewhere along in life I have to come to terms with the idea, who is Jesus? If he's God, that changes everything. There is an insecurity leak in my heart and your heart that says we can spiritually exist by historical grace. We can spiritually exist by historical grace. That's what the religious leaders were doing. They were the protectors, the guardians of the Law. From a young age their parents dropped them off at the temple and Rabbis poured into them the knowledge of the Law. If you do these things, your soul will be saved. You can check the boxes and God of the Old Testament will be pleased with you.

That's what they did. They went to street corners and prayed out loud. They tithe and they would say, look how much money I'm giving to the poor, as they dropped it into the bucket. They had so much pride, so they were saying to Jesus, you think you are greater than our father Abraham. Do you not know that our traditions saved us. I grew up in a strong Christian home. My dad was an elder. My mom was involved in Sunday school. I knew the stories. I accepted Christ when I was young. I was baptized. I did all of the things you are supposed to do in the church. When I left home to go to college I said because of all of the right stuff I did then, this gives me a runway fund, an overflow. Because God is so pleased with me, I can run out and do what I want. There were situations that happened in our church. I was close with our lead pastor and ministry teacher and they were let go -- not for moral failures or anything

like that. When I went to college, the light went off.

I said if that is the church, I don't want to have anything to do with it. I turned my feet and eyes toward pursuing three things.

I was in a relationship with a gal not glorifying to God. I was in a fraternity that had nothing to do with God and my pursuit was playing sports and basketball. I know some of you thought I was a jockey. Just a myth. My pursuit was after those three things. I got home in the dorm one night and flipped on the light and my dad was sitting on my bed. I was like, I'm in for it. I must have overdrawn the checkbook. I thought this is serious for him to drive up to be in my dorm room. I thought did something happen with my brother or sister or my mom? He's a man of few words. My dad said, Kip, I came up here tonight because I want you to know, I stepped down from being head elder of the church. That was a crushing blow. That was a big deal for him. If I can't keep my own house in order, how can I lead the church? I was like what are you talking about? He said because you are not following God, I can't lead the church. That changed everything in my life. Jesus brings life. When we follow him, when we obey him, he brings life.

A few weeks later the college pastor of a church that we were test driving and five other guys playing ball together that didn't care about God or anything about that at the time. He said I want you to come. He said if you come, I'll buy you dinner. We are in. Took us to the IHop, we can endure an hour or whatever. We showed up late, couple of my buddies had alcohol their breath. The spirit of God did something, we walked down the aisle. All six of us went forward and gave our lives to full time ministry. Next year will be 25 years we have given our life to full time ministry.

[Applause]

I'm telling you that because Jesus gives life. The wage of following Jesus is life. He brings life. The religious leaders couldn't respond to that because they were so caught up in what they did and how they did it. Jesus said this, I know you are Abraham's descendants. I know your background. I know your pedigree, but you seek to kill me. My Word has no place in you. The reason I know you are true descendants of Abraham, because if you truly loved Abraham, you would love me. Peter writes this, to this you were called. He's speaking to believers, to us today. To this you were called.

Because Christ suffered for you, leaving you as an example to follow in his steps. He committed no sin. When they hurled insults at him, he didn't retaliate. He bore our sin in his body on the cross that we might die to sin and live for right living, righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. You are like sheep who have gone astray, but you have returned to the shepherd in the overseer of your soul. How could men write that? How could a zealot against the Roman government write those words? His life was transformed. He was willing to die for the truth of the Gospel. He was crucified upside down because he didn't want to follow the example of his King Jesus. Jesus at the age of 33 died for truth on your behalf and my behalf. True identity knows where it comes from. I want to ask you this morning, where is your identity found? I want to tell you, the bottom is going to drop out.

It is. It's happened in my life. If I didn't have Jesus, I wouldn't know where I was going, where I was coming from, where truth was. It would be based on my experience. Because of Jesus, I know the truth. I know his identity. I know who brought the truth into my life. Jesus replied in verse 54, "if I glorify myself, my glory means nothing, but my Father whom you claim as your God is the one who glorifies me." Jesus is saying, there is one opinion that matters in life. It's the glorification of my Father. It's my Father who matters most. You have to determine now if Jesus is God. If you follow Mohammed, you will live your life a certain way. If you believe the Rabbis are from God, you will live a certain way. If you believe Joseph Smith is of God, you will live your life a certain way. If you believe the Dalai Lama is of God, you will live a certain way. I challenge you to look at the end of all of those men's lives, and what was found in the grave. I want to ask you -- what grave is empty? This is why ten weeks from now, the pinnacle of our faith, we celebrate Easter. If Christ's body is in the grave, he is guilty of the wage of sin. If Christ's body was found in the grave outside on the hillside called Golgotha, he is guilty of the wage of sin and we can't believe him. We can't trust him. We can't believe his Word. He doesn't bring life because it's man made. But the grave is empty. Because of that, we can trust him, drive the stake in the ground and bank on that and trust him that Jesus is God. He sits at the right hand of the Father.

Verse 55, I know him. I'm going back to the father. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I know him. Your father Abraham rejoiced in my day and he was glad. In the Old Testament, God appeared to Abraham and said out of you, out of your descendants will become the Messiah. Abraham was the grandfather of the coming Messiah. He believed and obeyed and because of his obedience he was found righteousness of God. 25 years later, Isaac was born as a confirmation that through Isaac the Messiah would come. God said amazing things through Abraham. I want you to take your Isaac and take him to the mountain and sacrifice him. If you are committed to me, I want you to sacrifice him. At the moment Abraham would stick the stake into Isaac's life, a ram was found. That symbolizes the death and resurrection of Christ. He took our punishment. He became the sacrifice for us. That is why Abraham is glad. The religious leaders, struggling with everything Jesus is saying and caught on the idea that it's physical death he's talking about, they interrupt him and say, you are not yet 50 years old. You have seen Abraham? This doesn't make sense.

Jesus says, verily, verily, I tell you before Abraham was born, I am. The Greek there for him using the expression I am is kaboom. The religious leader's minds blew out the right side of his head. He's using everything we were taught; all of the religious traditions are based on pleasing Yahweh. He said he is God. That can't be. Because they knew the Old Testament Law, they were picking up stones

and would have pelted Jesus. It's blaspheme. He has to be put to death. That's what their Law says. They were obeying everything they were taught. Jesus blew up their minds because they were responding to a God of knowledge, a God of study a God of protection. If we know all we can about Yahweh, our knowledge will save us. Jesus says believe me, trust me, obey my Word. Even the demons know God, and they shutter. Jesus was not a good man. Jesus was not a good teacher. Jesus was not a good messenger if he is not God, but if he is, then we have to wrestle personally with that. We have to figure out what that means for us in our life, but listen to me today, in this room, I believe, and I know because I was. Some of us are exhausted because we become very good runners. We become very good at free falling. We dove out into the temptation of sin. Not only did we dive into the temptation of sin, we say, I enjoy that. I want to free fall for some months or years. I want to tell you the wage of that, Jesus says, is death. The wage of following the King, the wage of being obedient to Jesus is life. Some are exhausted, tired because your past or influential people or maybe even the church have put these religious laws over your life and you can't please them, and you can't fulfill them. There is no way.

God says that's why the Ten Commandments were written, for you to recognize that you can't fulfill the Law in and of yourself. It will take someone supernatural to step in to take that for you. If you look at your life like a courtroom scene. You walk into the courtroom and God is behind the bench, this massive bench. Here's God behind it, right? Then witness after witness come up to the bench. They begin to accuse you and tell you, when he was little he said this about me or they did this to me or he didn't treat his wife or kids right. God pronounces you guilty. As the mantle is coming down for your sentence, Jesus busts into the courtroom and steps in front of you and says, God, I will take whatever blame, I'll take the circumstance, I'll take the punishment on me. I will die in their place. That's what Jesus did on our behalf. You could move this morning from insecurity to security through faith in Jesus. He will change your identity. He changed my identity. My name was written in the Book of Life. God's Word says I'm adopted into His family, I'm an heir to His throne. I'm a prince of the King. Jesus says, if you respond in five ways, your identity will change. First of all, you recognize that you have done wrong. God, I have tried to control my life. I have tried to control my circumstances. I'm exhausted and tired of running. You admit, Jesus, I need you. I have done wrong. The second thing you admit, you say, I'm sorry. I want to follow you. I want to find and follow you, Jesus. Third, you recognize Jesus died on the cross, that he died for you and took the punishment on himself. The greatest truth of this is the fourth one that says, Jesus not only did you die, but you rose again on the third day. You conquered sin and death, which means I can run free. I can follow you.

The fifth thing is, I accept that gift of life. I accept that gift of peace, and I accept that gift of forgiveness. Let me pray for us. Father, I thank you this morning that when I prayed that prayer, you restored me. You were kind to me. I found life, and Father, you desire like the religious leaders, Jesus you were right in front of us every day and we can miss you. We can be oblivious to you because we are wrapped up and self-absorbed and we miss the King. I want it to be said in the life of myself and my wife and my kids, I see you. I will not miss you. Father, I pray for those here today that have been running, running in their own control. God, I pray that you would restore them. Be kind to them like you were to me. Amen

Maybe there is something that touched your heart today and you would like to unpack that. If you would like to come forward and meet someone to pray and do life with you, we would like to pray with you. Maybe you can invite Jesus into your life. There are people in the front that will pray with you. Let us continue our response in worship to Jesus.