Jesus is the God of the Old Testament (New Testament Figures)

Forgiver of sins, reader of hearts, stiller of storms, walker on the sea

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, July 3, 2022
PASSAGES	Mark 4:35-41; Mark 6:45-52; Mark 2:1-12; Mark 1:2-3; Mark 10:17-22; Jonah 1:4-16; Psalm 107:23-30; Exodus 3:14; John 8:58; Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:17:21 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

The Gospel writers are not claiming that Jesus is *a* god in the elastic way a Greek might call Zeus a god. They claim he is Yahweh, the one God of Israel, made flesh. Mark shows it less by statement than by story – a forgiven paralytic, a stilled storm, a man walking on the sea – and it matters, because only God's own blood has the power to save, and because it means the whole Bible is one story about one God.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- John the Baptist's call to repent was not un-Jesusy; Jesus began with the same message: the kingdom of God is at hand, repent.
- Some texts say it outright: the Word was God, and "before Abraham was, I am."
- Mark changes the pronouns of Malachi and Isaiah so that the messenger prepares the way for Jesus where the prophets said Yahweh was coming.
- Jesus never disputed that only God can forgive sins. He simply forgave by decree and read the hidden thoughts of hearts.
- The storm story is built on Jonah: the disciples woke Jesus to pray, and instead he did what only Yahweh did for Jonah's sailors.

- Walking on the sea and meaning to "pass by," Jesus says, in effect, "I am" – the God who alone treads the waves.
- It matters who died on the cross, and it means we fit into God's story, not him into our schedule. Yahweh is more merciful and Jesus more fearsome than we think, because they are the same.

▶ 1:17:21

Before Matt preached, Thomas announced Friday's launch of the book about Wittenberg 2017 – the gathering he and his wife Amy convened in Germany, where believers from across nations and traditions met to grieve the divisions in the body of Christ and pray Jesus' prayer that they would be one. Then, after plugging the church cook-off, Matt continued the New Testament series.

Same message, same God

▶ 1:18:01

Last week John the Baptist preached repentance, and Matt wanted to show again how "Jesusy" that is: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14–15). Now begins a short run on Jesus himself, starting with the claim that he is the God of the Old Testament.

▶ 1:18:59

At Advent Matt preached "The Invisible Yahweh," showing that even in the Old Testament Yahweh is one yet multi-personal – the Lord rained fire "from the LORD out of heaven" (Genesis 19:24). Now the point is sharper. The Gospels are not saying Jesus is a god "like Zeus is a god." "They're saying he is Yahweh made flesh – really specific claim." (For those streaming on a holiday weekend, he reopened the live-chat questions.)

The explicit claims

▶ 1:21:30

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Who is the Word? The rider in the robe dipped in blood, whose name is "The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13) – Jesus. And in a monotheistic setting, that means the one and only God.

▶ 1:22:12

> "God said to Moses, 'I AM who I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you.'"
>
> EXODUS 3:14 ↗

"I am" is tied to the unique identity of Yahweh. So when Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58), it is "an unmistakable claim to not just be a guy with great power, but the unique God of the Old Testament, the God with no rival, who created without any help."

Reading Mark like Mark

▶ 1:23:23

Beyond individual verses, the Gospel writers make claims through which stories they tell and how. Mark knows the Old Testament well, so his allusions are deliberate – and, Matt stressed, even when a character in the story misses something about Jesus, we the readers need not. That is one reason the Old Testament series mattered: bring those stories into the New Testament, then go back and read again.

▶ 1:24:50

Exhibit A: the messenger. In Malachi, God says, "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before *me*" (Malachi 3:1). Who sends? Yahweh. In Isaiah, "prepare the way of the LORD… a highway for our God" (Isaiah 40:3). Who is coming? Yahweh. Yahweh sends a messenger to prepare the way for Yahweh.

▶ 1:26:13

> "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"
>
> MARK 1:2–3 ↗

"What's with the pronoun change?" Mark knows God is one but multi-personal, so the Father sends the messenger before the face of the Son: John prepares the way for Jesus, who is clearly the one coming in Isaiah. "Mark is saying Jesus is equated with Yahweh" – easy to blow right past.

Exhibit B: who can forgive sins?

▶ 1:27:36

In Capernaum four men dig through a roof and lower their paralysed friend. “Son, your sins are forgiven.” The scribes reason in their hearts, “He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, asks which is easier to say – your sins are forgiven, or rise and walk? Then, “that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,” the man rises and carries his bed out before them all (Mark 2:1–12).

▶ 1:29:37

Saying “your sins are forgiven” would be easier to fake – no one can check. Saying “rise and walk” in a crowded house exposes you if nothing happens. And notice: Jesus never disputes that only God forgives sins. He refutes the charge of blasphemy “by placing himself firmly in the category of one who can forgive sins.” A priest could pronounce forgiveness tied to a sacrifice; Jesus does it by decree, unasked. He also answers what they only thought. “The LORD sees not as man sees… the LORD looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). Forgiver by his own word, reader of hearts, healer.

Exhibit C: the sleeper in the boat

▶ 1:32:50

> “A great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’… And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’”
>
> MARK 4:35–41 ↗

▶ 1:33:55

The characters tell you what the story is about: *who is this?* It is tempting to assume they woke Jesus so he would calm the storm, but nothing yet suggested he could – and why be terrified when he does exactly what you asked? Matt thinks they wanted something else, and the clue is Jonah, the prophet the series skipped, who fled rather than see God forgive Nineveh:

▶ 1:35:28

> "But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea… Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god… But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. So the captain came and said to him, 'What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.'"
>
> JONAH 1:4–6 ↗

▶ 1:36:41

The disciples were freaking out and thought, Jesus can pray to God for us. In Jonah, the sailors throw Jonah overboard, the sea calms, and they fear the LORD exceedingly (Jonah 1:15–16). The parallels pile up: experienced sailors panicking, efforts failing, a main character asleep, woken, intervening, a crew left perplexed. And the parallels expose the one difference. In Jonah, Jonah does not calm the sea – Yahweh does. In Mark, Jesus does. "Get it? Get it?"

▶ 1:39:07

Mark could have saved expensive parchment and spared the apostles' dignity by skipping the panic and the cushion. Instead, "Jesus answers their prayers directly, and this is, I think, what freaked them out." It is also why he asks, "Have you still no faith?" They thought he would pray for them; they did not know they could pray to him. The psalmist seals it: sailors at their wits' end "cried to the LORD in their trouble… He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed" (Psalm 107:23–30) – and Lord in capitals is the name Yahweh.

Exhibit D: the God who passes by

▶ 1:40:54

> "And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out… But immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.'"
>
> MARK 6:45–52 ↗

▶ 1:42:06

"He meant to pass by them." The background: God told Elijah to stand on the mountain, "and behold, the LORD passed by" (1 Kings 19:11); and to Moses, "I will make all my goodness pass before you… while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock" (Exodus 33:19–22). Moses and Elijah – the two who later stood with Jesus on the mountain. This is not "Oh, Moses, I didn't see you there, I was on my way to the market." It is a deliberate "I am showing myself to you."

▶ 1:43:50

And in the Greek, "it is I" is literally "I am." "Are you saying that Jesus is walking on water, intending to walk by them, and say 'I am'? Who could do that?" Job answers: God "alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea" (Job 9:8). "Have you… walked in the recesses of the deep?" (Job 38:16). "Are you an ocean walker? There's only one."

Exhibit E: "Why do you call me good?"

▶ 1:44:27

A man kneels: "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone." Jesus loves him and tells him to sell everything, give to the poor, "and come, follow me"; he goes away sorrowful (Mark 10:17–22). He asked for eternal life; Jesus' main answer was "follow me."

▶ 1:47:47

Jesus does not say "I am not good." He asks why the man said it. We do not know how the rich man settled that, "but we are not the rich man; we are the readers." Mark has already shown us – the crowds in the Decapolis said it outright: "He has done all things well" (Mark 7:37). So: only God is good; Jesus is good; Jesus is the one who saves and gives life. No one else can claim those things but Yahweh. Matt mentioned more without slides: Jesus as the bridegroom (Mark 2:19–20), a title that had belonged to Yahweh alone; his sending "his angels" to gather "his elect" (Mark 13:27); and next week, Jesus as a later and greater Moses gathering twelve.

Why it matters

▶ 1:50:04

"At the very heart of our worship is the God that we're worshipping." Jesus died on a cross to save us and give eternal life – but who died? "Not just the best and brightest among us – God himself. Jesus sheds his blood, which is God's blood, which is why there is life in him." Would Isaiah or Moses dying for you be worth anything? The power to save is divine.

▶ 1:51:30

It also helps with an understandable confusion. Sometimes a kid on the playground grabs Matt's leg, looks up, and realises he is not Dad – "I could see why you would think that; I'm standing right next to your dad and we're both wearing khakis." We can see why people think Jesus is not God: he was born, ate, prayed, died. But Scripture means us to see him as fully God and fully man, not by turns – the God

of the universe become man to dwell among us, reveal himself, and die so we can be forgiven and be with him.

▶ 1:52:36

And it means there is no clean break between the Testaments. “I’m bringing all that with us.” To compare and contrast Jesus with the God of the Old Testament would be comparing someone with himself. We do not read the Bible mainly to get through the work week; “instead of him fitting into our schedule, we are actually fitting into his… somehow into his story.”

▶ 1:54:01

> *“Sometimes people forget how merciful and gracious Yahweh is, and how scary Jesus can be. It’s actually because they’re the same – the scary, the sweet, the mighty and the merciful.”*

The giver and taker, Lord of heaven and earth and what is below – “that is our great God, and that’s whom we worship.” Matt prayed simply that God would reveal himself and help us know him.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- Mark 1:14–15
- Genesis 19:24
- John 1:1
- Revelation 19:13
- Exodus 3:14
- John 8:58
- Malachi 3:1
- Isaiah 40:3
- Mark 1:2–3
- Mark 2:1–12
- 1 Samuel 16:7
- Mark 4:35–41
- Jonah 1:4–6
- Jonah 1:15–16
- Psalm 107:23–30
- Mark 6:45–52
- 1 Kings 19:11
- Exodus 33:19–22
- Job 9:8
- Job 38:16
- Mark 10:17–22
- Mark 7:37
- Mark 2:19–20
- Mark 13:27

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. What is the difference between saying Jesus is "a god" and saying he is Yahweh made flesh? Why does Matt insist on the second?
2. In Mark 2 Jesus never disputes that only God can forgive sins. What does that tell you about how he understood himself?
3. Matt suggested the disciples woke Jesus so he would pray for them, not so he would calm the storm. How does the Jonah parallel change the way you read Mark 4?
4. Which of the exhibits – the messenger, the paralytic, the storm, the sea-walker, "why do you call me good?" – was most convincing to you, and why?
5. If Jesus is the God of the Old Testament, how should that shape the way you pray to him in your own storms this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6aJfr2FCA-w&t=4641s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.