

## Ordinary 21A - 2020

### Public Notions of Jesus' Identity

Some, said Peter, say that you are Elijah. Now why would people think that Jesus was the long deceased prophet Elijah. Elijah was, of course, a highly revered personality in the religious life of the Hebrews. His defeat of the 450 prophets of Baal on the top of Mt. Carmel was a story that was known even by the little children. It was a commonly held belief among the Hebrews that one day Elijah would return and that would mark the end of the world. In the very last passage in the Old Testament, in the Book of Malachi, we find these words: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes."

Most of you have read Charles Schultz's comic strip Peanuts. One day we see that the television is on but there is no one in the room listening to it. The announcer is talking about a golf tournament that is in process. He says: Smith has to make this putt to win the championship. There will be no tomorrow." And just as he says, "There will be no tomorrow," in walks Lucy. She immediately goes into a panic and starts running around and yelling to the other children: The world is coming to an end. They just announced it on television. Her panic quickly spreads as we see all the peanuts kids as they go wildly screaming about. Finally in the last square we see all of the children huddled on top of Snoopy's doghouse waiting for the end of the world.

And Charlie Brown finally speaks up with a puzzled voice: I thought that Elijah was supposed to come back first." Well Charlie Brown knew his Bible. Elijah was supposed to come back before the end time. When the disciples told Jesus that some people thought he was Elijah, they were expressing a common thought among the people that the end was very near. (from [www.eSermons.com](http://www.eSermons.com))

### People See Things Differently

People see things differently all the time. For example, three people - a minister, an archaeologist, and a cowboy - were getting their first look at the Grand Canyon one day. The minister exclaimed, "Truly this is one of the glories of God!" The archaeologist commented, "What a wonder of nature this is!" And the cowboy said, "Can you imagine trying to find a lost steer in there?" People see things differently.

The Messianic hope of those in the Jewish community who held such a belief was that the Chosen One would reestablish the supremacy of Israel among the great nations of the world. The assumption was that this would be accomplished in a violent and vengeful manner, with the forceful overthrow and total destruction of the current ruling powers. But before this happened, the prophet Elijah would return to herald the coming of the Chosen One.

As a result of these hopes, Jesus had to somehow communicate to his disciples and others who had such high hopes for him that what he was offering was something completely different from what they expected. (by Johnny Dean, The Pop Quiz, [www.esermons.com](http://www.esermons.com))

### The Triumph of Jesus

In 1896, after fifteen centuries, Athens renewed the Olympic games, thus fulfilling the dream of Baron Pierre de Coubertin of France. You can imagine how proud the Greeks were to host the first modern Olympics. You can also imagine how disappointed they were at their athletes' lack of success in event after event.

The last competition was the marathon. Greece's entrant was named Louis, a shepherd without competitive background. He'd trained alone in the hills near his flock. When the race started, Louis was far back in the pack of marathoners. But as the miles passed he moved up steadily. One by one the leaders began to falter. The Frenchman fell in agony. The hero from the United States had to quit the race. Soon, word reached the stadium that a lone runner was approaching the arena, and the emblem of Greece was on his chest! As the excitement grew, Prince George of Greece hurried to the stadium entrance where he met Louis and ran with him to the finish line.

In this sports tale we have something of the history of the human race. Most historical figures make their impact, achieve a measure of fame, books are written about them, but as the years go by they begin to fade. Less and less is written or spoken of their lives until they rest in relative obscurity.

With Jesus Christ, however, one finds quite an opposite phenomena! Christ started from way back in the pack. He was born in relative obscurity, never

had many followers, commanded no army, erected no edifices, wrote no books. He died young, was buried in a borrowed grave, and you'd think he'd be quickly forgotten. But, no! His reputation has grown so that today he is worshiped on every continent, has more followers than ever before, sixteen times has his picture been on the cover of Time magazine, and his sayings have been translated into more than 200 languages. (by Stephen M. Crotts & George L. Murphy, *Sermons For Sundays: After Pentecost* (Middle Third): The Incomparable Christ, CSS Publishing Company, Inc.)

### **A Point of Reference**

The state highway department in Pennsylvania once set out to build a bridge working from both sides. When the workers reached the middle of the waterway, they found they were thirteen feet to one side of each other. Albert Steinberg, writing some time ago in the Saturday Evening Post, went on to explain that each crew of workmen had used its own reference point. No wonder they did not connect. In that same article Steinberg tells about a small disc on the Meades Ranch in north central Kansas where the thirty-ninth parallel from the Atlantic to the Pacific crosses the ninety-eighth meridian running from Canada to the Rio Grande. The National Oceanic Survey, a small federal agency whose business it is to locate the exact positions of every point in the United States, uses the scientifically recognized reference point on the Meades Ranch. So far, no mistakes have been made, and none are expected. All ocean liners and commercial planes come under the survey. The government can build no dams or even launch a missile without this agency to tell it the exact location to the very inch. "Location by approximation," the article goes on to say, "can be costly and dangerous."

That's why there is so much chaos in our society today. Everyone's using their own reference point. What we need is a universal reference point so that we can say, "Here. Here is how the good life is lived." For Christians there is such a reference point - and that is Jesus. What would Jesus do? That is the question that continually helps us in our quest for right living. Jesus not only revealed the character of God but he also patterned the ideal life for humanity. (by King Duncan from *Collected Sermons*, [www.Sermons.com](http://www.Sermons.com))