

Thou art the Christ

Matthew 16: 13-16

As we continue looking at profound statements in Scripture, we come to an intimate moment with Jesus and His disciples. They have traveled from Bethsaida to Caesarea Philippi. It is here that Jesus asked a fundamental question – whom do men say that I am? Hearing the response of what men thought of Him, Jesus pressed further, making this personal for the disciples. Being challenged of the Lord, Peter offered one of the most profound statements in all of Scripture. He declared Jesus was in fact the Christ, the Son of the living God.

We all face questions and are forced to make decisions daily. Some of those are insignificant, and others can have lasting implications. However, none are more important than the question Jesus posed to the disciples – whom do you say that I am? How we respond to that question will have eternal implications. It is a question all must answer, and one that is impossible to avoid. Those who refuse to deal with the question have in essence chosen to reject Jesus as the Christ. I want to examine the [reflections](#) within the text as we consider this profound statement: [Thou art the Christ](#).

I. A Question of Eternal Significance (13) – [When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?](#) Here Jesus posed the question that all must consider and respond. It isn't a question that we can deny, or avoid. All must answer His question and decide who Jesus is and what they will do with Him.

➤ To better understand this question, we need to consider the backdrop to which it was asked. Jesus wasn't asking this question to gain knowledge for Himself. He already knew the hearts of men and what they thought of Him. (By the way, Jesus knows our hearts today! He knows whether you have truly accepted and confessed Him as Savior, or if you view Him less than your personal Savior.) It's interesting that Jesus brings up the question of eternal significance in Caesarea Philippi. This was the region that Jesus and His disciples had gone to find rest from the multitudes who followed for material gain as well as the scoffers who denied Him. Caesarea Philippi was a region that was steeped in idolatry and pagan religion, even in Jesus' day. It was there that Herod the Great had built a temple in honor of Caesar. His son Philip had made the temple more elaborate with a magnificence that was known world-wide. All of this was done to encourage the worship of Caesar as a god.

➤ It is this setting that Jesus asks this fundamental question – [Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?](#) This is the title that Daniel referred to our Lord. [Dan.7:13 – I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days,](#)

[and they brought him near before him](#). It is the name that Jesus used most frequently, referring to Himself. It speaks of His humanity, His sacrifice, and His relationship to fallen man.

➤ Jesus asked this because He knew men had a distorted perception of who He really was. He knew of their worship and devotion to Caesar and their rejection of Him. He knew that many Jews had rejected the Son of Man as the Messiah. He wanted the disciples to ponder their faith in Him as well. We must all answer this eternal question.

II. A Reflection of Social Indifference (14) – [And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets](#). The response of the disciples reveals a tragedy that is repeated throughout the ministry of Jesus. The holy Lamb of God had come to take away the sin of the world and yet many never recognized or accepted Him as the promised Messiah. They witnessed the miracles and were even astonished at His words, but they never believed on Him as the Christ. Many felt as if Jesus was simply Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets reincarnated, whom God had sent back to bring healing to Israel. They admitted that Jesus was a man of power, but they rejected the idea that He was the Christ.

➤ The Son of God was reduced to nothing more than a mortal man in the eyes of most who knew Him. The Messiah had come, but most were spiritually blinded and rejected Him. Those of His own hometown even rejected Him. [Mark 6:3 – Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him](#).

➤ His social acceptance was tragic, but we cannot expect the world to acknowledge Jesus as their Savior. We find the same spiritual ignorance today. The Bible is clear that Jesus is the only way of salvation, and yet many decide to put their faith and trust in anyone or anything but the Redeemer. The world continues to hold a distorted view of Christ. Some will admit that He lived upon the earth, and that He was a great teacher or prophet, going about doing good deeds, but stop hopelessly short of admitting that He was and is the Christ of God! May we never be guilty of placing our Lord on the same level as mortal men! May we never find ourselves taking away from His absolute deity and absolute humanity! May we never be guilty of belittling our Lord, viewing Him as less than He really is!

III. A Confession of Personal Assurance (15-16) – Jesus was well aware of what the Pharisees and those around Jerusalem thought of Him, and here He posed the same question to the disciples. Just as before, Jesus already knew the reality of their hearts, but He wanted them to ponder who He was and why He came. It is here that Peter makes his profound confession. Consider:

A. The Accountability (15) – He saith unto them, **But whom say ye that I am?** Jesus was very direct. He called upon each of the disciples to give account of who they believed Jesus to be. They had shared what they believed the world to think, and now Jesus wanted to hear from them. He was aware that His own had rejected Him, but He hadn't overlooked those who had faithfully followed Him. **But, whom say ye that I am?**

- In this we find that each disciple was personally accountable to recognize the Lord. Another's confession wasn't enough. It really didn't matter what other men thought. Jesus was concerned with their individual faith. The world may have denied Him, but He was willing to accept those who believed in Him. The same holds true today. This world doesn't care for my Lord. Many have rejected Him, denying His sacrifice and gift of salvation. But, Jesus continues to ask – Whom do you say that I am? What will you do with me? Are you willing to recognize me as Savior?

- The world may reject Him today, but He lovingly forgives and pardons those who accept Him. Each of us is accountable unto the Lord. Each of us must decide whether we will accept Him or deny Him. Others can't decide for you; what have you decided? **Mat.10:32-33 – Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.**

B. The Affirmation (16a) – **And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ.** This is one time that Peter got it right when he was quick to speak. I don't believe he was being arrogant or trying to get ahead of the others; he was certain of who Jesus was and he was not ashamed to declare it. He had seen enough through the life of Jesus. There was absolutely no doubt in Peter's mind that Jesus was the Christ. He was the promised One who had come to deliver fallen man! Peter had come to a saving knowledge of Jesus as the Christ. He wasn't just a great prophet or teacher. He wasn't just a man who spoke with authority and possessed power over all creation. He wasn't just a great miracle worker. He was the Christ.

- What kind of assessment have you made regarding Christ? Is He just someone you've read about or heard others teach about? Is He just a Man whom the Bible claims to be the Son of God; or is He the Christ of your soul? I am thankful I have proclaimed Him as my Lord and Savior. I praise His name that He gave His life that I might live, offering me the opportunity to be saved! He is my Lord! I am persuaded that Jesus is the Promised One who purchased my redemption!

C. The Association (16) – **And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.** Peter not only declared that Jesus was the Christ, but also that He was the Son of the living God. I'm sure Peter couldn't see Calvary from here. He didn't fully understand all that lay ahead, but he knew enough to know that Jesus was the Son of the living God. He recognized the

fact that Jesus had been sent from God out of heaven. He was in essence declaring the deity of Christ.

▪ This is a fundamental element of our faith. We serve the Son of the living God. We serve one who was with the Father in eternity past. He was born of a virgin, conceived of the Holy Ghost. We serve one who stands as the second person of the Godhead. Yes they crucified His body; yes He died and was buried, but praise God that wasn't the end of the story. He rose from the grave victorious and He lives today! I don't fully understand all that happened as Christ died for my sin. I don't even understand all that Jesus did for me and continues to do in my life, but I am confident that He lives! I am secure in Him and that will never change. [2 Tim.1:12 – For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.](#) Jesus was and is of God! [John 1:1-3, 14 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ^{\[2\]}The same was in the beginning with God. ^{\[3\]}All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. ^{\[14\]}And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, \(and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,\) full of grace and truth.](#) Jesus was not just a good man who died a tragic, martyr's death. He was the only begotten Son of the Father, robed in flesh who gave Himself the atonement for sin!

Conclusion: This fundamental question remains – who is Jesus? Regardless of what others think or believe, our response to that question will determine our eternal destiny. Many today are willing to admit that Jesus actually lived and died. They may even admit that He performed miracles and was crucified on a Roman cross. However, they refuse to embrace His atoning work to redeem us from sin.

Who is Jesus to you? I trust you know Christ as Savior. If not, come to Him in repentance and faith. If Christ is your Savior and Lord, tell others of His saving grace!