

Who Is Jesus?

13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” 14 So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 17 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” 20 Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. **Matthew 16:13-20**

This lesson follows a testy **confrontation** with the Scribes and Pharisees.

- Once again, they are trying to find a means of **embarrassing** Jesus
- They are looking for some way to turn the crowds against Jesus.

Jesus tests his disciples

- He wants to know about their **progression** of faith

Jesus asks 2 questions

1. Who do people say I am?
 - a. A prophet
 - Prophets are **truth-tellers**
 - A prophet uses the word of God and their understanding of God to **diagnose** current ills
 - b. Predicting the future
 - Only very **rarely** does a prophet “predict” the future and what is to come
 - When they do predict the future, it is often the **logical** progression of what results when one pursues a destructive path (e.g.--if you smoke 6 packs a day, you are likely to die of lung cancer).
 - In many cases, the prediction that we see in a prophecy is something that can only be understood in **retrospect**
 - Even the prophet himself may not have understood that to be its **future** meaning. (e.g.—many of Isaiah’s prophecies that we understand as predicting the birth of Jesus were likely understood as applying to **Josiah**, the current king at the time of Isaiah)
2. Who do you say I am?
 - a. The Christ
 - 1) This is the Greek word for **Messiah**
 - a) The word means “the **anointed** one.”
 - b) The term was not an **exclusive** term: there were many Messiah’s in the Bible
 - David, Solomon, Josiah, Hezekiah
 - c) There were many claimants to the title in Jesus’ day
 - **Judas** of Galilee (6 AD—his revolt was brutally crushed by the Romans)
 - Theudas (46 AD—led a nearly successful revolt that led to temporary freedoms)
 - 2) There had not been a successful Messiah for hundreds of years

- a) The people yearned for a Messiah that would deliver them from **oppression**
 - This Messiah would restore the **centrality** of the Jewish nation in the world
 - b) It is not surprising that Jesus was NOT viewed as the Messiah by most Jews
 - He did not have the **political** sensibilities of previous Messiahs
 - Jesus had no ambition for commanding a **military**
- 3) In what sense was Jesus a Messiah?
- a) We Christians talk about Jesus being the one who delivers us from sin
 - This is **true**
 - b) However, this is not all: Jesus is not only a **personal**, but also a **public** Messiah
 - Deliverance from bondage IS the **purpose** of the Messiah
 - **We** are the continuation of the Messiah's work
 - The job is in **process**: our purpose is the work of delivering others from oppression
 - However, contrary to other Messiahs, this Messiah insists that we not use military or political means of deliverance.
 - Our only weapon and tool of deliverance is that of **love**.
- b. Son of the living God
- This phrase was often used of the Jewish **nation**: they are the Sons of God
 - As a personal reference, however, it is a term that is only applied to the **Messiah**
 - It is a claim that the Messiah has an intimate relationship with God, and an understanding of God that the rest of us do not share.

Is that all?

- The understanding of who Jesus may be for us is a **growing** one
- A relationship with Jesus requires a lifetime **walk** with and **commitment** to Jesus
- We grow in our understanding: it does not come to us in **full-bloom**
- It is not until the confession of Thomas that the disciples understand that Jesus is **God**

We are called to walk with Jesus and see where that path may lead us...

... the journey continues still, even after 2,000 years.