

*"But Who Do You Say I Am?"*

*Matthew 16:13-20*

*The 5 Questions of Christmas*

Who is Jesus Christ? To the Jehovah Witness He is not God in human flesh, but rather a created being. To the Mormon He was a pre-existent spirit like the rest of us, though distinct from us by being the firstborn of God's spirit children. To the Hindu, Buddhist, Confucius, or Moslem, Jesus is a great man or even a "sinless" prophet, but He is not the only begotten of the Father, the God-man as He is declared in the New Testament.

Who is Jesus Christ? This same question has been asked since the beginning of His initial appearance in the sandy shores of Galilee. Based on the record provided for us in the New Testament, Jesus Christ is either a liar (John 8:44), a lunatic (Mark 3:21), or Lord of all creation (John 20:28).

Mankind has said many moving and glorious things concerning Jesus Christ. Some believe Him to be a monumental man or an inspirational instructor. Others believe Him to be an excellent example. Yet, if Jesus Christ is not Lord of all, then He is not Lord at all. The only legitimate and proper response to the question is that which was stated by Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

In our postmodern culture we are raising a generation of children who do not know who Jesus Christ is and how He fits into this season of the year. Yet this season, even in our denial, forces us to confront the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" Our passage provides for us two great ideas. One deals with God's Son and the other with His Church.

I. The greatest person (vv. 13-17 "You are the Christ").

A. A human evaluation (vv. 13, 14).

Is He a great teacher, a divine healer, a compassionate philanthropist? Who is He? If He is not all that He claimed to be, then He is either a liar or a lunatic.

B. A divine revelation (vv. 15-17).

Notice the idea expressed. Peter was blessed because God revealed to Him a proper understanding of who Jesus is.

1. Jesus is the Christ
2. Jesus is the Son of the living God

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II. The greatest program (vv. 18-20 “I will build my church”).

A. The foundation of the Church (v. 18)

The foundation of the church is established by who He is, what He has done, and who we now are in Him.

1. The foundation is not Peter
2. The foundation is Christ

Grammatically the two rocks referred to in verse 18 are different genders. Peter’s name is Petros and is masculine. The second rock mentioned (“this rock”) is feminine (Petra). Thus many conclude that “Because of this change in Greek words Jesus is building His church on Himself.” (BKC, NT: 57)

B. The future of the Church (vv. 18b, 19)

1. It will endure (“The gates of Hades will not overpower it” [v. 18b])
2. It will expand (“I will give you the keys” [v. 19])

Peter and the apostles would be given the authority to carry out the dictates of God. What they did in opening up the way of the gospel to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles was the outworking of this passage.

At this point in the purpose of God, Jesus told His disciples not to tell anyone that He is the Christ. Why did He say this? For the first time Jesus will disclose His imminent death. His kingdom program will enter a new expression and phase. The outworking of God’s purpose will now focus on the cross-work.

Today, we are to celebrate Him. The church is a reflection of who He is, what He has done, and who His people now are in Him. The church has value only because of its foundation. The question asked of the apostles is still being asked of us today, “What do you think of Christ?”

If you believe Him to be someone other than the chosen of God, the Son of the living God, then you have failed in your calculation of His person. Do you know Jesus?