

Who is Jesus?**Matthew 16:13—17**

Jesus is well aware that His days are numbered. In a short few weeks Jesus will be headed to Jerusalem to give Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. The Disciples will be continuing the ministry of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom acting as Christ's proxies through the power of the Holy Spirit. They were being groomed by Jesus to step in after Christ's ascension. But the Disciples are struggling to understand the lessons taught by Jesus. It seems that they have a lot to learn in a short period of time. This is why Jesus has been withdrawing Himself from the crowds and the leadership of Israel and is now working more closely with His Disciples. The Disciples still need to understand that Jesus is the second person of the Trinity and that they will fulfill a very important function during the Tribulation period. (Note: It's obvious that the Tribulation has not happened and that the Disciples are now dead. However, the Tribulation would have happened during their lifetime if God had not interrupted Israel's prophetic program. I believe Christ was ready to pronounce judgment on the earth when He was seen standing at the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7:55. (Note also Psalm 110:1; 7:6; 12:5; 44:26; 94:2; Zephaniah 3:8)

There are many today who sidle up to Jesus as their best friend or buddy. When they run into difficulty they run to Jesus and ask for help. When they make important decisions they ask, "What would Jesus do?" They emulate the earthly Jesus as much as possible but even then they only do what is convenient. They stop short of doing things that are too hard like selling all their possessions or following all of the Mosaic Law. Jesus had a much different view of Himself than most people do today.

Son of Man (verses 13—14)

Jesus and the Disciples traveled 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee to Caesarea-Philippi. He asks the Disciples who people say the Son of Man is. Jesus is clearly and almost casually referring to Himself as the Person who will come in power and glory to set up the earthly Kingdom. This is made clear in verse 27.

Matthew 16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Christ is both Son of Man and Son of God. The first relates to His humanness, including His death, burial resurrection and Second Coming, while the latter shows His Deity (Isaiah 9:6 shows the child as human and the Son as God). When Jesus used this term about Himself, He declared that the Old Testament prophecies about a Messiah have their fulfillment in Him.

When Daniel 7:13 uses the term Son of Man it is in relationship to Jesus' coronation at the Second Coming. Here the Father (Ancient of Days) presents to His Son dominion, glory and a kingdom. This is a specific reference to His future earthly kingdom that was promised to Israel. We, in the Church, the Body of Christ are presently in Christ's Kingdom (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 1:13). This Kingdom is already in existence and belongs to the Son. This shows that there is more than one kingdom. Christ has not yet been given His earthly Kingdom but currently has His heavenly Kingdom of believers. When these two kingdoms are mixed together, confusion will always be produced. One way people wrongly bring these kingdoms together is by spiritualizing them. The kingdom now becomes nothing more than a group of believers, taking away the literalness of the Millennial Kingdom. Even among those who understand that the Millennial Kingdom will be established after the Rapture of the Church, many conclude that we will be reigning with Christ on this earth because they confuse the two Kingdoms. (One verse that is used to "prove" that we will be a part of the earthly Kingdom is 1 Corinthians 6:2. However, I believe Paul is referring specifically to the Kingdom saints who will be judging the world. Contrast that with verse three where he includes himself with us in the Body of Christ as those who will judge angels. Paul did not include himself in the judging of the world in verse 2.)

Christ often pointed to Himself as the Messiah. In Matthew 19:28 He told the Disciples that they will sit on 12 thrones and He would be sitting on His glorious throne in the regeneration. In Matthew 24 He said He would appear in the sky and all tribes will mourn as they see Him come in power and glory. Mark 14:62 says that they will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven. In Luke 22:70 He says He is the Son of God. When Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:25—26 He says He is the Messiah. As Jesus is reading Scripture in the synagogue in Luke 4:17—21 He declares that He is the fulfillment of the promise of One sent by God. He also claimed to have seen Abraham and that He was the I Am (John 8:52—58). He put Himself on equal footing with the Father saying if you have seen Me you have seen the Father (John 14:9). He also forgave sins and allowed people to worship Him, something reserved only for God. Jesus was never shy about declaring that He was the Messiah.

People did not see Him as their Messiah but as John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets. They couldn't see God, only a man.

The contrast between unbelieving Israel and the Disciples is amazing. Jesus said numerous times that He was the Messiah and the One who was the fulfillment of Scripture. He had proven Himself by performing probably thousands of miracles and signs that should have pointed Israel to Him as their Messiah yet only Peter confidently states that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed One of God. Almost all of Israel rejected His claim of being their Messiah. How sad that Israel had gotten so far from God that they didn't recognize Him when He came into their midst!

Thou art the Christ (verses 15—17)

Peter had a very different answer when asked by Jesus who he thought Jesus was. After months and months of being with Jesus and seeing miracles at every turn, Peter is finally beginning to understand who this Jesus really is. I can imagine the difficulty of trying to understanding that a person you are close to is actually God in the flesh. Since they had no real concept of the triune Godhead, it would be even more difficult to accept Jesus as God. To them, God was One (Deuteronomy 6:4). To this day most Jews reject the idea of a trinity (or Tri-unity). His answer was succinct and accurate, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

We often think of Christ as a name. It is actually a title that means the Anointed One. Messiah is the Hebrew word for anointed. Jesus was the Anointed One of The Father. He is God's Christ or God's Messiah (Psalm 2:2; Luke 4:17—21; Acts 10:38).

His answer should have been the answer of all of Israel. All the evidence they ever would need was there if they would only believe. Jesus is quick to point out that it wasn't Peter's great insight or wisdom that lead him to that conclusion but the Father who revealed it to him. Calvinist's often uses this verse to show that God will reveal Himself only to certain individuals who happen to be one of the elect. They would say only the elect will be saved so it is only the elect to whom the Father will reveal truths about Himself. I would counter that the Father actually revealed Jesus to all of Israel and that all of Israel had the same opportunity to believe and become a part of the Kingdom. The only reason they did not believe is because they chose not to. Those who have already rejected the Father can't hear the Father's testimony about the Son and therefore they also reject Him too (John 5:36—38; 6:44; 8:17—19).

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