

Who Do YOU Say I Am?

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- [0 : 00] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help, and the Lord's reading, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the Gospel according to Matthew and chapter 16.
- Matthew chapter 16, and if we read again at verse 13. Matthew 16 and verse 13.
- Now, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, Who do people say the Son of Man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.
- He said to them, But who do you say that I am? Simon Peter replied, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- But particularly the question of Jesus to the disciples. Who do you say that I am?
- [1 : 08] Who do you say that I am? Do you know my unconverted friend here this evening?
- Jesus has one question for you. And it's a question that is of the utmost importance. Because your answer to this question will make all the difference.
- And it will make a difference not only in this life, but it will also make an eternal difference. Because your answer to Jesus' question that he poses here, it's the difference between an eternity in heaven or an eternity in hell.
- My friend, this question is so important that you can't avoid answering it. You must give an answer to Jesus' question. You must respond to what Jesus is asking you.
- You must not put it off or ignore it or come back to it at a more convenient time in your life. You must answer Jesus' question.
- [2 : 15] And I'm urging you to answer it now. Because tonight Jesus is asking you, Who do you say that I am?
- Who do you say that I am? And there's no doubt that you've heard a lot about Jesus. No one's questioning that. There's no doubt that you already know a lot about Christianity.
- Because you've been sitting here for many years. There's no doubt that you're familiar with what a Christian is and what a Christian is not. But what Jesus wants to know is, What do you think about me?
- He's not asking, what do you think about church? He's not asking, what do you think about other Christians? He's not even asking, what do you think about Christianity as a whole? These things, they may have clouded your perception in the past or even tonight.
- But what Jesus wants to know is, What do you think about me? What do you think about me? Who do you say that I am? Who do you say that I am?
- [3 : 18] And you know, just to pause there and say that if you have questions about Christianity, What about Christ or becoming a Christian? Then the invitation will go out one more time.
- Come to Christianity Explored. It's an informal gathering that gives you the opportunity to either ask questions or just sit and listen. I want to put it out there again.

You're invited to come. You're invited to come. But this evening Jesus is inviting you to answer this one question. Who do you say that I am?

And you know, it's a good question. But it needs an answer. But you know, what we see from this conversation between Jesus and his disciples is that there was confusion as to the identity of Jesus.

And it's at this point in Matthew's Gospel that Peter, the Apostle Peter, he steps forward and he publicly confesses his faith in Jesus Christ. He makes what you could say a public profession.

[4 : 20] He makes a public confession of Jesus. But what I want us to see this evening is that there are three confessions in this passage. There's three confessions.

There's the confession of the crowds. There's the confession of the Christian. And there's the confession of the Christ. There's the confession of the crowds, the confession of the Christian, and the confession of the Christ.

So, let's look first of all at the confession of the crowds. The confession of the crowds. Look at verse 13. we're told that when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples who do people say that the son of man is and they said some say John the Baptist others say Elijah others one of the prophets or Jeremiah or one of the prophets and he said to them but who do you say that I am when Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi he did so for some peace and quiet the crowds had been gathering at a rapid pace and everyone had been following Jesus everywhere and so Jesus he takes some time out with his disciples away from the crowd and away from all the demands that were upon him and Jesus he takes advantage of the peace and quiet by taking his disciples aside and asking his disciples a very personal question Jesus asks the disciples what's on their mind he wants to know what they're thinking he wants to know what's going on in their heart and of course Jesus knew what they were thinking he knew what was going on in their heart just like he knows what we're thinking he knows what's going on in our heart but Jesus wanted the disciples to talk about it openly and Jesus we see here that he initiates the conversation by asking what other people thought about him he asks what other people thought about him who do people say that the son of man is and we might think that that's a strange question for Jesus to ask why was Jesus asking what other people thought about him because well it wasn't going to change the fact that Jesus was going to the cross regardless of what anybody said about Jesus he was still going to go to the cross and die for sinners but you know Jesus asked the question he asked the question in order that the disciples would think about what people were saying

Jesus asked this question not because he was worried about public opinion not because he worried about what people thought of him he asked the question because he wanted the disciples to make a confession that he was the Christ whatever anyone thought about Jesus it wasn't going to change the direction that Jesus was going in but you know thinking about this can the same be said of you can the same be said of you can it be said of you that that you worry about public opinion Jesus didn't worry about what people thought of him but do you worry about what people think of you do you worry about public opinion and public perception and public misconceptions about you and maybe your confession as a Christian because if you were to become a Christian maybe you worry about what people would think public opinion is something that plays on your mind maybe it's something that even holds you back from following Jesus you worry about public opinion what other people will say you know the Bible describes you so perfectly when it says that the fear of man is a snare that's what happens when you worry about the opinions of others you become trapped and ensnared worrying about what people will say and you wrongly come to the conclusion and think well

I can't come to church twice on the Lord's Day I can't become a Christian I can't go to the pream of Dean I can't confess Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior because of what other people will say about me what public opinion will say about me I'll be the topic of their discussion but you know what exactly do you think they'll say about you and I'm sure I've said this to you before what do you think that they'll say about you that you're interested in the gospel that you love the Lord that you want to be a Christian that you've committed your life to Jesus Christ because you've now realized that you're a miserable sinner and that Jesus is a wonderful Savior what do you really think people will say about you?

[9 : 08] my friend who cares what people will say about you? who cares? you know in light of eternity what does it matter?

what people think or what people say? I would far rather come out on the side of Christ than spend an eternity in hell I would far rather confess Jesus as my Lord than be judged by him in hell and you know that's what Jesus was asking who do people say that the Son of Man is?

Jesus' first question was to gain public opinion about himself and the disciples they gave Jesus an answer they listed what people thought about Jesus we're told in verse 14 they said some say John the Baptist others say Elijah others Jeremiah or one of the prophets and as you would expect there were a variety of different opinions about the identity of Jesus public opinion number one was that Jesus was John the Baptist that was the theory that was promoted by King Herod because when Herod was confronted by Jesus he thought he was John the Baptist raised from the dead but John's message as we know John's message was only a message of preparation it was to prepare the way for the arrival of Jesus because Jesus never pointed to John it was always John who pointed to Jesus and said behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world so that was public opinion number one he's John the Baptist public opinion number two was that Jesus was Elijah and they probably said that he was Elijah because the very last

Old Testament prophet Malachi Malachi prophesied that the Lord will send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord and some came to the conclusion that Jesus he must be Elijah and that Jesus he has come to bring judgment and this eternal reign in Israel but you know Malachi's prophecy about this Elijah-like figure it actually referred again to John the Baptist not to Jesus and so if Jesus is not John the Baptist and if Jesus is not Elijah they're still asking well who is he?

Public opinion number three suggests that Jesus was Jeremiah and it's hard to understand why they said Jeremiah but Jeremiah was a man who suffered greatly he experienced a lot of opposition from the religious leaders of his day that would correspond closely with what Jesus was experiencing not to mention the fact that Jeremiah was known as this prophet of doom he was always preaching about judgment he was preaching about the judgment of God and the destruction of the temple which is something that Jesus was proclaiming but again public opinion it doesn't reveal the true identity of Jesus which leaves our last opinion he's just one of the prophets he's like all the other Old Testament prophets who proclaimed God's word Jesus was just a prophet he's just like Isaiah and Ezekiel and Amos and Haggai and Hosea there's nothing special about this

[12 : 41] Jesus there's nothing unique about him he's just a prophet and you know reading about the popular opinions of Jesus in the first century we can see that the popular opinions of Jesus in the 21st century they haven't changed because well what's the popular opinion of Jesus today who do people say that Jesus is today some people say they don't know who he is nor do they care but they're happy to take his name in vain and use it as a swear word some people say that Jesus was just this fictional character others would say that Jesus well he was real he was a real man but he was just a man he wasn't God he was just a man but a good man he was a good man with a good philosophy for life other people in the 21st century follow the public opinion of the first century that Jesus was just a prophet that's what the Muslims say

Muslims say that Jesus was just a prophet he's one prophet among many prophets he's not the son of God he's not divine he's not the savior of sinners he's just a prophet and then to confuse matters even more about the identity of Jesus there are some who say that Jesus can save us from our sin because according to popular opinion some people think that Jesus is a savior of sinners he's not the savior of sinners but a savior of sinners he's one of many ways to get to heaven he's one of many roads that lead to heaven and my friend with all these opinions and all these interpretations and all these perspectives and debates and discussions over this one man Jesus Christ the reality is there's so much confusion there's so much confusion and it leaves us asking who is this Jesus but you know it's Jesus that comes to us in the gospel and he says to us you've heard all the opinions of others you've heard what public opinion has to say you've heard the confession of all the crowds but now it's time to make a decision and Jesus makes the question very very personal because that's how Jesus deals with us he deals with us personally and Jesus comes to us and he says who do you say that I am who do you say that I am he doesn't say what does your wife say that Jesus is he doesn't say what does your husband think he doesn't say what do your friends think he doesn't say what does your family think what does your community think

Jesus says who do you say that I am and it's at that point that Peter steps forward and he makes the confession of the Christian that's what I want us to see secondly the confession of the Christian so the confession of the crowds and the confession of the Christian look at verse 15 Jesus said to them but who do you say that I am Simon Peter replied you are the Christ the son of the living God you know this question from the lips of Jesus it's probably the most personal question in the gospels who do you say that I am and you know having heard all the opinions of others Jesus wants his disciples and he wants us he wants you and he wants me to answer this question personally and like the disciples Jesus doesn't want us to follow the crowd he doesn't want us to go along with public opinion

Jesus wants us to consider the evidence he wants us to consider all that we've seen about Jesus he wants us to consider all that we've heard in the gospels he wants us to think about all that we've seen and witnessed in the lives of other Christians Jesus wants us to consider all that we've heard through preaching through bible reading even by attending Christianity Explored Jesus wants us to consider it all and make a decision about him and you know my friend you've been hearing the name of Jesus all your life that's how privileged you are there are people in this world who have never heard the name of Jesus and you've had the name of Jesus ringing in your ears since you were on your mother's knee you've heard the name of Jesus all your life but you know is it not about time that you made a decision about Jesus is it not about time that you came to confess him as your Lord and Saviour is it not about time that you stopped denying that you know this Jesus when you already know him is it not about time that you came openly and publicly and made the confession of the Christian is it not about time and you might say to me

Mardo I want to come I want to make this confession but it's not easy to make a confession it's not easy to come out on the side of Christ you know my friend it wasn't easy for Peter to make this confession either because you know up until this point the disciples they repeatedly struggled to understand who Jesus is and why Jesus came they saw all the miracles and they even when Jesus calmed the storm they said who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him but you know having witnessed all the miracles and having listened to the teaching of Jesus and with all the evidence of who Jesus is and why Jesus came the disciples they could only come to one conclusion they could only come to this point and fall on their knees confessing the confession of the Christian the conclusion that they came to wasn't to fall in with public opinion and confess the confession of the crowds the conclusion they came to was to make the confession of the Christian you are the Christ the son of the living God you are the Christ the son of the living God and this is the confession of every Christian you are the Christ the son of the living God but what was

[19 : 32] Peter confessing what is the confession of the Christian well the confession of the Christian is that there's no other saviour there's no other God there's no other Lord there's no other way of salvation there's no other hope in life and there's no other peace in death there's no other king upon the throne of my heart except Jesus Christ that's the confession of the Christian you are the Christ the son of the living God that's the confession of the Christian but what about you what about you are you willing to make the confession of the Christian are you willing to say openly and publicly about this Jesus you are the Christ the son of the living God but you know if you're not willing to confess Jesus as the Christ then you know your reluctance only shows that you're confessing that there are other things and other loves which are on the throne of your heart there's something holding you back whether it's your family

I don't know your wealth your friends your status your social life whatever it is you're putting it before Jesus which is something you should never do whatever it is you're putting it before Jesus and it's holding you back and it's making you unwilling to confess that Jesus Christ alone is Lord and King over your life and you know what's frightening what's frightening in my eyes is that you are willing to risk an eternity in hell for momentary pleasure and approval you are willing to risk an eternity in hell for momentary pleasure and approval but you know what we see here with Peter's confession is that he not only confessed that he wanted to follow Jesus wholeheartedly he also confessed that he knew who Jesus was he said you are the Christ you are the Christ and when Peter called Jesus the Christ he wasn't addressing him as his by his surname but by his title

Peter was confessing that Jesus is this king he's God's king in God's world that's the title and position he's giving Jesus he was Jesus was Christed he was anointed he was the Messiah he was set apart as God's chosen king but you know the confession of the Christian it goes beyond that because Peter says you are the son of the living God you are the Christ the son of the living God which means that as a Christian Jesus Christ was not only on the throne of his heart Jesus Christ was not only his king he was also Peter also knew Jesus to be God's son that he's the only begotten son of God that he's the beloved son and you know it's only when we come to understand the identity of Jesus that we can truly appreciate the love which has been demonstrated towards us as sinners that God the Father would so love us that he would send his son to die condemned in our place that's what the Bible reminds us

God demonstrates his love towards us in that whilst we were yet sinners Christ died for us and that's what the Christian understands they understand the love of God that has been poured into their heart by the Holy Spirit but my friend what Jesus wants to know from you this evening is who do you say that I am who do you say that I am are you going to make the confession of the crowds or are you going to make the confession of the Christian and confess openly and publicly that Jesus Christ is the son of the living God and your Lord and your King but you know I'd like us to see last of all the confession of the Christ the confession of the Christ so we've seen the confession of the crowds the confession of the Christian and the confession of the Christ look at verse 17 and Jesus answered him blessed are you

Simon Barjona for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my father who is in heaven and I tell you you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven you know the confession of the Christ here in verses 17 to 19 it has often been the center of division and controversy for generations because well because of its interpretation by the Roman Catholic Church Roman Catholicism uses the words of Jesus Jesus here as their proof text for the existence of the papacy and the right for the Pope to absolve sinners of their sin and admit them into heaven but of course such an interpretation is not only a misinterpretation but it also undermines the sufficiency of Jesus Christ and what he did on the cross because you know by claiming that

[25 : 24] Peter was the first Pope and that he had the ability to forgive sins and send people into heaven there's no word for that except blasphemy because it's putting someone in the place of Jesus Christ and that's essentially what the Pope is he is the vicar of Christ he stands in the place of Jesus Christ but no one should ever stand in the place of Christ because even Peter himself he admits here with the confession of the Christian he says about Jesus you are the Christ the son of the living God you are the only one who can get us to heaven and so Peter he wasn't the first Pope and he certainly wasn't the foundation of the church of Jesus Christ because when Jesus said upon this rock I will build my church as you know Roman Catholicism they say that the Vatican and Rome is literally built upon the grave of the apostle

Peter but we have to be clear none of what the Christ is confessing here is anything to do with the identity of Peter no the confession of the Christ is everything to do with the Christ it's not about Peter it's all about Jesus in fact Jesus says that Peter's confession confession of a Christian was not his own doing flesh and blood he says have not revealed it to you he says in verse 7 blessed are you Simon Barjona for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my father who is in heaven Peter's confession that he was a Christian wasn't because he had earned his salvation it wasn't because of his efforts or his intellect or his knowledge or his church attendance or the fact that he went to Sunday school or that he was he had Christian parents or even that he was a good person none of these things gave Peter the confession of the Christian none of them made him look at Jesus and say you are the

Christ the son of the living God no Peter knew that Christianity is not a way of life it's not a lifestyle choice it's not even a religion it's not a self-help program it's not a crutch to get us through life Christianity is an act of divine revelation my friend when Peter looked at Jesus he made the confession of the Christian because of divine revelation flesh and blood did not reveal it to him but my father who is in heaven Peter confessed that Jesus was his savior all because God's word was speaking to his heart it was pressing upon his heart the Holy Spirit was convincing Peter of his own sin and misery that he was in ruin that he desperately needed a remedy that he was in sin he desperately needed a savior and when

Peter was confronted by all the opinions of others he could only come to one conclusion that everything he had heard about Jesus and all that he knows about Jesus is the truth it's all true but what about you my friend what about you because if God's word is speaking to your heart tonight and pressing upon your heart and maybe it has been for many many years pressing upon your heart and challenging you as to where you stand with Jesus if the Holy Spirit is convicting you of your sin and convincing you of your need to be saved if the Holy Spirit is convincing you of your ruin and your need of a remedy and you have this desire to come to Jesus this desire to be saved then you know you must do as Peter did you must do as

Peter did you must make the confession of the Christian and say about this Jesus you are the Christ the son of the living God you need to stop holding back as we were saying this morning from Acts chapter 7 you need to stop resisting the Holy Spirit because the warning of the Bible is that the spiritual shall not always strive with man you need to confess the confession of the Christian and say about Jesus you are the Christ the son of the living God because when you make that confession you become part of the rock upon which Jesus Christ is building his church that's what Jesus said to Peter I tell you you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it the rock was not

[30 : 41] Peter although the name Peter means rock the rock was not Peter the rock was Peter's confession you are the Christ the son of the living God Getty it was built upon Peter the church was built and extended upon the confession of the Christian that Jesus alone is saviour.

He is Lord. He is mighty to save. That's the confession we see throughout the book of Acts. The church is growing. The church is extending. The church is growing out into Europe all because, not because of Peter, but because of the confession of the Christian.

You are the Christ, the son of the living God. And you know, that confession of the Christian, it has been the rock and it will remain the rock upon which the church of Jesus Christ is continually being built.

And so as long as that rock is proclaimed and confessed, Jesus says, not even the gates of hell will prevail against it.

And you know, my friend, far better for you to stand on that rock and confess the name of Christ than be overcome by the powers of hell.

[32 : 23] Far better for you to make the confession of the Christian than go along with public opinion and be lost for all eternity. Far better for you to cast your lot in with Jesus tonight and confess him to be your Lord and King than to make the confession of the crowds in a lost eternity in hell.

Far better for you to do what the gospel says. Believe in your heart and confess with your mouth and you will be saved.

My friend, Jesus is asking you tonight, who do you say that I am? Who do you say that I am?

But before you answer, always remember what Jesus said. Whosoever confesses me before men, I will also confess before my Father in heaven.

But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. Jesus is asking you tonight, who do you say that I am?

[33 : 49] May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee that the Lord of God who deals with us so personally and who deals with us so intimately.

And we thank Thee, Lord, even for personal questions that are directed towards us. And Lord, that we would see that they are for us, that these words have been written in the pages of Scripture for centuries in order to speak to us even tonight.

And Lord, that we would take them to heart, that we would hear the voice of Jesus speaking to our soul, pressing upon us an answer, wanting an answer from us, and that each and every one of us that we would confess this Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, that we would know Him as our Christ, that we would confess Him as our Savior, that we would follow Him all the days of our life, knowing that He is the one who promises to prepare a place for us in glory.

O Lord, hear us, we ask. Speak to us, we pray. And Lord, that we would leave this place transformed, that we would not go to our beds this evening without having closed in with Christ, because who knows what tomorrow will bring.

We are not promised a day nor an hour, and yet, Lord, we bless Thee, that the Word of God who is able to save us right here, right now, hear us then, we ask.

[35 : 21] Speak to us, we pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen. We are going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 62.

Psalm 62 in the Scottish Psalter, page 294 in the Blue Psalm book. Psalm 62.

We are singing from verse 5 down to the verse marked 8. We were speaking about Peter's confession, where he said, you are the Christ.

And this, Psalm 62, is David's confession, where he confesses that Jesus is the Christ. He says in verse 5, my soul, my soul, wait thou with patience upon thy God alone.

On him dependeth all my hope and expectation. He only my salvation is, and my strong rock is he. He only is my sure defense. I shall not moved be.

[36 : 27] In God, my glory placed is, and my salvation sure. In God, the rock is of my strength, my refuge most secure. And then David, he turns it all on us, and he says to us, you people, place your confidence in him continually.

Before him, pour ye out your heart. God is our refuge hand. These verses of Psalm 62 in conclusion to God's praise. my soul, without with patience upon my God alone.

On him dependeth of my hope and expectation.

He only my salvation is, and my strong rock is he.

He only is my sure defense.

[38 : 02] I shall not move at thee. In God, in God, my glory blessed is, and my salvation sure.

In God, the rock is of my strength, strength, my refuge most secure.

He will place your confidence in him in him continually.

Before him, for ye at your heart, God is our refuge high.

the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore.

[39 : 37] Amen.