

BUT WHOM SAY YE THAT I AM

MATTHEW 16:13-17

Text:

Introduction:

The Lord and His disciples are about 120 miles from Jerusalem in northern Palestine. We're closing in on the time when He will go to the Holy City and the cross upon which He will die.

We come to what is not just a good question, but possibly the single greatest question in history. In verse 15, the Lord Jesus asked His disciples, "But whom say ye that I am?"

How a man defines the Lord will make all the difference in that man's existence and eternity. How a person answers the question put forth in this text is the single issue upon which destinies are made and eternities are mapped.

The disciples have been with Jesus for about 3 years, and now it's final exam time. He asks first who the crowd says He is, and then who the disciples say He is.

Notice:

1. THIS QUESTION IS PUBLICLY ARGUED

In our text, in verse 13, Jesus privately polls His disciples and asks them what the people are saying about Him. He says, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”

A. Fond Opinions (vs. 13)

Matthew 16:13-14

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? ¹⁴ And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

- John the Baptist

Because of His preaching of repentance. The Lord was a far greater preacher than John, and He spoke with an authority that was astonishing. He not only spoke the Word of God, He IS the Word made flesh! John only pointed to the Lamb of God, but Jesus personified the Lamb.

- Elijah

Because of His prayers and miracles. Elijah prayed and the heavens opened and closed, whether rain or fire. Jesus had a powerful prayer life. The disciples never asked Him to teach them to preach, or to work

miracles...but they DID say, teach us to pray! They were blown away by His ability to talk to His Father, and they were happy to learn they could easily do the same.

- Jeremiah

Because of His compassion. Jeremiah was the weeping prophet, and was known for His tears. And Jesus was known for being moved to tears...from His view of a multitude in a crowd like sheep w/ no shepherd, to the tomb of just one and the shortest verse in the Bible, our Jesus wept and wept, and still today when we are hurting, He hurts right along with us, His heart breaks for us, and our tears are a language that our God understands!

Still today, many think highly of Jesus. I venture to say that there are very few people who would have something negative or derogatory to say about the character or conduct of the man, Jesus.

People consider Him to be a master teacher. They call His life the supreme example. They appreciate His sacrificial life and service to others.

For many, Jesus is just inspiring. Like a hero from the pages of time, they look to Him with fondness, and regard. They respect His impact and influence on history, and his example of selflessness.

We'll never find the right answer to this persistent question by taking a public opinion poll.

When it comes to the Lord, the crowd is always wrong, yet many make public opinion their main method of gaining spiritual understanding.

B. Flawed Opinions

In verse 14, the people associated Christ with some of the greatest figures in Israel's religious history. Yet, as fond as their opinions may have been, they were inherently flawed.

Men have argued about the identity and nature of Christ for some 2,000 years, and while they may have admirable and high opinions of him, their fond opinions are often flawed, and fall short of who He really is.

When we consider the question of defining Jesus, we see not only that *this question is publicly argued*, but notice also further that:

2. THIS QUESTION IS PLAINLY ANSWERED (VS. 15)

Matthew 16:15

¹⁵ He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

The Lord then narrows His focus.

As we study the response given by the Lord's disciples, we are reminded that the question of, "Who is Jesus," is one that has been plainly answered, in spite of the various opinions.

Every person must answer this question. The crowd cannot answer it for you. You cannot abstain or opt out from answering...you can delay, but you cannot hide forever, you will answer someday.

There are really only 4 answers that can be given.

- "He's a legend

It's all made up. He never really was." A very small minority today believe this one. Intellectually you cannot hold this position. Why? Because there's more historical proof of the existence of Jesus Christ than of any other person in human history. I hate it when cable channels try to deal with Bible stories because they totally botch it up so often. And when they investigate who Jesus was, there's no exception, they flaunt their ignorance as if it were a neon sign flashing above their heads. But I'll tell you one thing they never even attempt to do, and that is to deny His existence ... there's simply too much historical evidence to even begin to go there.

- He's a liar

He deceived people into thinking He was someone He was not. He was a good teacher, a good person who did good things, but He was not God in the flesh.” This position is not even an option. Why? Because He claimed to be God, and if He wasn’t then He was a liar, and good people don’t go around living a lie. It wasn’t a little white lie if He was lying, He was a pathological, habitual deceiver...is that a good person? No! And people can see right thru that kind of liar.

- He’s a lunatic

He was off in the head. Maybe sincere, but crazy...mentally deranged.” But again, read His words, and see how the people marveled. They said, where does He get His wisdom. The most brilliant minds have studied His words for centuries and have only scratched the surface at the depth of His wisdom! And so, if he was not a legend, liar, or lunatic, then there’s only 1 other conclusion you can make.

- He’s Lord

A. Testimony of His Followers

Who else would you expect to answer the Lord’s question? Of course it was Peter.

Peter got it right!

This has been, for 2,000 years the confession and testimony of all who follow the Lord Jesus. To those who know Him best, He is not just a man; He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

There is one more truth that we draw from this question of defining Jesus. Notice not only that *this question is publicly argued*, and *this question is plainly answered*, but notice also thirdly that:

3. THIS QUESTION IS PERSONALLY APPLIED

In verse 15, Jesus moves his question from the court of public consensus to the realm of personal conviction. This question must be read and applied personally by each and every one of us.

The question is, “Whom say ye that I am?” “Who do you say that I am? Notice a couple of things we find when we personally apply this question. We find that:

A. It Is an Individual Question

The Lord Jesus was no longer interested in hearing the opinions of the public. In verse 15, His question was a personal one.

Ultimately, it does not really matter what everyone else confesses regarding the Lord Jesus. As far as you are concerned, the only opinion that matters is yours.

The Lord Jesus wants to know how you define Him.

He isn't asking you to tell Him what your parents or grandparents thought of Him.

It is not only an individual question, but notice also further that:

B. It Is an Important Question

If He is what He claimed to be, what His disciples affirm Him to be, and what the Word of God declares Him to be, then what you think of Him, and what you personally believe about Him is of the utmost importance.

Considering the weight of eternity, no question, no issue is more important than a proper definition of Christ in your life.

Romans 14:12

¹² So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

On that day, when each of us, individually face the God of eternity, only one thing will matter – what we personally believed about Christ.

Close:

Defining Jesus is something we must all do at some time or another. We must decide what we believe about Him. Whatever others may say, there is coming a day when all that will matter is what you have said.

Years ago a man walked a tightrope high in the air with no safety net. A great crowd gathered below to watch. Then he took a wheelbarrow across. Then he talked to the crowd. "How many here believe I can take a person across inside the wheelbarrow?" Everyone raised their hand. He pointed to one man raising his hand. "You sir, come here and jump in." The man took off running! He believed it in his head but not in his heart.

So, who is Jesus Christ to you?