

WHO IS JESUS?

Matthew 16:13-28

33: Who IS Jesus? (Matthew 16:13-28)

Who IS Jesus? This one question has sparked more literature, debates, sermons, and changed lives than any other issue. Who we say Jesus is, is the FOUNDATION for our faith. Today we examine this most important question, that JESUS asked His disciples.

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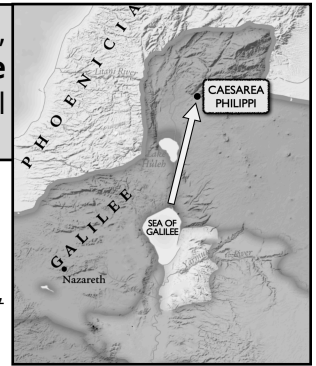


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teachingnotes

Matthew 16:13-14 (NIV) When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” “Who do people say **the Son of Man** is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”



Caesarea Philippi is located in Northern Israel, about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, on a 1,700 foot incline.¹ This is a largely Gentile area littered with pagan shrines and temples, originally built in honor of **August Caesar** by King Herod the Great, who died shortly after the birth of Jesus.

This city had later been renovated by Herod Philip (son of Herod the Great) *to honor Tiberius Caesar*, the ruling emperor during the life of Jesus.² This area has long been rubble with the exception of remnants from temples and pagan shrines at the base of the mountain.

It’s near this pagan place, where a temple built in honor of Caesar Augustus stood, along with the Temple to *Pan* (half man/ half goat - god of shepherds/sheep/nature), as well as several other sites to worship other deities.

Who do people say the Son of Man is?

- Some say **John the Baptist** - who has already been beheaded. They believe that Jesus is John risen from the dead. This is incorrect, BUT...it is an incredible statement of faith!
- **Others say Elijah** (prophet from 850 BC whom God took to heaven before death). Jews believed the Scriptures from Malachi about Elijah returning before the coming of the Messiah (Mal 3:1, Mal 4:5-6, Mt 11:7-14).
- Others thought Jesus was **a prophet** who had died long ago, like **Jeremiah**, prophets who must have been resurrected from the dead. These people were wrong, but they viewed Jesus as someone incredibly special.

Matthew 16:15-16 (NIV) “But what about you?” he asked. “**Who do you say I am?**” Simon Peter answered, “You are the **Messiah**, the **Son of the living God.**””

MESSIAH Peter calls Jesus the **Messiah** (Greek *Christ*) - meaning the “the anointed one”.³ These 2 terms - **Messiah/Christ** mean the same thing (Jn 1:41, 4:25-26) from 2 different languages (Hebrew/Greek).

- The Bible refers to Jesus as **Messiah/“Christ” 235 TIMES!**
- “Jesus Christ” = Hebrew **Yeshua** (Yahweh saves) **Messiah** (the Anointed One)

SON OF GOD

When Jesus was baptized the voice from heaven said, “This is **my one dear Son**; in him I take great delight.” (Mt 3:17)

- In Matthew’s gospel, only Satan (Mt 4:3,6), demons (Mt 8:29), & disciples of Jesus (Mt 14:33) referred to Jesus as “**the Son of God.**”
- Jesus would be handed over to die by religious leaders who condemned Him for **BLASPHEMY** as claiming to be the **Messiah** and **the Son of God** (Mt 26:63-68).

Matthew 26:63 (NIV) ...The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are **the Messiah, the Son of God.**”

They men make fun of Jesus while on the cross because He said He was **the Son of God** (Mt 27:43).

¹ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 424.

² W. T. Edwards Jr., “Caesarea Philippi,” ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 247-249.

³ Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, vol. 34B, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2001).

What does the phrase "Son of God" mean? John's gospel says that Jesus "was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God." (Jn 5:18) Jesus was with God in the beginning and created all things (Jn 1:1-3, 17:5) and is even called "God". Jesus is **God, the Son.**

Matthew 16:17-18 (NIV) Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and **on this rock I will build my church** [term for people, not a place], and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Contrary to what Catholics are taught, it was not PETER who is the **rock** upon which the **church** is built. **It is Peter's CONFESSION of JESUS' IDENTITY** that *WAS* and *IS* the foundation of the **church**. The Church is BUILT on Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God. **Paul** (Corinthians) and **Peter** later wrote these words,

1 Corinthians 3:11 CSB For no one can lay any other foundation than what has been laid down. **That foundation is Jesus Christ.**

1 Peter 2:4-6 (NIV) As you come to **Him, the Living Stone**—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through **Jesus Christ**. For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a **Stone** in Zion, a chosen and precious **Cornerstone**, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame."

According to Jesus, nothing will stop His people - His **church** - from accomplishing His mission in building His kingdom - not even **the gates of Hades** (the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew **Sheol** - referring to death - cf. Is 38:9).

Scholars like Craig Keener and John MacArthur agree that Jesus is saying that even when the community of Jesus stands at the threshold of death - **HADES**, the **church** of Jesus will triumph.

🕒 After the death & resurrection of Jesus, it becomes clear that DEATH - **hades** - holds no eternal power on followers of Jesus as Jesus will too raise them from the dead (1 Cor 15:51-56).

Even when the Church of Jesus stands at the threshold of death (hades), the **Church** who trusts in Jesus as the foundation for their faith - will triumph!

Who do YOU say Jesus is?

❓ Is Jesus the FOUNDATION of YOUR faith & life?

❓ Are you part of Jesus' CHURCH to further the Good News?

Matthew 16:19 (NIV) I will give you **the keys of the kingdom of heaven**; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you **loose** on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Jesus has given His disciples the **keys** - symbolic for authority to lock or unlock a door that separates.

Of the 2 times that Jesus gives apostles authority to **bind & loose** (Matt. 16:19; 18:18), neither is referring to the binding of Satan nor other demons. We would certainly never "loose" Satan, would we? NOPE.

✗ "Binding and loosing" has nothing whatsoever to do with demons.

✓ **Binding & loosing** is referring to the authority, responsibility, & privilege to warn of God's wrath & offer God's peace.

- The apostles have authority & responsibility to **bind**: to tell those who refuse to repent that forgiveness is withheld and they are still under judgement.
- The apostles have authority & responsibility to **loose**: to tell those who turn from sin & eternal judgement that they are forgiven!
- What is bound and loosed is recognized in **heaven** - eternal judgment (**bind**) and eternal life (**loose**).

Matthew 16:20-22 (NIV) Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and **on the third day be raised to life.** Peter took him aside and began to rebuke Him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

WHY not tell anyone? The people wanted and expected a military Messiah - a conquering king, not a Suffering Servant. And now we see that the disciples weren't expecting this either! This was such a shock and so outside of what they believed about the Messiah, that Peter feels the need to **rebuke** Jesus, to let Him know He was wrong.

Peter had heard the rabbinical interpretations which said the Messiah would never die (Jn 12:34) - a human tradition that was different from the Scriptural truth.

Matthew 16:23 (NIV) Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, **Satan!** You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

This is similar to Satan's tempting Jesus to wear the *crow*n without going to the *cross* (cf. Mt 4:8-9). Of course, this would have dismissed **the concerns of God** - the plan for the Messiah to take on the sin of mankind. Jesus would have none of it, not even from His best friends.

And then Jesus warns His disciples of what is expected of them.

Matthew 16:24-26 (NIV) Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be **my disciple** must deny themselves and take up their cross and **follow Me**. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or **what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?**

In the Scriptures, there is NO DIFFERENCE between Christians & **disciples**.

- ✓ **Disciples deny themselves**, sacrificing their own desires for the desires of others; denying their own desires when they are different than what Jesus wants.
- ✓ **Disciples take up their cross**. **Taking up the cross** is NOT a phrase referring to piddly problems. Most Jews had likely seen other Jews hung on crosses near Jerusalem as a vivid visual warning not to disobey the Roman occupying force

Galatians 5:24 (NIV) **Those who belong to Christ Jesus** have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

This is an ongoing process of taking up the cross and dying to selfish desires. Disciples must also be willing to follow Jesus to death, if necessary. All of the apostles of Jesus faced persecution and many of them were killed for their faith in Jesus.

- ✓ **Disciples follow Me**, dying to their selfish desires and yielding to Jesus to **find real life**.

✗ You CANNOT be a Christian without being a disciple - a FOLLOWER of Jesus; as we've many times before...**followers of Jesus FOLLOW JESUS**.

What can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

🔥 **Ray Comfort**. Check out his channel (youtube.com/@LivingWaters).



Take the "**Million Dollar Eye Test**" where he asks this question: **Would you trade your right eye for a million dollars?**

Your eyes rot away with your buried body, your soul will live forever, with Jesus or away from Him. According to Jesus, It's more profitable for a man to pluck out his right eye (if it caused him to sin) than for his whole body to be cast into hell (Matt 5:29).

- 🕒 Consider the value of your eyes as insignificant in comparison to the value of your soul.

WHO IS JESUS?

Do you recognize Jesus as the **Messiah, God the Son**? Is Jesus your Lord or is He just someone you look up to? There is A DAY COMING when nothing will matter more than YOUR ANSWER to THAT QUESTION.

Matthew 16:27-28 (NIV) For **the Son of Man is going to come** in his Father's glory with His angels, and then He will reward each person according to what they have done. Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

When Jesus returns He will judge everyone **according to what they have done**. Your good won't outweigh your bad. Jesus and His disciples are crystal clear that it is only by the sacrificial death of Jesus that you and I can be made clean again. Otherwise, we stand guilty before our Holy God.

❓ Who is YOUR HOPE IN - Jesus...or Yourself? His goodness or yours?

❓ Are you forgiven? Are you FREE? Is Jesus the Lord over your thoughts, attitudes, actions, words, relationships, and stuff?

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

* Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!

* Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Steve & Debbie Bass** (850-673-7952), **Tim & Joni Hughey** (850-464-1156), **Mark & Dot Mancil** (850-253-5405), **Boss & Amelia Mulkey** (850-464-6717), or **Tom & Martha Waddail** (850-973-0011).

Jesus says something strange, something that should encourage His disciples, **“some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”** *What’s THAT all about.* Be here NEXT WEEK & find out!

✓ Until then, wonder over **WHO JESUS IS** and **WHAT JESUS HAS DONE**. Jesus, **the Messiah** and **God the Son**, came to do more than heal and teach - He came to PAY for our sin!

📺 **Mosab Hassan Yousef**, son of a Hamas leader, turned to Jesus several years ago. Listen to HIS STORY - what it cost him, and how answering “WHO IS JESUS?” transformed his life.



discussionquestions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. *Who IS Jesus* and why does that really matter?
2. **Read Matthew 16:13-14.** What do the different responses of the people say about how significant Jesus is?
3. **Read Matthew 16:15-16 & 26:63.** What do these passages say about how unique Jesus is? Take time to discuss how Peter’s identification of Jesus helps us answer the question “Who IS Jesus?”.
4. **Read Matthew 16:17-18.** What would you say to a Catholic person who says that the Church is built on Simon Peter? Is this what Jesus meant? How does **1 Cor 3:11** & **1 Peter 2:4-6** help give clarity to this confusion?
5. Many people immediately think of “hell” when they read “the gates of Hades will not overcome it”. Does Satan and demons rule hell? Is this their kingdom? How does understanding that **Hades** likely is referring to *DEATH* make sense in light of the context of this passage?
6. **Read Matthew 16:21-23.** Why did the disciples of Jesus struggle with the mention of His death? If the disciples of Jesus had some wrong interpretations of Scripture based on the teachings of others, why should WE be open to reconsider some of what we have been taught in light of the context of the Scriptures? Why was Jesus so quick to compare Peter’s response to Satan?
7. **Read Matthew 16:24-26.** Although no Christian is perfect and we all have moments of weakness and struggle, how does this passage challenge you to reconsider whether those who claim to be Christians really ARE, based on their unwillingness to follow Jesus and sacrifice to obey Him?
8. How might using the “Million Dollar Eye Test” (from Ray Comfort) when you share with others help you to explain the importance of protecting and pursuing what impacts your eternal soul?
9. **Read Matthew 16:27-28.** Does the return of Jesus concern you, excite you, or both? Share why.
10. How did **Mosab Yousef’s testimony** of trusting Jesus encourage you to continue to take the good news of Jesus to ALL people? What stood out to you from his story?
11. What challenged or encouraged you *most* from today’s teaching? What does God want YOU to do with what we studied today?
12. Share prayer needs and pray for one another.