

**The Great Inquisitor**  
**Message 2**  
**2-18-18**

The gospels record over 150 questions asked by Jesus. Our all-powerful and all-knowing Savior asking His creation questions. The answers reveal more about us. God certainly knew who had tempted Adam when He asked as well as the answer "Who told you that you were naked?"

But we are concerned in this study with the questions of Jesus in the gospels.

**Matthew 16:13-14 CSB**

***<sup>13</sup> When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup> They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."***

Jesus and His disciples had been pressed upon for several intense days. He retreats with them to a park like setting called Caesarea Philippi.

Here various supernatural beliefs were readily accepted. It was not the conservative Jewish stronghold of Jerusalem.

No doubt, over the day's activities people had pulled the disciples of Jesus aside to ask about their rabbi.

What are they saying about me?

You are a vessel carrying the spirit of John the Baptist.

You are Elijah – the one who precedes the Messiah

You are Jeremiah – because of Christ's compassion

You are a prophet – new or undetermined.

All of these people are great men to be mistaken for.

They are all inaccurate and inadequate.

They were uninformed and thus they were under informed.

Unfortunately, this is the religious climate today. People take their uninformed views of Jesus and turn them into doctrine.

So society takes a little bit of Jesus, a little bit of Gandhi, a little bit of Buddha, a little bit of Islam and Judaism and seasons it all with opinions from Hollywood and calls it faith.

It is exclusive of none but the evangelical Christian and inclusive of all including atheists.

So when you ask "Who do men say Jesus is?" You get a plurality of answers and all are considered correct.

The only one that is rejected is "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6

It is in this pluralistic, inclusive society that Christ asks His second question.

**Matthew 16:15-16 CSB**

***<sup>15</sup> "But you," he asked them, "who do you say that I am?"<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."***

The placement of the word you in the structure of the sentence makes it emphatic. "What about you, you and you alone, no one else but you, who do you say that I am?"

There are two kinds of people in the world. There are those whose steps are directed by public consensus. These are the ones who test the wind before ever setting sail. They do not want to rock the boat and whose ultimate goal is to be well liked by everyone. Thus they become one with the crowd. They get swept up in the current of the moment and lose the ability to determine their own way. Their lives come and go without notice.

The second kind of persons in the world are those whose steps are determined by their convictions. The wind of public opinion does not determine the direction of their lives. Their ultimate goal is not to be well liked for their actions but to be well respected for their convictions.

So Jesus is asking, "What kind of person are you?"

The crowds had not been with Jesus all along the way. He didn't rebuke them for the insufficient answers, but the disciples were without excuse.

Jesus didn't ask, "What do you think about Me?" That would be the coward's way out. Many people have the correct opinion about Jesus, but are unwilling to declare their belief publically. That sort of halfhearted devotion prompted Jesus to say:

**Matthew 10:32-33 CSB**

*<sup>2</sup> "Therefore, everyone who will acknowledge me before others, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup> But whoever denies me before others, I will also deny him before my Father in heaven."*

Peter answered Jesus using the same emphatic sentence structure His master used.

"You, only you, no one but you are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God."

No doubt when Peter was asked to denounce his faith in Jesus before this moment was this dominant thought. As they strapped him to his cross in Rome, Peter must have

remembered this watershed event. While he may have fallen to temptation on the night of Christ's trial and denied Jesus three times, this would not be his legacy.

I believe by the evidence of scripture describe the first Christian martyrs death, as well as my own personal experience beside dying saints, that God gives dying grace to all who will confess His name.

Ravi Zacharias often shares the story of a Vietnamese interpreter who accompanied him in 1971 while ministering in Vietnam. Hien Pham was a strong Christian and was a great help to the preacher.

After Vietnam fell Pham was imprisoned. He received a daily indoctrination of communist atheism. After a while he began to think that Christianity must just be an American lie. He determined the next day he would no longer pray or confess the name of Jesus. He was assigned the chore of cleaning the filthy latrines of the prison camp. As he cleaned out a tin of toilet paper his eye caught sight of paper with English printed on it. He took it back to his cot that night after cleaning it he realized it was from a Bible. One of the verses he read was "for I am convinced that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." God would not abandon him. Not even on a day he refused to pray.

Christ is asking you this morning. Who do you say that I am?