

Conversations with Jesus : Peter's Confession a message for the
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Introduction

Matt 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21 In our study we are moving from the year of popularity into the year of opposition. It is becoming clear that the leadership of Israel has rejected Jesus's claim of divinity. Jesus brings the focus to that exact claim in this conversation. Acceptance or denial of this claim is a test that Jesus now puts forward for His disciples. He begins the conversation with a question which points out that there is a right and a wrong answer, there are sides to this conflict. He has done that consistently in most of his conversations. Getting well-meaning but wrong answers from the disciples causes Jesus to drive the nail directly to the point: "Whom say ye that I am?". The answer causes Jesus to give a complex response that has caused confusion for many.

Whom say the people that I am?

This is the question that divides. Either Jesus was exactly who He said He was or He was the greatest con-man in history, responsible for millions of deaths with a false claim. Consider the greetings received from individuals we have studied. Nicodemus said Jesus was a teacher from God. The woman at the well said He was a Jew that was a prophet. The rich young ruler called Him "Good Master". While each of these acknowledged Jesus in a positive way, all fell short of Who Jesus actually claimed to be.

As Jesus will point out later in this conversation, it is impossible to get to where Jesus needed them to get, without the Father revealing something to them. The answers that the disciples give are telling. They believe that some miraculous thing has occurred, yet they do not get to the truth, that He is the Christ, the Messiah.

Whom say ye that I am?

Jesus could have stopped with the information that the disciples gave, but He pressed them to get to the heart of the matter. Everyone needs to get to this point. We are not able to hide in the ecosystem of someone else's faith. Every believer must have his own faith. Every believer must come to grips with this question. We cannot hide from it or deflect it to answer a question that we are more comfortable with. Either Jesus was exactly who He said He was or He was a malicious liar. Martyrs have gone to their death with His name on their lips, to be received into glory by Him upon their death. If He was lying, what a disappointment for these individuals.

Peter's Confession

There is no clearer statement of Jesus's divinity in the scriptures. Consider this characterization of his claim from the JFB commentary: *But feeling the light of his Master's glory shining in his soul, he breaks forth - not in a tame, prosaic acknowledgment, "I believe that Thou art," etc. — but in the language of adoration - such as one uses in worship, "THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD!" He first owns Him the promised Messiah (see on Mat 1:16); then he rises higher, echoing the voice from heaven - "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; and in the important addition - "Son of the LIVING GOD" - he*

recognizes the essential and eternal life of God as in this His Son There is no deflection in Peter's answer. Peter leaves nothing to doubt as he makes clear who he believes Jesus to be.

...but my Father... in heaven

While the Holy Spirit is the agent of illumination, the Father is the source of all truth. Jesus credited the Father for Peter's revelation (in Matthew 16:17) to emphasize the divine, unshakeable nature of the truth. Instead of highlighting a specific person's clever reasoning, Jesus pointed to the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son, affirming that true spiritual sight originates directly from God. In Christian theology, this does not contradict the role of the Holy Spirit, but rather reflects the unity of the Trinity. The Father is the ultimate source of all divine revelation. Jesus later said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). The Father initiated this revelation to Peter.

The Holy Spirit is the active agent of that revelation. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:10 that the Spirit searches the deep things of God and reveals them. Theologically, the Holy Spirit was the power illuminating Peter's heart, proceeding from the Father. Jesus wanted to underscore that Peter's confession ("You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God") was not a product of human intellect, earthly education, or cultural assumptions (described as "flesh and blood"). While the Holy Spirit is explicitly called the "Counselor" and "Spirit of truth" to guide believers into all truth (John 16:13), in this specific moment, Jesus directed the glory to the Father as the originator of the divine insight Peter received.

Jesus continuous to reveal truth

Jesus did not stop with His commentary on Peter's confession, but assured the disciples that they had a place in His future kingdom. People have messed up the interpretation, namely the Roman Catholics who use this passage as part of the basis for Peter's papacy. Jesus tells His followers here that Peter and the disciples will become the foundation of His church. He goes on to explain that the forces of evil will not have victory over this church, but His own resurrection will give victory. 1 Cor 15 and 1 Peter 2:5-9 are excellent interpreters of this statement by Christ which Paul and Peter go on to explain in detail.

Much attention is given to the privileges that Jesus hints at in the next verses without consideration of when these privileges will be given. Matthew is clear to mention the kingdom of the heavens as the setting. Matthew 18 also gives the same setting when the question is asked about the greatest in the "kingdom of heaven" Matt 18:1, when Jesus tells the disciples that this power will be extended to all the disciples in verse 18. Most of the attention given to these passages seek to bring this power to all believers in this time period when I believe that it will be a kingdom practice of authority.

Conclusion

The passing of this test by the disciples is a rare example of them being on the same page as Jesus. But it led to Jesus continuing to prepare them for future service. It was a shining example of what was to come. God could use these men and women to bring the message of His resurrection to generations to come.