

Attention: Public opinion says Jesus is a hoax and church is filled with worthless hypocrites. However, studies show that people who are raised in church have a better chance. The George Barna Research Group says, what a child learns about Christ from birth to age thirteen, they will die believing. Their research shows that **more than 60% of Christians accept Jesus Christ** as their Savior **before the age of 14**. Research indicates that the likelihood of **accepting Jesus as Savior** is **highest between the ages of 5 and 12** (32%), compared to 4% for ages 13-18 and 6% for those 19 and older.

Need: **Once you have an encounter with Jesus, your life will never be the same. There is no limitation as to what God will do through you when you know who He is and live for Him.** Jesus will loose what you loose and bind what you bind. In other words, what you say yes to, heaven says yes to; what you say no to, heaven says no to. There is no door that God will not open for you if you believe. You must behave the way you believe. As God gives you the keys, you have power to unlock any door.

Background: Jesus has just confronted by the Pharisees and Sadducees, a strict religious group. They wanted Christ to prove His deity and Lordship. They were distractors. Jesus refused them and told them the only sign He would give was Jonah—the resurrection. Christ warned His disciples to learn to rebuke such people. He then asked His disciples, what were people saying about Him. The word on the street was some believed He was John the Baptist resurrected. Others thought He might be one of the prophets who have returned to the earth. Then, He provoked their knowledge by asking, who do you believe I am? When they acknowledged He was the Christ, He promised them access to the kingdom.

***Caesarea Philippi** was a major center of pagan worship in the 1st century, renowned for its shrines to the **Greek god Pan**, and later, temples dedicated to **Roman emperor worship**. Located at a massive rock cliff with a spring and cave (considered the "gates of Hell"), it was a key religious site for Greek and Roman, and formerly Canaanite (Baal), practices.

*It **Located at the base of Mount Hermon**, the city was a center for idol worship, including the worship of a temple dedicated to Caesar Augustus. By bringing His disciples here, **Jesus was directly confronting pagan and Roman power structures.**

*In this hostile environment, **Peter confessed**, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (**Matthew 16:16**), **setting him apart from the worship of "dead" idols.**

*The area featured a deep, water-filled cave often called **the "Gates of Hades,"** believed to be **the entrance to the underworld.** Jesus's statement that "the gates of Hades will not prevail against" his church [**Matt 16:18**] served as a direct challenge to the power of evil and death from its supposed headquarters.

*Standing before **a massive cliff** face, Jesus stated he would build his church **upon "this rock"** [**Matt 16:18**], contrasting his eternal, living foundation with the man-made pagan temples carved into the rock.

1. The Crowds Versus Conviction (v. 13-14).

- a. Jesus asked what people were saying about the Son of Man.
 - i. The Son of Man is a Messianic title of Jesus' humanity found in **Daniel 7:13-14**.
 - ii. The term is used 82 times in the New Testament.
 1. It bridges the gap between God and humanity—He is fully God and man.
- b. Some say you are: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets.
 - i. Some people thought Jesus was **John the Baptist** resurrected because of the striking similarities in their ministries, the recent execution of John by Herod Antipas. Both men preached the same message—"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"—They came with similar power and authority.
 - ii. Jesus' powerful miracles and preaching reminded people of **the prophet Elijah**, leading to comparisons because both were considered powerful, wonder-working prophetic figures. Elijah and Jesus were known for raising the dead.
 - iii. **The prophet Jeremiah** reminds us that Jesus was like Jeremiah, a wounded, despised, rejected "prophet of doom." Jesus was often confronted, despised, and ridiculed. *Isaiah says, "He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted." (Isaiah 53:3-4, NKJV).* Jeremiah was in derision daily, *"O LORD, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed. I am in derision daily; Everyone mocks me. For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, "Violence and plunder!" Because the word of the LORD was made to me A reproach and a derision daily." (Jeremiah 20:7-8, NKJV).* Jeremiah was imprisoned for the truth, and Jesus was sentenced to death on a cross. Like Jesus, Jeremiah spoke an unpopular message to the Judean leadership.
- c. Because borrowed belief doesn't save a soul: Jesus wants to know about you.
 - i. A sign of an elementary spirit is careless complaints and idle talk.
 - ii. *"For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Cor. 3:3, NKJV).*
- d. When carnal company are your companions, you will speak just like them.
 - i. *"Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits." (1 Cor. 15:33, NKJV).*
- e. Consider how Jesus has made you different than your previous lifestyle.

2. Knowing Jesus is Personal and Public (v. 15-17).

- a. Through divine revelation, Peter was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah.
 - i. "Jesus didn't ask, 'What are you struggling with?' Nor, 'What are you going through?' He asked one question that cuts deep: *Who do you say that I am?*
- b. For 40 years, Moses withdrew from God, but the Lord would make him go public.
- c. Jesus never **called people to be neutral or occasional**.

i. *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.”* (Psalm 139:23–24, NKJV).

d. Some know Jesus intellectually, but they do not know Him personally.

3. Positioned in Places of Honor (v. 18-20).

a. Jesus promised that nothing would be able stand against His church.

b. King Darius acknowledged God.

i. ... For He *is* the living God, And steadfast forever; His kingdom *is the one* which shall not be destroyed, And His dominion *shall endure* to the end. ²⁷ He delivers and rescues, And He works signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. (Daniel 6:26–27, NKJV).

ii. Keys refer to access—you have more power than we imagine.

c. In spiritual warfare, believers have been given authority to bind and loose.

d. Despite popular opinion, hell can't stop you.