

The Great Sayings in the Gospels
Message 80
Who Is Jesus?
And, What Am I To Think of That?
Part One
Matt. 16:13-28

Reading:

Matt 16:13-20

- 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.
- 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?
- 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.
- 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
- 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
- 20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

Introduction:

In the text before us, Jesus has again left the region of the Sea of Galilee. He and the disciples have traveled directly north to at least the outskirts of the city of Caesarea Philippi (there is no record of Him ever entering the city but this event as well as the Transfiguration occurred in this vicinity). Historically, this city was known for the worship of false gods: Baal in the OT (the city at one time had been named Baal Hermon, for the mountain, Baal Gad, it had been in the territory of Gad, and Panias, for the Greek god Pan who had been worshiped there).

It is indeed interesting that Jesus chose this place for Peter's great affirmation as well as His revelation of Himself in glory to the 3 disciples closest to Him (Peter, James, and John).

This region was governed by Herod Philip, who never showed any animosity toward Jesus at all. Some scholars think that these excursions in Philip's territory were for the purpose of rest and quiet interaction with His disciples.

I. **Who is Jesus?**

Jesus asked two very specific questions of His disciples. “Whom do men say that I am?” and “whom do you say that I am?”

Now, again, Jesus knew all things and the hearts of all men. He knew exactly what the general population was saying about Him and what these disciples believed concerning Him. The questions were for the purpose of drawing out a discussion, engaging them in serious thought, and placing some information in their minds (as well as ours) that would be useful to them later.

It was universally agreed in the areas populated by the Jews that Jesus was an important individual. The common people generally held Him in high regard and many of the Pharisees and Sadducees were impressed with Him.

The disciples were not specific in their answers as to “who thought what” but gave a generalized answer that somewhat covered the opinions of the people who were known to them.

“Some way that you are John the Baptist.” It is known that Herod Antipas, who had killed John the Baptist, thought that Jesus was John raised from the dead. This is not really surprising since both Jesus and John preached the same message. One great difference between them was that John did no miracles. No doubt those who thought that Jesus was John attributed that difference to their notion that he was one who had come back from the dead. The Jewish leadership had been intimidated by John just as they were now with Jesus.

“Some say that you are Elijah.” There was a very specific prophecy in the OT that Elijah would come again before the Great Day that the Jews were anticipating. This issue was mentioned several times in the gospels.

John’s father, Zecharias, had been told before John’s birth that he would operate in the “spirit and power” of Elijah.

Luke 1:16-17

16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. KJV

John himself had confronted the question as to whether he was Elijah.

John 1:19-21

19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. KJV

Jesus, however, affirmed that he was indeed the fulfillment of the prophecy of the OT concerning Elijah. We have already discussed this in this series of messages.

Matt 11:11-15

11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.
12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.
13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.
14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.
15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. KJV

And, in a passage that follows our text today, the issue came up again.

Matt 17:10-13

10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?
11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.
12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.
13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist. KJV

This whole discussion and question was based in a prophecy of the OT concerning the fact that Elijah would return before the Messiah would come.

Mal 4:5-6

5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:
6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. KJV

Jesus was obviously not Elijah.

“Others said ‘Jeremiah’ and others thought ‘one of the prophets’ without knowing which one.”

The point was made, Jesus was known as a Biblical, not political figure (although many of the Jews had a hard time distinguishing between the two).

You will notice that the disciples did not report a wide-spread view that Jesus was the Messiah.

The follow-on question that Jesus had drilled to the core of the beliefs of the disciples.

“But whom say ye that I am?”

In the end, it really doesn't matter to an individual what the rest of the world thinks of Jesus. There are two things that do matter and Jesus presented them both in this interaction.

1. Who do you think Jesus is, and
2. How did you come by that information

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Both of these issues are critical. No one can be saved except those who confess Jesus as Deity. But even among those there is a meaningful and a meaningless confession of faith. It is only those to whom the Father has **actually revealed** this fact who are **“Blessed,”** saved for sure and destined for heaven.

There are many people who grew up in church, attended Sunday School, maybe even went to a religious grade school and high school. They learned the right answer to the question, “who is Jesus?” but God never did a work of grace in their souls. Today, they are as lost as any Muslim in Indonesia or pagan of India or atheist in Europe. They have the information but there is no real and genuine faith, nothing that drives them to serve Him, nothing that pushes them toward repentance from sin and godliness of life.

Sometimes the difference is pretty subtle and only visible under close observation. Nicodemus was convinced that Jesus was “a teacher sent by God.” The Rich Young Ruler lacked only one thing to possessing eternal life. The centurion at the cross confessed that “this was the Son of God.” But as we encounter these people in the moment in scripture, they have no hope of eternal life. You will recall that it was the centurion who had to give the order that the legs of the three men on those crosses be broken. I am sure that many Baptist preachers in our day would have found a way to baptize each of them **before** the work of God in their souls was finished, if it ever was.

And, why is this such an issue? We must look further.

I. Jesus explained why He forbid the disciples to proclaim Him as the Christ.

21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

God had an agenda, a plan, and a purpose. It did not include having a large number of Jews convinced by other Jews (and not the Spirit of God) that Jesus was the Christ.

The agenda was that Jesus go to Jerusalem, to the cross, die, rise again the third day, ascend back to heaven, and *then* pour out His Spirit upon the church and those who would believe to embrace Him as the Christ.

Now, I do not believe that the eternal purposes of God could have been overthrown if the disciples had disobeyed the command of Jesus not to make Him known. But they would have found themselves working contrary to the eternal will of God. There would have been no Holy Spirit enablement for that work, no miracles to establish their testimony, and no attending presence of Jesus Himself, Who would not have endorsed their efforts.

In fact, Jesus seemed to say that any work which resisted the Plan of God would have been, in all reality, the work of the Devil himself.

22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Just think about this for a moment. Jesus had forbid them to declare Him as the Christ, had taught that instead of being carried to a throne by the Jewish throngs, He would suffer and die at Jerusalem. Peter objected.

Now consider this in its totality. Peter had boldly affirmed Jesus as the Christ. Jesus had endorsed his affirmation and proclaimed that it was from Divine revelation. Then, Peter had been ordered not to publicly declare this since Jesus' purpose was to die. Peter's objection and contrary thinking to this scenario (The Eternal Plan of God) might be thought by some to be natural and spiritual. Instead, Jesus revealed it to be 'natural' and demonic.

Peter's mindset, no doubt, was that Jesus *should* be proclaimed as Christ, that the Jews *should* embrace Him as such and *should* exalt Him to the throne of Israel. That is, that natural and human means should be employed, without regard to the revealed and eternal wills of God, to advance the 'Cause of Christ' and convince men to believe on him through human devices.

To my mind, Peter's position is exactly that of many people in our day. Most preachers deny that God has a fixed and eternal Purpose that cannot be changed or overthrown. Therefore any person could and should be convinced by argument, manipulation, pressure, motivation, or whatever human device is available to 'trust Christ.' They fail to understand that God has a purpose in every life of every person who is going to be saved, a timing and a sequence of events that *must* occur *before* spiritual life, faith, repentance and salvation will be granted.

Like Peter, many think that God's plan is wrong, too slow, too ineffective, and, so, they object as Peter did. They set about to make converts of everyone they see and have so cheapened and degraded the gospel message that anyone can be saved just by repeating a few words. And even though we can appreciate their emotions as we can Peter's, we must carefully consider the words of Jesus. "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

So what harm is there? What harm would there have been in Peter and the others proclaiming Jesus as Christ and convincing as many people as possible to believe that He was? They would certainly have not overthrown the purpose of God but many people would have ended up confused at Jesus' crucifixion.

What harm is there in convincing as many people as possible to pray the "sinner's prayer" and ask Jesus into their heart? Same issue. Many unconverted become convinced by the work of men and not by the Holy Spirit. They enter a state of confusion from which many never recover. Some of those whom God has elected to save are brought supposedly to "salvation" before God does a work of grace in their souls. Same problem. Confusion is introduced that should not be there.

I. So, what is the conclusion?

First of all, you really must believe that Jesus is the Christ.

But you must make sure that it is God and not man Who has revealed this to you.

How does a person do that? Well, if you were introduced to Christianity by some person explaining a series of facts to you and proposing that if you would pray a certain prayer you would be saved, and that is the basis of your faith today, I would say that you have some work to do.

You must confirm to your own mind and soul that it is God indeed Who has made these truths real to you, if He has. And, if He has not, you must give all diligence and effort to come to the place where God does indeed reveal Christ to you beyond all question in your mind.

How does one do that? You begin by listening to His central message, "repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." You must make sure that you have actually repented of all your sins.

How does one do that? I pondered this question many years ago when I was coming out of a great state of confusion concerning my standing before God. I wanted to make sure that I had indeed obeyed the command of the One in Whom I said that I trusted. I took seriously what He said, "if you love Me, keep My commandments."

I set aside some time every day to speak with Him about my sins. I asked Him every day to show me what they were. I asked Him to show me the first sin that I ever committed and then every one recorded in my memory since that one. I took my life one year at a time beginning with the year of my first remembered sin and asked the Lord to help me recall them all. As memories began to appear in my mind, I would carry each sin to the Lord, confessing it as sin, recalling the specific commands of God that it violated, and asking Him particularly and individually concerning that sin to forgive me and confirm to my soul that I was forgiven. When I finished (it took months) I not only knew for certainty that I was forgiven, but I also knew for certain that my faith in Jesus Christ, His Deity, and His Work of Redemption was

something that had been given to me by God and not something that I held because some man told it to me.

I was brought very low in shame, humiliation and embarrassment, being forced to own as truly mine sins that I did not even want to think about again, much less carry before the Holy and Eternal God, admitting them, confessing them, owning them and pleading for forgiveness.

So, I ask you, the faith you have that Jesus is the Christ, is it from God or did some man convince you to believe?

Have you shown that faith to be real by obeying the very core of the message of the Son of God? Have you repented of all your sins? Or, did you make some lame acknowledgment like, “Jesus please forgive me of all my sins?”

Luke 13:1-5

- 1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.
- 2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?
- 3 I tell you, Nay: but, **except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**
- 4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?
- 5 I tell you, Nay: but, **except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.** KJV

Have you repented of all your sins?

Unless you do you will most assuredly perish.