

The Most Important Question

People ask lots of questions. Anyone remember years ago before Google ruled the internet there was a popular search engine called Ask Jeeves? The most frequent searches are questions.

People want to know: How this? Why that? When this? Where that? We are curious people.

Do you know there is one question that is more important than all others? Here it is: Who is Jesus?

Mark 8:27-28 (NKJV)

27 Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, "Who do men say that I am?"

28 So they answered, "John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets."

Isn't this a question we should be asking ourselves today? Who do people say that Jesus is? What do people think about Him, believe about Him?

I mean, what hope do we have if not hope in Jesus? NONE.....at least none that matters....

Jesus gave His followers a job to do: "GO make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you."

We respond with things like "I don't know what to say". Don't you realize that Jesus is the One true hope? It all starts with our view of Him, then our knowledge of Him, then our connection to Him.

So who do people say Jesus is? It's a door opening question. One of the core teachings for Christian Apologetics (defending and attempting to prove the faith) is to ask questions. Find out what the person believes.

Jesus had been ministering in miraculous ways. Healing a deaf and mute man. Feeding thousands with a few loaves and fish. Restoring sight to the blind. Miracles upon miracles....

This place where He had been ministering was Caesarea Philippi. What's interesting about this location is that "Caesarea" was named after Caesar and "Philippi" was named for Philip, the son of Herod. This region was the center of Baal worship in the Old Testament and then became the religious center for the worship of the Greek god Pan. The Roman emperor was also

worshipped in a temple there. Citizens were required to enter this temple once a year, place some incense on a burning altar and proclaim, "Caesar is Lord!" In addition, there were shrines to various gods carved into the cliffs.

This is where Jesus decides to go and work miracles. A place where many gods are worshipped. I think He did this to show the disciples that He is above all gods. Jesus is mightier than any other god.

Psalm 95:3 (NKJV)

For the Lord is the great God,
And the great King above all gods.

Jesus is Mighty God! This is a good place to plug some recent sermons if you go to our facebook page or our website freedomreignsinchrist.org you can listen to "Mighty God" from our Christmas series or NYE's message "Time to Choose" which I believe is a must hear for every believer because we need to have an expectancy for Mighty God to move in our lives in 2018.

So Jesus does these supernatural things that no man can do, in a city of many gods, THEN He takes His followers down the road and says "who do they say I am?". Now that they have seen the power of the Holy Spirit working mightily in the lives of man..... Heaven colliding with earth..... The Supernatural intervening in the natural..... The One true God working in mere men....."what are they saying about Jesus?"

"Well....some say you are John the Baptist" You'll find out shortly that 'Peter the Lutheran" didn't agree...lol. John had been beheaded and they thought Jesus was John resurrected from the dead. How could they even believe such a thing? I guess since they were cousins maybe they looked alike?

"Others say you are Elijah!" Well....I guess that's more likely? At least Elijah hadn't died. If you go back and read 2 Kings chapter 2, God took Elijah up by a whirlwind into heaven. Then we have this promise from Malachi...

Malachi 4:5 (NKJV)

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

Maybe this miracle worker is Elijah, he did mighty things in the OT....the funny thing is that Jesus told us that John was the Elijah who was to come (Matthew 11: 14)...not that John IS Elijah, but Luke 1:17 says he comes in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Still others say Jesus is one of the prophets. He did seem to have some tremendous wisdom. He did seem to know many things that no one could explain. Remember all the times where He spoke and people were amazed and wondered where He learned these things?

There were lots of thoughts of who Jesus is.....yet most people's answers were wrong.....

People today still have lots of thoughts on who Jesus is...

- **Muslims** believe Jesus was a prophet but wasn't the son of God or crucified on a cross.
- **Hindus** believe Jesus is just one of millions of gods.
- **Buddhists**, according to the Dalai Lama, believe Jesus is the model of a "spiritually mature, good, and warm hearted person."
- **Jews** believe Jesus was a prophet and teacher, but not God.
- **Mormons** believe Jesus is A god, but that any human can also become a god.
- **Jehovah's Witnesses** believe that Jesus was once the Archangel Michael and not God in the flesh.
- **Atheists** deny Jesus ever existed at all.
- **Agnostics** don't know what to believe about Jesus.
- **Many in society** believe Jesus is just a great teacher with some good ideas about loving and helping others.

Some truths are present in these views but none of these views are the Truth. If they don't lead to Jesus is God, died for man's sin, resurrected, and ascended, then they are not the way to eternal life. Eternal life is KNOWING Jesus!

We need to know what people think if we ever want to have a chance to present the gospel to them as the Truth and the only way. Who do others say Jesus is?

Mark 8:29-30 (NKJV)

29 He said to them, "**But** who do you say that I am?"

Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ."

30 Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him.

Jesus starts with a BUT. It's like He is saying good job recognizing what others think and say. You've done well.....now what do you think?

In the original language, the Greek, the word for you is a little more emphatic. It's more like this: "Who do you yourselves say that I am?"

It's a change in the direction of your thinking....it's what we aim for every week at the altar call....get your mind off of others, look at yourself....what do you yourself need today?

So you know what others think about Jesus, pivot....what do you yourself think? Who do you say Jesus is?

This is a real question that we should really be asking ourselves. And I warn you, don't take it lightly. Don't dismiss this question because you "already know"

Jesus asks these men that have walked with Him daily. They've seen the miracles. They've heard the amazing teachings. Their lives have been changed. Yet Jesus still finds it necessary to ask them "But who do you say that I am?"

Peter answers "You are the Christ". By this answer, Peter proclaims that Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed One promised in the Old Testament. Jesus is God. Jesus is Savior.

It seems that Peter gets it. In Matthew's account of this Jesus responds "*flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*"

Ultimately it's God Himself that reveals to you yourself who Jesus is. It's part of the reason we must ask questions and know what others think and we just present the truth to them....we can't MAKE them believe....we can't even MAKE ourselves believe! The Holy Spirit reveals truth....we just get to choose to accept it or not.

1 Corinthians 2:10 (NKJV)

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

You can't know the deep things of God without the Holy Spirit revealing them to you. The fact that you ever chose to follow Jesus (if you have) is because the Holy Spirit led you to Him. And if you want to know Jesus more....if you want to follow Him daily....you must be dependant on the Holy Spirit to lead you!

John 16:13 (NKJV)

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

Church, this is how the world gets changed. Believers lead by the Spirit, following Jesus, and having discussions with people about who Jesus is!

Who do others say Jesus is?
Who do YOU say Jesus is?

Third, Who does Jesus say Jesus is?

Mark 8:31-33 (NKJV)

31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. 33 But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Jesus, for the first time, reveals what He must endure as Messiah. "Peter, you are right, I'm the Messiah.....remember what it says in Isaiah 53....that's Me. I must suffer and die and be raised to life"

He MUST.....it's necessary....it wasn't just some kind of prediction or death wish....it was part of God's plan. It was the ONLY way that the wrath of a holy God could be satisfied. Jesus would take our place as our substitute for price of our sin.

Hebrews 9:22 (NKJV)

And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

Who does Jesus say Jesus is? Messiah, Savior, Redeemer, The Way, The Truth, and The Life.

He told them openly, plainly. No parables. No metaphors. Just the hard, honest facts.

John 16:25 (NKJV)

"These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father.

Jesus plainly tells them the Father's plan of redemption. He holds nothing back. "I'm going to suffer, be rejected, be killed, then after three days rise again."

As plainly as it was told, it's clear that the disciples, at least Peter, didn't fully understand. I think if I were one of them I might have had some questions to ask. I might have needed some reassurance that everything was going to be ok. (which they eventually got in John 16 "it's to your advantage that I go away").

But Peter, the one who rightly recognized Jesus as the Messiah, takes Jesus to the side and BEGINS to rebuke Him. We tend to think of rebuke in a harsh, mean way, like a scolding. But it also means to advise against something. I don't think Peter was "letting Jesus have it" but I

imagine something like “Do you really need to do this? What are the people going to think? There must be another way. You don’t have to do this.”

Peter didn’t like Jesus’ plan. I think we all can be like Peter.....have you ever rebuked God? Have you ever advised Him “Do you really need to do this? What are the people going to think? There must be another way.”

See Peter declared Jesus is Lord but then he tried to tell Him what kind of Lord He should be....

Ever done that? Me too.....

Peter got it right when he confessed Jesus as the Christ...and got it wrong when he tried to remove the cross and the resurrection.

Jesus responds in front of everyone ““Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

Peter let his guard down and allowed his mind to wander towards human reasoning. Peter is not thinking Kingdom, he is thinking only of his desires and preferences.

One minute Peter is a spiritual rock and the next he’s a stumbling block.

Peter was not demon possessed, but the thoughts of the enemy entered his mind and instead of acting on his faith he acted on the lie.

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days by satan, he offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth if Jesus would worship him. Satan tried to keep Jesus from the cross.

Luke 4:13 (NKJV)

Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

What an opportune time, take the one who declared Jesus as God, speak the lie to him, and see if you can stop the gospel....

That’s how the enemy works. We always think the opportune time is when we are alone, down and out, that’s when we are vulnerable. Sometimes we are, but other times it’s when we are doing great, walking in the truth, and we get a little puffed up.

Instead of continuing to rely on the Holy Spirit, we begin to rely on how smart we are.

Are you mindful of the things of God or the things of men? Jesus said to seek first the Kingdom of God!

Kingdom Mentality means we are under the reign of God-past, present, and future! He is in charge of all things, sovereign in Heaven and in our will. Jesus is our identity and our LORD personally and collectively.

Believers are called to be influencers and shapers pointing to Jesus and His redemptive work!

We must not try to change what God has set in motion – but to follow His lead.

It is then, that we can work backwards from Who Jesus says He is, to Who you say Jesus is, to Who others say Jesus is, where you can share that good news of truth: who Jesus really is!