

WHO IS CHRIST?

Jesus asks two questions of His disciples in Luke 9:18-22: "*who do the crowds say that I am?*" and "*who do you say that I am?*" Peter responded, "*You are the Christ of God.*" This God-given answer hearkens to "*the anointed of the Lord*" in Psalm 2, who reigns over the nations.

JESUS' ANSWER - Luke says then Jesus "*strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one,*" saying, "*the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.*"

Jesus calls Himself 'Son of Man' seventyone times in the four gospel accounts. It's from Daniel 7:13-14 which describes the One who came up on the clouds of heaven before the Ancient of Days to be given dominion and glory. It's a vision of the ascended Christ after His resurrection.

SON OF MAN - This title also refers to Jesus Christ as a divine-human being, God come in the flesh, as the one unique person with two natures. This is how He accomplishes all that the Bible promises about Him. Jesus specifically refers to His role as God's suffering servant (Isaiah 53).

Jesus Christ can be rejected and executed, but He will rise from the dead. These things are necessary for salvation. The Lord does not come as the expected political deliverer, but rather as spiritual deliverer, addressing the real need of humanity and delivering from spiritual captivity.

BUT WAIT - "If the Christ you're responding to is a Christ without suffering, without atonement or incarnation, a Christ who is not Messiah," warns RC Sproul, "then He is not the biblical Christ."

People don't want the Christ of the Bible because it is too awful, too convicting. If He must be crucified then it must be because I am so sinful. This is what people won't abide, notes Sproul. They want a great teacher, a great example, not a great savior from sin. They want a regal, glorious king, not a suffering savior. They want a lion, not a lamb. And so did Peter.

NO WAY?!? - As Matthew 16 records this episode, right after Peter remarks the great revelation that Jesus is "*the Christ, the Son of the Living God,*" Jesus predicts crucifixion and resurrection. But Peter takes Jesus aside and rebukes Him, saying "*this shall never happen to You.*"

Then Peter gets a sharp rebuke, as Jesus says, "*get behind Me, Satan, you are a hindrance to Me, for you are setting your mind on things of man, not God.*" As JC Ryle notes, man's' opinions are Satan's trap. Peter is like us, as opinions and emotions run right over facts.

You don't want to believe what you don't want to be true. That's why God gave us the written-down Word of God, the Bible. We must submit to what God says, not what we think.

CHRIST'S TIME - Jesus was in this remote region of northern Galilee for good reason. His time had not yet come. The people were trying to make Him king by force, but He had much yet to do. Even now, would you welcome a political savior to "*save us now*" just as the Israelites wanted?

CS Lewis survived the horrors of two world wars, and contemplated the atomic age: "Let us not exaggerate the novelty of our situation. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death was not a chance at all, but a certainty," he writes. "The first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together.

"If we're all going to be destroyed, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things--praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts--not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but they need not dominate our minds." Wise words with many applications today.

YOUR RESPONSE - Are you cowed by coronavirus or other earthly evil, or thinking about our victorious Christ? Everything else is fake, phony, false. "Reception or rejection of Jesus makes all the difference," notes RK Hughes. "He is Christ, God's Son come in the flesh, crucified, buried, raised from the dead, paying the full penalty for sins. He now reigns and one day will judge every human. To be with Him in heaven, we must believe this--we must rest our lives on Him."

Who do you say Jesus is? Lecturer? Legend? Liar? Lunatic? Lord Christ of God? Your answer determines how you live, and where you will live forever. In Him we are more than conquerors! ☐