

**WHO IS JESUS?**

What's the greatest question of the day? Headlines vary hourly. It won't end well if you follow the wrong people for news, or politics, financial advice, relationship problems, and etc.

Luke 9:18-22 clarifies: the most important question is 'who is Jesus?' And your answer is most important for not only your daily life, but your eternal destiny. Don't get it wrong. If you're not following the Christ of the Bible to heaven, then you're following an imposter to hell.

**THE QUESTION** - Jesus astonished the people by feeding 5,000 men with five loaves and two fish. John 6 says the people then wanted to make Him king by force. Jesus then withdrew to pray alone. Matthew and Mark say they were near Mt Hermon, highest point in Israel. It was an area steeped in pagan beliefs. He asks the disciples, "*who do the crowds say that I am?*"

Jesus asks not because He doesn't know, but the disciples needed to articulate their thoughts. Herod had just asked the same question. Amidst a dark world of pagan and Roman realities, poverty, disease, God was shining a bright light of hope and power into darkness and despair.

**SOME ANSWERS** - The disciples responded that some people said He was John the Baptist, or Elijah, or one of the prophets of old, the same answers given in Luke 9:9 to Herod. Malachi 4:5 predicted Elijah would come. Deuteronomy 8:15-18 predicted a great prophet like Moses.

But like us, the people were philosophizing instead of personalizing. "Thousands in every age spend their lives speculating on a variety of opinions about Christ and His gospel, but never drawing near to God through Christ, never taking up their cross to become Christians," observes JC Ryle. "After all their talking, they die in their sins, unprepared to meet God."

Is this you? Muslims see Jesus as a great prophet. Skeptics see Him as historical but strip away the supernatural, leaving Jesus as mostly myth. Who do you say that Jesus is?

**THE ANSWER** - CS Lewis nails it. "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say," writes Lewis.

"A man who was merely a man who said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic, on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice.

"Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing non-sense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

**PETER'S ANSWER** - In verse 20, Jesus asks, "*but who do you say that I am?*" and Peter answers, "*the Christ of God.*" This is remarkable. Ryle observes, "this is a confession of great faith, mingled with much ignorance and imperfection." Much like ourselves, as much as we know of Him, we put our faith, trust, commitment in Him, as the only One who can save us.

Matthew 16 records Peter's answer as "*You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*" Christ is the Greek word for 'anointed one' and refers to the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament to come as the divine deliverer (such as promised in 2Samuel 7:11b-16).

It's also linked to Luke 4:16-21 as Jesus announced He will personally fulfill God's promises. 'Son of the Living God' presents the Christ as equal to God and representing Him in His reign (the one true God of Jeremiah 10:10, alive and real, as opposed to lifeless idols). It's also linked to Luke 3:21-22 when God said, "*You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*"

**YOUR ANSWER?** - Matthew says Jesus replied, "*Blessed are you, Peter, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*" This is how all come to faith, as the Holy Spirit opens heart and mind and will to receive Jesus through repentance and faith.

As RC Sproul notes, Peter's words were not a matter of human conjecture, but divine revelation. It wasn't from great intellect or perception, but by revelation of God for salvation. Jesus' question still awaits your answer. The unmistakable upshot: Jesus Christ was either a liar, or a lunatic -- or He is the Lord He claims to be. What's YOUR response? ☐