

# Sermons on Matthew

## You Are the Christ

*Matthew 16:13-17*

*With Study Questions*

*Pastor Paul Viggiano  
Branch of Hope Church  
2370 W. Carson Street, #100  
Torrance, CA 90501  
(310) 212-6999  
pastorpaul@integrity.com  
[www.branchofhope.org](http://www.branchofhope.org)  
9/17/2006*

**You Are the Christ**

*Matthew 16:13-17*

When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “\_Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”<sup>-14-</sup> So they said, “\_Some *say* John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or \_one of the prophets.”<sup>-15-</sup> He said to them, “\_But who do \_you say that I am?”<sup>-16-</sup> Simon Peter answered and said, “\_You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”<sup>-17-</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “\_Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, \_for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but \_My Father who is in heaven (Matthew 16:13-17).

## Sound Doctrine

This passage is recorded directly after Jesus had cautioned His followers to beware of the bad doctrine of the Pharisees (Matthew 16:5-12). De-emphasizing doctrine, when it comes to our souls, is like de-emphasizing a clean operating room for surgery. Christians often adopt a “Just cut away doc” mentality even though the doctor didn’t go to medical school and is about to perform a delicate procedure using a jack-hammer.

Sound biblical doctrine is important to our Savior as it is the means by which we come accurately know the things of God—know Him. Men are naturally inclined to morph God into a being which suits their own inclinations. It was just this type of behavior which brings out the jealousy of God recorded in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:5). The true God becomes jealous of the bizarro or caricature of God which is seeking to supplant Him.

We shouldn’t think of this jealousy in its common envious, passionate and irrational sense. It is a holy and healthy jealousy which has God’s own glory and His children’s own welfare as its object. I may grow jealous if I see my children attracted to an unseemly character who is seeking to win their affections in order to lead them astray. I am their father and this stranger does not love them the way I do—even though it may not appear to be the case through their young and immature eyes.

Jesus does not want His followers to be swayed by the winds of doctrine which were prevalent at the time—specifically the religious leaders, the Pharisee and Sadducees. He wasn’t so concerned about the atheists and other secularists as He was about false religious teachings.

## Believing in Jesus

And it is the doctrine about Himself which the passage before us emphasizes. It wasn't sufficient for people to merely believe in Jesus. There is a sort of comfort we can falsely assure ourselves with by saying we believe in Jesus. But of course Herod, Pilate, Caiaphas, the Pharisees and Sadducees all believed in Jesus. Roman Catholics, Protestants, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, L. A. Church of Christ, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus et al believe in Jesus.

But the question must go deeper. Certainly it is necessary to believe in Jesus.

**Most assuredly, I say to you, \_\_he who believes \_\_in Me has everlasting life (John 6:47).**

But what does that mean? Believe that He existed? That He was a prophet? A good man? A teacher? A miracle worker?

The question put before us in the passage informs us that it is not merely believing that person named Jesus lived at one time, or even having positive and pleasant thoughts about Him and seeking to follow and obey His moral precepts. The belief is much more specific than that. It is believing in certain things about Jesus—sacred things which separate Him from all others—things that would cause us to sing holy, holy, holy with the angels as we stand in awe of His utter uniqueness.

### **Three Questions**

The passage requires the pursuit of at least the three questions: 1. Who is Jesus? 2. What is the Christ? 3. How do mere men come to know this?

**When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, \_\_“\_Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?\_” -<sup>14</sup>. So they said, \_\_“\_Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or \_\_one of the prophets\_” (Matthew 16:13, 14).**

**Who is Jesus?**

**The Son of Man**

The way Jesus phrases the question has a bit of a “Who's buried in Grant's tomb” ring to it; “Who do men say that I, (hint) the Son of Man, am?”

We understand Jesus' use of the Son of Man term to describe Himself as referring to His humanity; as the hymn rightly distinguishes "Son of God and Son of Man" speaking of Jesus humanity and His deity (that He is fully God and fully man).

But those who had read the Old Testament would have a hard time missing the most significant Son of Man reference.

**I was watching in the night visions, And behold, *\_\_One* like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.  
<sup>14</sup> *\_Then* to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all *\_\_peoples, nations, and languages* should serve Him. His dominion *is* *\_an* everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom *the one* Which shall not be destroyed (Daniel 7:13, 14).**

This passage is often misattributed to the Second Coming. But even a cursory reading reveals that Jesus is not coming to earth in this passage but to the Ancient of Days—that is, He is ascending to the Father and given dominion, glory and an everlasting kingdom made of all nations which shall never pass away (see Ephesians 1:15-23). This is the other side of the ascension (Acts 1:9-11).

### **More Than a Prophet**

Peter gives a list of answers to Jesus' question regarding who men say that He is which had, no doubt, been circulating throughout the region; they included John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or *\_\_one* of the prophets. Peter leaves out that the Pharisees thought Jesus was of the devil. The popular guesses did not place Jesus in bad company. But they were wrong. And seeking to lower Jesus just one rung on the ladder is the difference between heaven and hell.

The Christian faith should be much more concerned with who Jesus is than with His moral teachings, example of right living and call to good deeds. Later in this gospel we will read of a woman who was criticized by Jesus' disciples for pouring a very costly alabaster flask of fragrant oil on Him; they become indignant because it could have been sold and the money used to

help the poor (Matthew 26:6-13). Jesus seemingly belittles the plight of the poor against the backdrop of His own personhood.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus, the concerned pastor and teacher, now moves from the third, person, plural (who do men say...?) to second, person, plural (who do you say...?).

**He said to them, “\_But who do \_\_you say that I am?” -<sup>16-</sup> Simon Peter answered and said, \_\_“\_You are the Christ, the Son of the living God\_” (Matthew 16:15, 16).**

### **What is the Christ?**

Peter gives the correct answer. But what does this mean? I remember being mildly chastised by another pastor who encouraged me to move away using “the Christ” as a title and stick to the “Jesus” title; both names of used hundreds of times in the New Testament, therefore making either appropriate.

But I thought, and still think, that in our current culture, “the Christ” is more helpful since Jesus, which was a common name among the Jews (Colossians 4:11). It is also a common name among certain cultures today. We tend to be more free-wheeling with that title. It fits in with our current trends of contemporary church where, sadly, Jesus descends to the level of a contemporary. People feel free to construct their own Jesus.

But there is only one Christ. It is the *singular nominative* “the” Christ; what we would call the *definite article*. There aren’t many Christs. There is only one. Paul would argue that Jesus was the Christ.

**But Saul increased all the more in strength, \_\_and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ (Acts 9:22).**

Apollos the same:

**for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, \_showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18:28).**

### **The Anointed One**

---

<sup>1</sup> Of course cultures which come to honor Christ will find their poor will find greater relief.

Christ (christos) means “anointed”. It was generally used when a high priest was ordained (Exodus 29:7) or a king inaugurated (1 Samuel 10:1). But the prophets, priests and kings of the Old Testament were merely pale foreshadows of the true Prophet, Priest and King who is Jesus. The hopes of all of humanity were wrapped up in the anointed one of God.

So important is this that to deny that Jesus was the Christ received one of the most forceful rebukes contained in all of Scripture:

**Who is a liar but he who denies that \_\_Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22).**

It is not without good reason that this doctrine which Peter had confessed was so rich and essential. The Christ was the hope of Israel (Luke 2:25), which was the hope of the world. It was promised to Abraham that through his seed “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3).

Correctly did Phillip Brooks write of the Christ, “**The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.**” The promise of God was that through the Christ, the Anointed One, the tragic affects of the fall upon humanity would be restored.

**\_Behold, *the* days are coming, \_” says the Lord, “\_That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and \_\_prosper, \_And execute \_judgment and righteousness in the \_\_earth. <sup>6</sup> \_In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel \_\_will dwell safely; Now \_\_this *is* His name by which He will be called: \_THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jeremiah 23:5, 6).**

## **Astonishing Accomplishments**

So astonishing are the Old Testament accounts of the accomplishments of the Christ, that many of Jesus’ contemporaries were looking for an immediate cataclysmic overthrow of Rome (Acts 1:6) while today most Christians consign much the redemption associated with the Christ to a future age which only begins after He comes again.

Military might, political agendas, worldly philosophies and every other floor on men’s towers of Babel will crumble. The success associated with the Christ cannot be overstated. A full reading of Psalm 2 (which explicitly refers to the Lord’s Anointed) is worth the read.

Why \_\_do the \_nations \_\_rage, And the people plot a \_\_vain thing?

<sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves, And the \_\_rulers take counsel together, Against the Lord and against His \_Anointed, \_\_saying,<sup>3</sup> “\_Let \_\_us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us.”<sup>4</sup> He who sits in the heavens \_\_shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision.<sup>5</sup> Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure:<sup>6</sup> “\_Yet I have \_\_set My King \_On My holy hill of Zion.”<sup>7</sup> “\_I will declare the \_\_decree: The Lord has said to Me, ‘\_You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.<sup>8</sup> Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations *for* Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.<sup>9</sup> \_You shall \_\_break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’”<sup>10</sup> Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth.<sup>11</sup> Serve the Lord with fear, And rejoice with trembling.<sup>12</sup> \_Kiss the Son, lest \_\_He be angry, And you perish *in* the way, When \_\_His wrath is kindled but a little. \_Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him (Psalm 2:1-12).

## By the Gospel

And although this has a very political and military sound to it, this kingdom does not advance through military might.

**Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,\_' Says the Lord of hosts (Zechariah 4:6).**

The means by which this kingdom advances, and all the promises associated with the Christ, come to pass is through the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

We have just read that the executions of God judgments on the earth are through His anointed one who is called **“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jeremiah 23:6)**. Paul was unoriginal when he wrote, that he desired to be found in Christ, not having his **“own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith” (Philippians 3:9)**.

And how is this faith appropriated?

**So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17).**

The redemption of all creation associated with the Christ comes one person, one heart, at a time through the preaching of God's word. It is little wonder that we read that the apostles, after they were beaten and warned not to speak of Jesus, rejoiced...

-

**And daily *in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ (Acts 5:42).***

We are to think nothing less of Jesus than that He is the Christ. John associates this with our very salvation.

**Whoever believes that *Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him (1 John 5:1).***

Our ignorance of history and emphasis on the shortness of the future of how long this world will continue tends to sway people away from the triumphal nature of the work of the Christ. Christians bemoan their current condition as if things couldn't be worse. Of course we often do this while driving our Lexus listening to Christian radio freely broadcasted throughout the land; makes me wonder if Nero would have allowed KBRT or KKLA access to the air-waves.

### **Triumph of God or Man?**

It is also argued that this places man and not Christ in the driver's seat of redeeming history, since Christ, as some argue, has not yet taken the throne. This pushes us to our final point. Was Peter to be credited with this great profession? Had he, as my college campus Christian group's evangelism campaign stated, Found It?

**Jesus answered and said to him, "*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven (Matthew 16:17).***

## Not Flesh and Blood

Jesus tells Simon, son of Jonah that he was blessed (it should be safe to assume the blessing came from God), for flesh and blood (which led all others into error regarding who Jesus was—thinking He was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets) did not reveal to him who Jesus was.

Are we to think that by “flesh and blood” Jesus is giving the exhaustive list of things which do not reveal the truth? Is it possible that Jesus left an opening for things like the human mind, will, philosophy, humility, weakness, strength, et al? There is a fuller list elsewhere.

**But as many as received Him, to them He gave the \_\_right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: <sup>-13-</sup>\_\_who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12, 13).**

## Revealed by the Father

Or should we read this embracing its obvious Calvinistic implications. Whatever accurate understanding and appropriation Peter had regarding Jesus, it was revealed to Him by the Father.

Reveal *apokalupto* signifies “to uncover, unveil” It is often set against the idea of hiding; as earlier in this very gospel.

**\_At that time Jesus answered and said, “\_I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that \_You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent \_\_and have revealed them to babes” (Matthew 11:25).**

Those rejecting salvation by grace alone through faith alone will tend to argue against the triumphal nature of the Christ and His kingdom because they are required to view this as a cooperative effort between man and God; a view popular with heretics and generally rejected by Christians.

But when we come to realize that the only reason any of us believes that Christ is our righteousness and seek to walk in His ways is due to the Spirit’s effective application of the truth of the gospel to our hitherto hardened hearts, we know that all glory is God’s.

May Christians ever seek to know who Jesus is. May the doctrine of Christ ascend to the highest of priorities for those who have called upon His

Name. May we obediently serve Christ as He subdues all His enemies through the preaching of His gospel. And may we humbly and thankfully acknowledge that our inclusion in His glorious plan of redemption is brought about by His power alone.

-

**For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a \_\_Son is given; And \_the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called \_Wonderful, Counselor, \_\_Mighty God, Everlasting Father, \_\_Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of *His* government and peace *\_There will be no end,* Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The \_zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (Isaiah 9:6, 7).**

### Questions for Study

1. Was sound doctrine important to Jesus? Why (pages 2, 3)?
2. What does it mean to believe in Jesus (page 3)?
3. Why did Jesus refer to Himself as the “Son of Man” (page 4)?
4. What is the difference between Jesus and the Christ (pages 5, 6)?
5. What does Christ mean (page 6)?
6. What will happen as a result of the Christ (pages 6, 7)?
7. How will this take place (page 8)?
8. Does this make man the cause of redemption (page 9)?
9. How do people actually come to embrace Jesus (page 10)?