

## Matthew 16:13-17 Sermon

Quest for the Historical Jesus – early 1900s. Book by Albert Schweitzer, began a movement. Not everything in the Bible is true – it reflects truth, but it isn't true. So how do we know who Jesus really was? We have to find Him. WE are on a quest for the historical Jesus.

Led a significant movement where people came to all kinds of different conclusions about who Jesus was. Some emphasized one thing, some another. Some grabbed hold of a Bible verse from John but ignored the Bible verses from Mark, or Luke. Most ignored the New Testament except for the gospels, but even the Gospels they wouldn't fully accept or read in a faithful way.

Led one scholar to say of the tradition that those looking for the so-called historical Jesus, but not using the Bible to find Him, were like those looking for Jesus at the bottom of a well. They would look down the well to see Him, but all they would see was a dim reflection of themselves staring back at them.

Always make God in our own image.

What different people say of Jesus. Good teacher, prophet, CS Lewis with liar, lunatic, or Lord. Quest for the historical Jesus...like looking into a well, and seeing your own reflection. You end up seeing in Jesus what you want to see, and most often what you want to see looks something like yourself!

Question – who is He? Personal nature of the question – who do *you* say that I am?

Who He is is not determined by our opinion, but our belief matters. It is key. Further, essential because this is the rock upon which He will build the church. Foundational to the building of Christ's body is what we think and believe about Jesus. If we believe Him only to be a good man the church cannot stand. In fact if we believe Him to be anything short of 'the Christ' the church cannot stand. And that concept pulls in everything about Him – gentleness, firmness, grace, truth, sovereignty, humanity. The church is built upon the foundation of Christ (1 Peter 2), but that foundation is expressed and made known practically speaking through a church which makes 'the good confession.'

Growth of the church depends upon its view of the Saviour. Because Jesus builds His church upon the rock of a solid confession, apart from that confession it is not His church being built. (or, as our confession more or less reflects the true Christ, Christ may more or less build His church? But what about times of persecution? Built then is not numeric, but spiritual. On that confession, even under persecution, she cannot be overcome by the gates of the evil one.)

### Points

1. The confession of Christ is *personal*
2. The confession of Christ has *substance*
3. The confession of Christ *shows God's richest blessing*

### 1. The confession of Christ is *personal*

The contrast – who do men say...BUT who do you say?

The internal call of the Gospel, the response of faith, stating who Christ is in opposition to all others, the greatness of Peter's confession being that he said this in a time when others did not.

Not just something for the youth, or those coming to faith personally for the first time, but we must *keep* saying this about Christ. Truth we have times when we waver OR times when we don't say *anything* about who Christ is. But this confession is not only to be the bedrock of the church, but also the bedrock of the Christian life.

Go back to last week, the caution was against the leaven of the Sadducees and Pharisees. To think it doesn't matter – one time confession, after that live for self.

What we say about who Christ is will come through in every part of our lives. The way we treat the poor, or the outcast, or the sick, or the prisoner, will show others what we say about who Jesus was. Was He God's Christ? Because if so HE determines how we view the poor. He determines how closely we guard our finances. He determines what causes we will give our time and effort toward in this life. He determines how important our family is and what it means that family is important and yet we must be willing to lose father mother son and daughter for Christ and His kingdom.

How we treat the rich will show it! Do we give special treatment? Do we think that money determines how important they are in our eyes?

Make the poor more personal – the person in your class who doesn't wear nice shoes, or doesn't always smell as nice. Young person who is awkward. Adults – members in church who are tougher to get along with, have more rough edges. Raising their kids differently than you did.

Doesn't mean we don't sharpen each other! Does show what we confess about Jesus.

To live such a life that when we say, "I believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God," the person we are talking to says, "Yeah, I kind of figured that."

Must confess – you need to know and say who Christ is.

The danger of just speaking *with the crowd*, whether positively or negatively. Judas was in that group of disciples! Not enough to say it along with others, it must be the confession of the soul.

## 2 – The confession has *content/substance*

The personal nature of our confession of Christ doesn't mean that our confession of Christ doesn't have substance.

For example, our confession is not simply a confession that we love Jesus. That is beautiful, and the Scripture uses that to describe Christians on numerous occasions – *whom having not seen, you love...and all who love His appearing...I John with love for Christ and the love of the Father.*

But that's not all it is; it is more while not being less.

As we study it we want to see that this confession is one that is seen in a few very important areas in the Bible.

In John 11 Jesus comes to Bethany after His friend, Lazarus, has died. He meets Martha as she grieves, and He says those famous words **I am the resurrection and the life, HE who believes in Me though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.**

Then Jesus asks her, **Do you believe this?** And she responds **Yes Lord, I believe that You are the Son of God, who is to come into the world.**

We see the same phrasing – the Christ, the Son of God. It is personal – **do you believe this**, and yet there is content. She believes He is the Christ, and this MEANS she believes He is the resurrection and the life, and all who believe in Him, though they die, yet they shall live.

And it happens again when Jesus is on trial in the end of Matthew. Matthew 26:63, Jesus has been answering 'not a word' as He is questioned until finally in frustration the high priest says **I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!**

And Jesus answers **It is as you said**, to which the high priest tears his clothes and says **He has spoken blasphemy, what further need do we have of witnesses.**

Very significant confession: one that ends the trial of Jesus and proves that He is worthy of death. Why is that? What are we saying?

So we begin exploring Peter's confession and he calls Jesus, "The Christ."

This is an Old Testament reference that in Hebrew was the Messiah, and it means, simply, the Anointed.

Now in the Old Testament three categories of people were anointed: prophets, priests and kings. But all through the Old Testament there was a recognition that while the people of Israel were given priests, they needed a greater priest, while they were given prophets, they needed a greater prophet.

So for example in Dt. 18 Moses tells the people of Israel that God will raise up a prophet **like him** from among their brethren, and that the people of Israel would listen to *Him*.

There would be a greater prophet than Moses, who the people would listen to, through whom they would actually receive and believe and obey the word of God. That greater prophet was to be the Messiah, the Anointed, the Christ.

Other references too. David was the greatest of all the Old Testament kings. He was a man after God's own heart, yet God told him that he could not build the house of the Lord – His Son would have to do that. And God spoke of a Son of David who would also be the Son of God (2 Sam 7). Notice the similarity of wording! That Son would build God's house, so that God could truly dwell with man. He would be an eternal king. A greater Anointed than David. And that One was to be the Christ.

Finally there is also the idea of the priests. Hebrews 7 & 10 tells us that they had to continually make sacrifices and prayers, because they weren't able to perfect forever the people they made a sacrifice for. So Israel waited for a greater Priest, and a greater Sacrifice. An Anointed who could, finally, give the One sacrifice that could perfect forever those for whom it was made. The Christ.

(Hence Is. 61 quote by Jesus in the synagogue – (Luke 4:18) **The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted....**

That is what it meant to confess Christ. He was the One they waited for. The One who could save. The One who could defend. The One who could bring victory. The One who could bring the truth, and allow us to receive it.

For all that, they didn't believe everything! Missed Christ as the Suffering Servant.

Added to that are the words "**Son of the living God.**" With these words we are reminded that the Christ we need, the Saviour we need, must be very God of very God.

After church the other day I had a member of our congregation who is a numbers man – loves math and science! – ask me how Jesus could take the infinite penalty of our sins in only a few hours upon the cross.

Do any of you know the answer?

**The Son of the Living God.** The infinite takes the infinite, like no man or woman ever could.

Key – our confession must have substance. We must know something about Him. Not all! But grasp the greatness of His person, the beauty of His work, and find that the subject of Christ is delights the soul and is the foundation of faith.

### **3 – The confession of Christ shows God's richest blessing**

Now we move on to Matthew 16:17. **Blessed are you Simon bar-Jonah.**

Neat – bar-Jonah is a reference to who this Simon was. Like a last name, it distinguishes this Simon from others. It means, literally, **Simon son of Jonah.** Or, as some translate it, Simon son of John.

Here we see something exceptionally neat in the passage, because Jesus is speaking *personally* to Simon. Simon has answered, Simon has confessed personally, and now Jesus speaks to him *personally*, and His words are words of blessing – not addressed to all the disciples, but just to Peter, Peter who confessed *his* faith in Jesus.

And Jesus blesses Peter.

Benefit of hearing that someone is proud of you? Have you ever wanted to know that God was proud of you?

When I was newer to the Christian faith, I used to yearn greatly that God would be proud of me. I wanted to hear the words **well done good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over little, I will put you over much. Well done.**

Not that I don't want to hear it anymore now, I most certainly do, but now perhaps with a little more growth and awareness that this, too, is given in Christ.

Key – Jesus says this to Peter! Blessed are you! Why? Because only God could have opened Peter's eyes for him to know Jesus! If he is confessing Jesus, this is a sign of God's tremendous love for Peter, not that Peter can now hope to know God's blessing, but that God has blessed him already!

There is something very important here. Any time we confess faith in Jesus Christ, it is a sign not that we *may* be blessed of God, but that we *are* blessed of God. That God has shown His love to us, because He has let us come to know Jesus Christ.

God blesses His believing children *personally*. It is not in general, but specific and pointed. Blessed are *you* Simon, son of John/Jonah. First and last name! Said in the second person *singular*. **YOU** are blessed. And you are blessed of My Father. Have you ever realized that God blesses *you* particularly? That He says *your* name when He blesses you?

And what does it mean to be blessed of God? Think of the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6. God's face to shine upon you. The Lord keeping and holding and protecting you. The Lord's grace being given to you from hour to hour and day to day. His shining face upon you – ever seen someone's face light up for someone? God's face lights up for you! And His peace upon your heart.

Neat thing is that blessing is pronounced every Sunday. Point – its personal. Its personal as you confess Christ.

**Jesus asks: Who do you say that I am?**

It is a question you must answer personally, fully, and by God's gracious blessing. May the Lord help us know what it is to say **You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.**

Amen.