

WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM? **Matthew 16:13-17**

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INTRODUCTION

In the passage before us, Jesus wanted to know if people knew who he was without the benefit of something specific pointing out his identity.

He begins by asking the disciples about the popular consensus. The answers ran thus: John the Baptist; Jeremiah; Elijah; one of the prophets.

The crowd knew He was someone important. Then Jesus shifts course, and makes the question an extremely personal one for his disciples. "Who do you say that I am?"

You, who have walked with me and prayed with me, have heard me preach and watched me perform miracles. You, who have seen the crowds gather around me and clamor for my attention. You, who have seen me walking across the waves and witnessed me calming the storm. Who do you say that I am?

A PROBLEM OF IDENTITY

Identity is a very sensitive concept of life. How would you feel if you woke up one day and your child, brother, sister, father, or

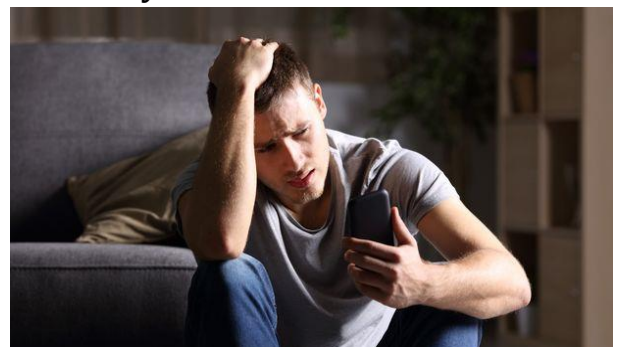
mother, say they do not know you? It would be devastating!



Jesus felt the need to know what the people knew about Him. After all He had done, He desired to know what they thought about Him.

It is important to point out that ***Christ didn't ask that question to satisfy his curiosity*** of what the people thought about Him. And this is a lesson that we should learn, that; ***you do not live your life based on what people think about you.***

No wonder there are so many cases of suicide and depression these days.



We are living our lives based on what the social media tells us, and the great deception we never seem to get about the social media

is that ***the media has never been social!***

Let people say what they want to say, that doesn't define who you are.

So, Christ knew this, that whatever the people said about Him wouldn't define Him or His purpose. So why did He ask that question?

He wanted to know what they thought about Him when it becomes ***personal, when the storm was over and when they were surrounded by temples of idols.***

It is easy to take a stand for Christ when an accident is about to happen. It is easy to shout the name "Jesus" when you feel attacked; but who do you really think He is when you're not threatened by fear or doubt or life's issues. Jesus wanted to know what the disciples thought about Him for real.

FROM POPULAR TO PERSONAL

Notice the shift from the general view to the personal view.



From the people to His people. From the popular to the personal. From the crowd to the few. Let's note the following:

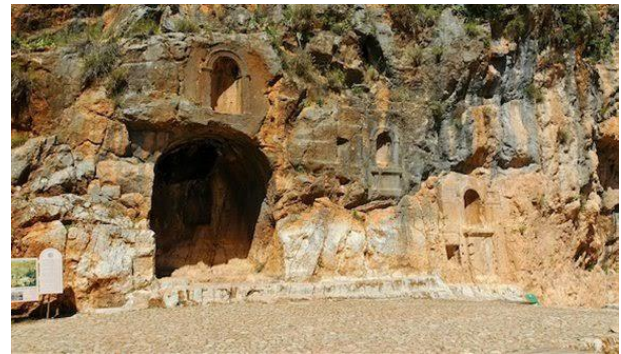
- Ministry has a lot to do with personalization. It is good to

do general appraisal but very vital to do personal appraisal.

- You cannot live off others' faith. At certain times, what will hold you would be how much you believe in Jesus Christ; not your mother's or father's or preacher's belief.
- You can have Christ, yet lack knowledge of Him. Even Paul had Christ and said still "***that I may know him more***" ***Philippians 3:10.***
- Faith in God is personal. You must have a personal relationship. It's not about the membership alone, but even more about the relationship.

CAESAREA PHILIPPI

For us to understand what our response will be to that question today, we need a deep understanding of the place called Caesarea Philippi.



- Caesarea Philippi was a city on the southwestern slope of Mount Hermon.
- The snowcapped peak of Mount Hermon (9,232 feet above sea level) can be seen on a clear day from as far away as Nazareth, where Jesus grew up.
- Caesarea Philippi was outside the domain of Herod Antipas (ruler of Galilee) and within the area of Philip the Tetrarch.
- Water is in abundance, for the city is one of the sources of the Jordan.
- The area was scattered with the remains of ancient Syrian Baal worship—at least fourteen temples have been identified.
- A cave at Caesarea Philippi is said to be the birthplace of the Greek god Pan, the god of nature, fields, forests, mountains, flocks and shepherds.
- In 2 B.C. Herod the Great's son Philip named it Caesarea in honor of Augustus, and, to differentiate it from Caesarea Maritima, it became known as Caesarea Philippi.
- Here, about 25 miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus could be alone with His disciples.

APPLICATION

The world today is our Caesarea Philippi. The evils today can be likened to the pagan gods.

Christ wants us to proclaim that we know Him in a system of idol worshipping.

He is asking us who do we say that He is, and our response can only be our ***lifestyle, our conduct, the relationships we keep, our faith.***

He wants us to identify with Him in Caesarea Philippi. He wants us to mention his name in Caesarea Philippi.

He doesn't want us to stop at the church building, He doesn't want us to stop at the weekly activities, He doesn't want us to hide under the umbrella of the Christian gathering, He is saying that He is holy and he wants us to be holy.

He wants us to dress like a Christian would. He wants us to speak like a Christian would. He wants us to stand for things that a Christian would. He wants us to proclaim his name in everything we do.

How well do we answer the question? Whom do you say that I am?

CONCLUSION

They say talk is cheap and action speaks louder than words.

No wonder it's interesting that Christ referred to himself as the ***Son of man*** but the people saw Him more as a ***God-type of man.***

We ought to talk the talk and do the work. Let's tell the world not only by our words, but more so by our conduct that we know whom

Christ is, by serving the living God with practical lives.

You'll never know who you are until you fully understand who He is.

You'll never be contented with who you are until you are contented with who He is. ***Whom do you say that He is?***

God bless us all in Jesus' name
- amen.