

Jesus said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”
Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:15-16)

Heavenly Father, it is only by your will and revelation that we come to know Jesus for who he really is. In the opportunities we have to bear witness to our faith, may we boldly and confidently profess our trust in Jesus as our Messiah. Give us the courage and strength to take up the cross and follow him wherever he made lead us. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

After Jesus had been with his disciples for some time, teaching among the people, he asked the disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” They offered several different answers. But then Jesus asked the disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” This is the same question that Jesus asks of us as well.

Read: Matthew 16:13-25

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

Not everyone who encountered Jesus knew who he really was. People gathered to listen to him as a Rabbi (teacher). Other came to witness his miraculous signs. Some hoped that he would be a military leader who would drive out the occupying Roman Empire. But Jesus had his own mission, which he revealed only to a few.

At the halfway point in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, just prior to the story of the Transfiguration, Jesus measured the response of the people by asking who the crowds thought he was. Most considered him a prophet or miracle-worker. But Peter, standing up among the disciples, identified Jesus as “the Messiah, Son of the Living God.” Jesus then set his face toward Jerusalem and began to tell the disciples of his coming death on the cross.

Discussion Questions

1. This story serves as a turning point in the narrative. What had Jesus been doing prior to this? After this, what was he focused on?
2. The title “Son of Man” was how Jesus often referred to himself. In a literal sense, how is this an accurate description? Compare Daniel 7:13-14. How is the Son of Man described here?
3. The Jewish people had long awaited the coming of the Messiah — the Christ, the anointed one, the chosen leader who would defeat their enemies. What “enemies” did Jesus actually come to defeat? How was he going to do it?
4. Peter referred to Jesus as “the Son of the Living God.” How can Jesus be a human (son of man) and, at the same time, Son of God?
5. Jesus says that Peter did not come up with the answer on his own. Who revealed this truth to him? When it comes to faith in our own lives, why must God himself make it happen?
6. The “keys of the kingdom of heaven” refers to the power Jesus gave his followers to forgive sins in his name. Why is this a central part of our mission as Jesus’ disciples?
7. What did Peter get wrong about the mission of the Messiah (v. 22)? What did Jesus say *must* happen? Why? What does it mean for us to take up *our* sacrificial cross (v. 24)?
8. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18. In what sense do believers share the same fate as Jesus? What promise does Jesus give us in the midst of suffering and loss?