

What Think Ye of Christ?

Matthew 16:13-18

Rock Hill Baptist Church
605 Rock Hill Road
Lexington, Tennessee 38351

Pastor David Buffaloe
731-845-6104
online at bibleteacher.org



FOCAL Read Responsively Matthew 16:13-18 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, **Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?** (14) And they said, Some [say that thou art] John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. (15) He saith unto them, **But whom say ye that I am?** (16) And Simon Peter answered and said, **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.** (17) And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed [it] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. (18) And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and **upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**

When the Word of God is not spiritually discerned and carefully handled great error can occur. In our focal text today the Lord Jesus, coming to the end of His earthly ministry, wanted to determine how much His disciples had learned over the past three years of teaching. What Jesus wanted to know was “**How do you, My disciples, regard Me? Am I a mere Teacher of the Word, a Prophet of God, or do you see Me as Someone more?**” It is a good idea for any teacher to periodically back away from teaching and to ask the people, “Now, what do you think?” Jesus taught doctrinal truths that were supposed to be put into practice. He never taught for mere entertainment or education, but Jesus taught so that there would be *spiritual transformation* among His disciples. He needed these men to take the lessons that He had given them over the course of His ministry and *apply them to real life*. Who is Jesus? Who am I? Who

does the world think that I am? Now, Who do YOU think I am?

Christians can differ theologically on many different things and still maintain a cohesive fellowship. But Christians can *never* differ on the **Doctrine of Christ**. What separates the lost cult from the local Church is how you answer the question “What think ye of Christ?”. The **Doctrine of Christ** is the very first thing that a person must spiritually understand *before* he or she can go on to the deeper truths of God's Word. This is emphasized by God's Word in:

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore **leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection**; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

Until you understand Who Jesus Christ is and what His mission on earth was, you cannot be saved. Until you are saved you cannot go into the deeper truths of God's Word. This is why the first *five chapters of Hebrews* focuses on Who Jesus is, making it clear that He alone is the Way unto God. Jesus is very God of very God, preexisting from eternity past with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. He alone is the **Lamb of God Who taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29)**. He alone is offered to a lost and dying world by God the Father as the **only Way unto salvation**. He alone is the **Savior of the Body (Ephesians 5:23)** and the **Head of the Church**. Jesus Christ alone is the **Redeemer, purchasing all who believe in Him with His shed**

Blood (Revelation 5:9; 1 Peter 1:19). Jesus Christ alone stands between God the Father and the sinner saved by faith. It is He alone who **maketh intercession for us (Romans 8:34) at the right hand of God the Father**, while God the Holy Spirit **makes intercession for us to Christ (Romans 8:26-27) with words we cannot hear**. Because of Christ the sinner becomes a **son of God by faith (Galatians 3:26)**. Every person who has done as God has said:

Romans 10:9-13 **That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (11) For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (12) For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**

If the Doctrine of Christ is misunderstood grievous errors come into the Church that He so loves. That which God has made, He jealously guards. The priest Uzzah died because he dared to transport the Ark of God on a cart instead of on carried poles as the Lord ordered (**2 Samuel 6:7**). No matter that King David ordered the making of the cart. What God has ordained, God

enforces, and no man has the right to tamper with it. **God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son (John 3:16)**. There is **one High Priest** that every believer reports to, and this High Priest is Jesus Christ (**Hebrews 9:11**). Confuse the Doctrine of Christ and you will find yourself reporting your sins to another sinner, hoping for forgiveness. Confuse the Doctrine of Christ and you will forever find yourselves trying to earn your way into God's presence. Confuse the Doctrine of Christ and you will lose the **peace of God that passeth understanding (Philippians 4:7)**. Confuse the Doctrine of Christ and you may find your soul to be eternally lost and undone. There is a hell, a place of torment reserved for the unbelieving human and the fallen angels (**Matthew 25:41**). You cannot avoid hell unless you embrace the Doctrine of Christ. If you embrace Christ, however, you will find yourselves in a place of joyous safety no matter what life may offer. Jesus has said:

John 10:27-30 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: (28) And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand. (29) My Father, which gave [them] me, is greater than all; and no [man] is able to pluck [them] out of my Father's hand. (30) I and [my] Father are one.

Those who embrace the Doctrine of Christ *embrace Christ as their Savior and Lord*. **His sheep hear His voice and follow Him**. His sheep are forever led to the best of places in this life and in the next. The Great

Shepherd insures that His loved ones are tended, fed, comforted, watered, and loved. The Great Shepherd **gives unto His own eternal life**. Life is in Him, **God is in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19), reconciling the world unto Himself**. If you are bound to Christ you are bound to God, and in God is life. **Christ gives unto His sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish**. Without Christ a person is dead, separated from God. With Christ a person is connected to God, connected to life. You are safe in Christ. **No man is able to pluck you from His hand**. The Great Shepherd guards His own. His Father, the Head of the Family of God, has guaranteed you to Christ if you have surrendered your life in belief to Him. Surrender yourselves to His hands, dear sinner, and He shall give you rest.

Who is Jesus? What is the Doctrine of Christ, and what does it teach?

And The Answer Is ... Christ Is More Than Prophet and Teacher

FOCAL Matthew 16:13-16 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? (14) And they said, Some [say that thou art] John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. (15) He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? (16) And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Jesus asked His disciples a very provocative question. He said, **“Who do men say that I, the Son of man,**

am?”. The phrase **Son of man** is used *eighty five times* in the New Testament, and *eighty one times* in the Gospels by **Jesus to describe Himself**. That title **Son of man** was originally used in the Scripture to define *mere humans*. We see the title first used in:

Numbers 23:19 **God [is] not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent:** hath he said, and shall he not do [it]? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Son of man means **son of a human**, in short, a *mere mortal* – at least it did when God first used the phrase. **Bildad the Shuhite** told **Job**:

Job 25:4-6 **How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean [that is] born of a woman? (5) Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. (6) How much less man, [that is] a worm? and the son of man, [which is] a worm?**

The phrase **son of man** denoted a human, a descendant of Adam, a sinner that needed to be saved. How odd it is that Jesus would use the title **Son of man** so frequently for Himself. Or is it odd?

You see, sin came into creation *by man*, so therefore payment for sin had to come *through man*. The

righteousness of God *demand*ed this. Yet man is a sinner. **Bildad the Shuhite** was right. Man is a worm, a sinner, fallen, filthy in the sight of God. The Apostle said:

Romans 3:10-18 As it is written, **There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (13) Their throat [is] an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps [is] under their lips: (14) Whose mouth [is] full of cursing and bitterness: (15) Their feet [are] swift to shed blood: (16) Destruction and misery [are] in their ways: (17) And the way of peace have they not known: (18) There is no fear of God before their eyes.**

By man came the fall, by man must come the payment for the fall. Adam brought sin into the world, but how can the Son of Adam, the **son of man**, hope to cleanse that which he has corrupted. He cannot.

God had to intervene.

When Jesus Christ became incarnate – God Almighty became perfect and sinless Man – He became the means by which sin could be forgiven. Jesus Christ took the phrase **Son of man** and, applying it to Himself, began to teach that He was the Messiah, the Christ, God Incarnate come to redeem fallen humanity. Jesus first used **Son of man** in a very human way when He said of Himself:

Matthew 8:20 ... The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air [have] nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay [his] head.

Jesus Christ, the **Son of man**, was very poor. He purposely had nothing in this life but His mission. What was that mission?

Luke 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Jesus Christ, God's Son, became the **Son of man** so that He could make payment for our sins. No mortal son of man has the power to *forgive sins*, and yet Jesus Christ – God Incarnate – does have that power. Jesus said to the crippled man before He healed him “**Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.**” (Matthew 9:2).

When the Pharisees wanted to charge Jesus with blasphemy – for who alone but God can forgive sins? - Jesus told them:

Matthew 9:6 But that ye may know that the

Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) **Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.**

Jesus Christ – the **Son of man** – is no mere Teacher or Healer. He **has power to forgive sins on the earth**, and proved it when He healed the cripple man. God Himself gave the commandments, telling Israel “**Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy**” (Exodus 20:8). Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, as the **Son of man** is **lord of the Sabbath** (Matthew 12:8). It was the **Son of man** Who would be **three days and three nights in the heart of the earth** (Matthew 12:40). It is the **Son of man** who **orders the angels of God about** (Matthew 13:41), telling them to do whatever He wills. It is the **Son of man** Who shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works (Matthew 16:27). It was the **Son of man** Who stood on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:9), and the **Son of man** Who was betrayed by Judas (Matthew 17:22). It is the **Son of man** Who will sit in His Millennial Kingdom (Matthew 19:28) ruling and reigning at the end of times. It is the **Son of man** Who gave His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). Jesus Christ is no mere Man, but **He is the Son of Man, Messiah, the Promised Redeemer, King of Kings and Lord of Lords** Who reigneth forever!

When Jesus asked His disciples:

FOCAL Matthew 16:13 ... **Whom do men say**

that I the Son of man am?

He was watching and listening to their answers carefully. Did they understand that **Son of man** did not just mean *a Good Teacher*? Did they understand that **Son of man** did not just mean *a great Prophet*? The answers given by the disciples was “**Some [say that thou art] John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets**”. Many of those who saw Jesus and were ministered to by Jesus never came to know Him in an intimate way. They received blessings.

Matthew 11:5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

All the signs were there that Christ is the Messiah, yet the world at large saw Him as a great Prophet like **John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah**. When Jesus asked, **But Who do YOU say that I am?** Peter immediately responded:

FOCAL Matthew 16:16 ... Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Jesus the **Son of man** is the **Christos, the Christ, the Messiah**. He is God Incarnate come to live among us. He is the Lamb of God come to die to save the souls of those who believe.

An Intimate Relationship With Jesus Christ Changes Your Life

FOCAL Matthew 16:16-18 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. (17) And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed¹ art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed [it] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. (18) And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

A proper understanding of Who Jesus Christ is and who you are will always bring about a wonderful change in your life. Jesus tells Peter “**You are fortunate, blessed, happy**”. Happiness for the believer can only come when we understand that Jesus *alone* is the Christ, and that we as Christians are the *workmanship of God*. The Bible says:

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

¹ G3107, μακάριος, makarios, *mak-ar'-ee-os*, A prolonged form of the poetical μάκαρ makar (meaning the same); supremely *blest*; by extension *fortunate, well off*: - blessed, happy (X -ier).

Every believer in Christ is **created in Christ Jesus do do good works**. We are **His workmanship**, and God works in us to **will and to do of His good pleasure**:

Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Peter did not learn this great knowledge that **Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God** through his own efforts. **Flesh and blood did not reveal this great truth to the Apostle**. Peter submitted himself to the Word of God, to the teaching ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter *heeded* that which our Savior taught. Peter did as Jesus asked:

Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

He learned of Jesus. The person who learns of Jesus undergoes a life changing experience. You become a **new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)**. **Old things are passed away – behold, all things have become new**. God does not use the old wine bottles. He does not patch the life, but He *radically changes the life*. Jesus told Peter:

FOCAL Matthew 16:17 ... flesh and blood hath not revealed [it] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. ...

The Christian is someone who has been taught the truth of Christ by God. The Christian knows Jesus to be more than mere Man, more than Prophet, Priest, or King. The Christian is a recipient of the deep truths of God. He has been radically altered. The world will *never* truly understand the Doctrine of Christ. The Bible tells us that

1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The God Who is over all must reveal the Doctrine of Christ to the heart. Jesus must be seen as THE Christ, THE Messiah, God Incarnate, God the Son. Salvation is a receiving by faith of the truths found only in Jesus. **Simon Barjona's (the son of Jona)** life was radically altered when God the Father taught him the truth of Christ. Jesus even recognized the change in Simon's life by changing his name. We read:

FOCAL Matthew 16:17-18 ... Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed² art thou, Simon Barjona ... (18) And I say also unto thee,

² G3107, μακάριος, makarios, mak-ar'-ee-os, A prolonged form of the poetical μακάριος makar (meaning the same); supremely *blest*; by extension *fortunate, well off*: - blessed, happy (X -ier).

That thou art Peter³, and upon this rock⁴ I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Simon was also called **Peter**. His name, **Peter**, literally means **a piece of rock**. Our Lord Jesus says to the Apostle, “**Peter, you are a piece of rock. Upon this greater rock (petra) I will build My Church**”. What was Jesus telling Peter? The Church of Jesus Christ was build *on the foundation of the Word of God*. God has revealed His Word through the Apostles and the Prophets. The Scripture says:

Ephesians 2:19-22 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; (20) **And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; (21) In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: (22) In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.**

Peter would be the lead Apostle as the Church was being built. God would use Peter, along with all the Apostles and Prophets – with **Jesus Christ Himself being the**

3 G4074, Πέτρος, Petros, *pet'-ros*, Apparently a primary word; a (piece of) rock (larger than G3037); as a name, *Petrus*, an apostle: - Peter, rock. Compare G2786.

4 G4073, πέτρα, *petra*, *pet'-ra*, Feminine of the same as G4074; a (mass of) rock (literally or figuratively): - rock.

chief cornerstone – to be the foundation on which His Church would be built. Peter could not have been used of God to write Holy Scripture had he not learned Who Christ was. The Church had to be built on a proper understanding of Who the Lord is, and how a person is saved. **Jesus alone is the Christ, the Son of the Living God**. Jesus Christ alone is the Savior of the Body, the Head of the Church (**Ephesians 5:23**). There is no *pope* who stands at the head of the Church. We have *one Head, one Master, one Lord, one High Priest, only One Christ*. Failure to believe on Jesus Christ as risen Savior and Lord brings condemnation in the next life. Belief on Jesus Christ as risen Savior and Lord unites the believer-priest with God *forever*. The **gates of hell** cannot prevail against the Church of Jesus Christ, nor can Satan himself overthrow the believer-priest focused on the Christ.

The Question Remains – What Think Ye of Christ?

The greatest thing in life is to know Who Jesus Christ is. It is no coincidence that among *rich people* we see very high levels of suicide and depression. People who have sought joy through riches or through sensuality often live shallow lives. When you take a bath in a tub equipped with gold faucets, and walk on floors of polished stone, where do you go from there but downward? The happy person is the one who knows the God Who made him. The happy person is the one who knows Who Jesus Christ is.

Some time later, following the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of our Lord and Savior Peter would write (under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit):

1 Peter 2:3-6 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. (4) To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, (5) **Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (6) Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.**

Jesus Christ is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Those Who believe in Him are built on the foundation of God's Word. This Word, given by the Lord through the prophets and apostles, teaches us that there is but one Christ. Those who believe on Him shall not be confounded. We who have trusted our lives to Jesus have a High Priest we report to. We who have trusted on He that is Christ are a holy priesthood. We who have believed on Him are acceptable to God because of what Jesus has done for us on that old rugged Cross. We shall never be confounded, but will always be victorious, because He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

May God touch your hearts with these words.



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