

Who Is Jesus to You?

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Matthew 16:13-23

The question that demands an answer: For a moment, you are Peter, or maybe Nicodemus, and you now sit across a table from this man who came from Nazareth. He has healed many and fed thousands with one basket of food. He has taught with authority unlike the religious Temple leaders. His fame is spreading like wildfire. Now, He asks you one question: *"Who do you say that I am?"*

C.S. Lewis put it plainly: the claims Jesus made about Himself leave only three possibilities. He is either Lord, a liar, or a lunatic. A merely good teacher does not claim to forgive sins, declare himself the resurrection and the life, or accept worship. There is no comfortable middle. There is no neutral answer

"Who do you say that I am?" – Jesus

This is the most important question every human being will ever face, and we are answering it right now through our beliefs, actions, and what we love most.

I. The Confession (Matthew 16:13-20)

- A. **The depth of the question:** Jesus does not simply ask, *'Who do people say I am?'* He asks about the Son of Man. This title is not random — it is loaded with meaning from the Old Testament prophet Daniel:
1. *"...with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man... And 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..."* — **Daniel 7:13–14**
 2. **Son of Man:** Daniel's title for the coming King who would receive an eternal kingdom from God Himself — a title of divine authority and universal rule
 3. By using this title, Jesus is asking something much bigger than, *'Do you recognize my face?'* He is really asking: *'Do you understand who I am — and will you bow the knee to my eternal kingdom?'*
- B. **Three wrong answers:** the crowds had opinions. (**Matthew 16:14**) They were not hostile or indifferent — they were deeply interested in Jesus. But their answers kept Him safely at a distance:
1. **John the Baptist** raised from the dead — **Jesus as miracle worker**. Even wicked King Herod believed this (**Matthew 14:1–2**). The world has no problem with a Jesus who heals and helps. It only objects when He demands lordship.
 2. **Elijah the prophet** — Jesus as a great messenger of God and political deliverer from a wicked government (Ahab & Jezebel), but still just a messenger. A very good servant, but not the Master.
 3. **Jeremiah or one of the prophets** — Jesus was placed in a long line of holy men who spoke for God. Impressive, but ultimately just one more in a series.

The Pattern Down through the Ages

People are happy to give Jesus a title — as long as it does not require their submission. Religious admiration is a hiding place from true faith.

- C. **Only one correct answer with two titles (Matthew 16:16)**
1. **'The Christ'** (the Messiah, the Anointed One) — This means Jesus is the Great High Priest and King that all the Old Testament was pointing toward. Every animal sacrifice, every Passover lamb, every Day of Atonement was a preview of Him. Peter is saying: There is no need to look for another.
 2. **'The Son of the Living God'** — Peter is not calling Jesus the son of a statue or a myth. He is saying: this man springs from the God who is alive, who acts, who speaks, who is Life itself (**see Deuteronomy 5:26; Psalm 42:2**). Jesus shares the very nature of the living God.

"Peter's confession is the rock foundation upon which the church is built — not Peter himself, but the truth he declared under divine revelation." — **Charles Spurgeon**

3. **The only origin of the answer (Matthew 16:17).**
 - a) This is the crucial point. Peter did not figure this out. He did not reason his way to it. The Father revealed it. God is not an intellectual pursuit. He is not the conclusion of our research.
 - b) Paul confirms this plainly: *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.* — **1 Corinthians 2:14**

- c) **BOTTOM LINE:** *No one arrives at the true Jesus through clever thinking, good upbringing, or religious effort. Saving knowledge of Christ is a gift of God's grace — given to those He calls (1689 London Baptist Confession, Ch. 10.2).*

II. The Correction (Matthew 16:21-23)

- A. The Christ Nobody Wanted: (see **Matthew 16:21**).
1. The moment Peter gets the right answer, Jesus tells them what the Christ has actually come to do — and they hate it. Peter, who just gave the greatest confession in the Gospels, immediately becomes an obstacle: *Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.'* — **Matthew 16:22**
 2. Peter wanted a triumphant king, not a suffering servant. He wanted a crown without a cross. This is the Jesus the world has always wanted — powerful, helpful, victorious — but not crucified.
- B. The Christ Everybody Needs:
1. *But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.'* — **Matthew 16:23**
 2. Jesus rebukes Peter sharply because Peter's thinking, at that moment, was shaped by human desires — not God's plan. The suffering of Christ is not a tragedy to be avoided. It is the very mission He came to accomplish.

III. The Cost (Matthew 16:24-26)

- A. *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?"* — **Matthew 16:24-26**
- B. The Commands of a Disciple:
1. **Deny yourself** — Not self-improvement. Not self-care. Self-denial. The death of the throne of self.
 2. **Take up your cross** — In the Roman world, a cross meant one thing: execution. Jesus is calling His followers to live as those who have already died to themselves.
 3. **Follow me** — This is the positive call. Having denied self and taken up the cross, we now walk in the footsteps of Jesus — wherever He leads.
 4. **Discipleship:** The lifelong process of following Jesus — not as a religious hobby, but as a complete reorientation of life, loyalty, and love.
- C. The Radical Exchange
1. Jesus offers the most counterintuitive deal in history: lose your life to find it. Give up what you think you want, and receive what you were actually made for.
 2. The man who tries to hold onto his life — who keeps his own agenda on the throne — loses everything in the end. The man who gives himself over to Christ finds the life he was made for.
- "A man who loses himself for Christ's sake finds himself. You gain all when you lose all for Him."* — **Charles Spurgeon**
3. The Terrible Math:
 - a) *"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?"* **Matthew 16:26**
 - b) Jesus asks us to do the math. Imagine possessing every pleasure, every comfort, every achievement the world can offer — and then standing before God without Christ. The answer is: it profits nothing. Not a single thing purchased in this life can be carried across the threshold of death.

IV. The Light for our Path

- A. A conversation with Uncle Claude (AI)
1. Often, skeptics will frame their reply with "if true," then when referencing Jesus, the resurrection, etc.
 2. When I ask Uncle Claude if truth is framework dependent, here is what it said, ***The more honest thing to have said: "The resurrection claim, if false, is the most consequential lie in history. If true — and the evidence does not give me strong reason to call it false — it does not merely change everything. It IS everything."***
- B. The question you must answer is this one: "Is Jesus Lunatic, Liar, or is He Lord?)
1. There is no neutral zone on this question, nor is anyone exempt from the test.
 2. The truth (the 'Who' Jesus is) is not frame dependent. Your framework (worldview) does not determine truth. Truth is what God has revealed.