



Matthew 16:13-20

# DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING: KNOWING WHO JESUS IS

The timing of this question in Jesus' ministry was very important. The disciples had believed Jesus was the Messiah from the beginning of their contact with Him (John 1:41, 51). However, their understanding of the Messiah then was the traditional one of their day, namely that of a political leader. The multitudes failed to understand that Jesus was much more than that. The religious leaders were becoming increasingly antagonistic. The disciples were about to receive new revelation regarding Jesus that would have costly implications for them. Therefore, it was necessary for them to confess Jesus' identity clearly and unmistakably now. This passage represents the climax of Jesus' teaching ministry. It was, in effect, the apostles' final examination, consisting of but one question, the ultimate question that every human being must face: **Who is Jesus Christ?** A person's answer is of the most monumental importance, because on it hinges his eternal destiny. It is a question that no one can escape or avoid. Every soul, as it were, will be pinned against the wall of eternity and forced to answer that question.

—Thomas Constable

Jesus has taught His disciples several key truths in Matthew 14-16:

1. We live in an immoral world.
2. We face an impossible task.
3. We have an omnipotent Savior.
4. We can easily be side-tracked by popular movements.
5. We will encounter fear-producing storms in life.
6. We can walk on water if we keep our eyes on Jesus.
7. We must beware of the dangers of religious legalism.
8. We must see the absolute centrality of the heart.
9. We must confront our prejudices in order to love like Jesus.
10. We must beware of the leaven of the Pharisees & Sadducees.

Now comes the most important lesson of them all: *We must know who Jesus is if we are going to follow Him in faith and obedience.*

## THE HISTORICAL SETTING (16:13a)

Caesarea Philippi was twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee. It was a center of Greco-Roman culture as well as pagan worship. Upon entering the city, a person would find...

- Fourteen temples to different ancient gods.
- A cave dedicated to the worship of Pan.
- A great temple built to the deity of Caesar.

## THE POPULAR OPINIONS (16:13b-14)

1. John the Baptist (cf. 14:2)
2. Elijah (cf. Malachi 4:5)
3. Jeremiah
4. One of the prophets

Caesarea Philippi was a city dominated by immoral activities and pagan worship... It became the religious center for worship of the Greek god, Pan. In the cliff that stood above the city, local people built shrines and temples to Pan.

—Ray Vander Laan

No class of the people at this time regarded Jesus as being the Messiah. How could they, when in their view Messiah was to be a splendid conqueror and king?

—John A. Broadus

Jesus was reluctant to use the term [Messiah] of Himself, apparently because of the limited and inadequate nature of the current messianic hopes. In popular thought, the Messiah had largely become a nationalistic figure; and, if used of Jesus, the title would at once have inflamed the political aspirations of the people.

—D. Edmond Hiebert

Jeremiah came and found a cave dwelling, and he brought there the tent and the ark and the altar of incense; then he sealed up the entrance.

—2 Maccabees 2:5

## THE REAL QUESTION (16:15)

In a pluralistic pagan city, filled with gods, religions, politics, and sexual immorality, and in a religious culture with various opinions about Jesus, the disciples are asked the most important question of all eternity.

“Who do \_\_\_\_\_ say that I am?”

“Who does \_\_\_\_\_ say that I am?”

## THE TRUE CONFESSION (16:16-17)

Simon Peter proclaims: *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!*

### YOU ARE

### THE CHRIST

- \_\_\_\_\_ (Deuteronomy 18:18-19)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (Psalm 110:4; Isaiah 53:10-11)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6)

### THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD (Psalm 2)

## THE UNCONQUERABLE CHURCH (16:18-20)

Peter’s confession leads to the Messiah’s declaration. A new community would be formed—the church—kingdom citizens living in the present age.

- \_\_\_\_\_ is the owner, architect, builder, and foundation of the church (7:24-25; 1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Peter 2:4-10).
- \_\_\_\_\_ is the first stone in the church and the one who opens the door for the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles (Acts 1-15).
- \_\_\_\_\_ those who confess Jesus as their personal Savior are living stones in Christ’s church (1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:1-22).
- \_\_\_\_\_ will not conquer the church (1 Cor. 15:20-28).

*“Thou art Peter; and upon this Rock” which thou hast confessed, upon this rock which thou hast acknowledged, saying, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, will I build My Church,” that is upon Myself... I will build thee upon Myself not Myself upon thee.*

—Augustine (354-430)

*Yeshua said to Peter, “You are Peter [petros, masculine noun, meaning a small stone], and upon this rock [petra, feminine noun, meaning a huge, massive cliff-rock] I will build my church.”*

—Arnold Fruchtenbaum

*As Scripture says: “Upon this rock I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”; and elsewhere “The rock was Christ” [1 Cor. 10:4]. For as the Apostle indicates: “No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus” [1 Cor. 3:11].*

—Eusebius of Caesarea (260-339)

*“The gates of Hades” is a Jewish phrase referring to death. Even death, the ultimate weapon of Satan, has no power to stop the church. The blood of martyrs, in fact, has sped the growth of the church in size and spiritual power.*

—John MacArthur, Jr.

*16:19 is expressed in the unusual syntax of future perfect passive verbs, “will have been tied up,” “will have been untied.” The construction is sufficiently unusual and awkward in Greek to draw attention... When Peter makes his decision it will be found to have been already made in heaven, making him not the initiator of new directions for the church, but the faithful steward of God’s prior decisions.*

—R. T. France