



September 13, 2015  
Matthew 16:13-18  
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## Who Do You Say I Am?

Hi Everyone. My name is Larry Adams and I want to take a moment to thank you for downloading the podcast of this message. At Golden Hills we are committed to exalting Jesus and preaching the Word. Your downloading of this message is a great encouragement to us, as we know that our ministry is going out to spread God's Word all over the world.

We want you to know, too, that in no way do we intend these messages to be a replacement for your involvement in a good local church, where, sitting under the authority of pastors and other teachers, you can learn to worship, grow and serve and be engaged with a body of believers where you can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We realize also, that some of you may be in areas of the world where there is no local church. Therefore, we hope these messages you are using, to gather with your family or other believers, or people from the community that it will be a great encouragement to you, as you hear God speak into your life, helping you to become disciples who are true, reproducing followers of Jesus Christ.

If you have your Bible, I'd like you to turn with me to Matthew 16. We're going to be travelling about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, to a region known as Caesarea Philippi, named after Caesar and Philip. Philip was the third son of Herod the Great. His brother, Antipas, who was the Herod who was in the city with John the Baptist, is the brother who stole Philip's wife, which brought the whole situation with John the Baptist about. Philip lived in that northern region. It was an area full of idolatry. It was in that area that Jesus asked life's most important question. In fact, it was the question that every single person on planet earth is going to have to answer before we leave. No one will escape this. All eternity hangs in the balance.

Matthew was travelling with Jesus through that region and recorded for us what happened that day. Here's what he said (Matthew 16:13-18):

<sup>13</sup> When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

<sup>14</sup> They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

<sup>15</sup> "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

<sup>17</sup> Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Let's pray for a moment. *Father, this was a very pivotal moment in the life of these disciples. Because of Your Holy Spirit's inspiration of Matthew, we have this question and that day recorded for us, that we might be confronted with it all over again ourselves. It isn't enough to say that we believe in Jesus. We have to have the right Jesus. We have to have the true Jesus, and there is only one. God, as we begin this series today, may You help us to see today and throughout these times, who You are, so that we can know You. We thank You for all that You'll show us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

This summer I was coming out of a motel in West Yellowstone, Montana, heading to my car to go with the family into the park, Yellowstone National Park. I was walking to the car and I hear this voice from across the parking lot, "Hey! Aren't you going to say hello? I can't believe you're here! You do recognize me, don't you?"

I'm thinking, man! I meet a lot of people and my memory isn't that good. I'm looking at this guy, going, *where do I know him from? Where do I know him from? He must go to Golden Hills. No, he has watched me on a live stream somewhere. No, he has been at a conference where I spoke. Where do I know this guy from?*

All of those questions went out the window when he asked me this next one: "You do recognize me, don't you, Jeff?" (laughter)

This is just how it went:

"You are Jeff, right? From Spokane?"

I said, "No, I'm Larry from California."

He says this: "No way! Are you sure?"

I thought, *well, Karla thought I was when I got up this morning, but maybe I should check!*

That's what he said! "Are you sure?"

And I said, "I think so."

He goes, "Wow! Can I take your picture? Nobody back home is going to believe this! You are Jeff's twin!"

I don't know who this Jeff from Spokane is, but he must be one handsome dude! (Just kidding). I just hope he is not a criminal somewhere.

You see, what happened to me that morning was a mistaken identity. Very simple. You think you know somebody, in fact you're sure it's who they are, only you come to discover you're wrong. Mistaken identity.

Now if that happens like it did with me, and you think it's some long, lost friend from Spokane, maybe it's just a few minutes of embarrassment. But if you have a mistaken identity when it comes to Jesus, it will cost you your eternity. You see, there is only one true Jesus who can save us. It's important that we know who He is. Because there are many, many versions of Jesus out there, that cannot save, because they are not the true one.

That's why Jesus questioned Peter and the other disciples with life's most important question, **Who do you say I am?**

Today we're beginning an important series of messages:

### **Who do you say I am? Knowing the true Jesus.**

This is particularly important because of what we learned last week, that if you miss Jesus, you don't have life. Period. You remember John 17:3: "Now this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. This is eternal life."

It is never enough to say, "I believe in Jesus." Because many people believe in Jesus, but they don't have the true one. Many counterfeits abound. It's never my point to disparage anyone, but when it comes to this, we need to own it for what it is. For example:

- Mormons believe in Jesus, the spiritual brother of Satan, whose death does not pay for all sin, and only proceeds to the second highest heaven. Even Jesus doesn't make it to the top in their scheme of salvation. The Mormon Jesus is not the true Jesus.
- The Jehovah's Witnesses believe in Jesus. The first creative act of God. He is the one who is the same as Michael the Archangel, he is "a" god, but not "thee" God. Jehovah's Witnesses believe in Jesus, but he is not the true Jesus.
- Muslims believe in Jesus. He is the good man, the prophet of God, but not as high as their prophet, Mohammed. So the Muslim Jesus is not the true Jesus.

On and on it goes with the New Age Jesus, the Liberal Jesus, the "personalized" Jesus, made into whatever image you want Him to be.

So when people say, "I believe in Jesus," that's never the right thing to settle on.

You always have to ask them, "What Jesus do you believe in?" That's the key. So many times people say, "I believe in Jesus." We take it by face value that they are Christians. They are not! They don't believe in the true Jesus.

This was the situation Jesus was in when He confronted Peter and the other disciples 25 miles north of Galilee in the region known as Caesarea Philippi. It was a rampantly idolatrous area. They were known in this region for worshipping every kind of god you can imagine. Primarily they worshipped Caesar, they worshipped Baal, and this false god named "Pan". Now, Karla and I have walked through the region of Caesarea Philippi, and I can tell you, even today, as part of their history, there are idols shrines all over the place at Caesarea Philippi. There are even places you can go where there is like a mountain that is cut out of the side of a hill, and there are niches in there where people used to come and put all their different gods and idols they had created. They would bow down before these in this place. When you walk through that area you can almost feel the darkness. Where we walked, people were saying that this is likely where Jesus and the disciples were, in this environment where so many people had so many views of God, so many different ideas of who God was. Jesus was gaining in popularity so everybody was trying to get an opinion of who He was, and put Him in their pantheon of gods. So Jesus asked them, in that place, a very significant question, "Who do the people say I am?"

The disciples responded, "Man! They are all over the barn on this, Jesus. Some think You are the reincarnated John the Baptist. Some people think You are Elijah. Some people think You are Jeremiah or one of the other prophets."

"That's right," Jesus said, "They *are* all over the barn on this. But I want to ask you this: Who do *you* say I am? See, it doesn't matter what everybody thinks. What I want to know is, who do *you* say I am?"

It always comes down to this for every one of us. The Bible says that some day every knee shall bow and tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. No one is going to leave this planet without that confession. Nobody. It will either be your entrance and acknowledgement that you believe in Jesus and you are on your way up – OR – it will be the last pronouncement you make of truth before you are sent off to hell. That's the reality. Everyone is going to acknowledge His true identity.

Who do you say I am?

You see, there are many facets of Jesus' identity, but He has only one true identity as a person. He is God, the Great I AM. That's why Matthew tells us that all eternity hangs on answering correctly life's most important question, Who do you say I am?

As Peter proclaimed, **the true Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ. And the true Jesus is the Son of the Living God.** He is God the Messiah, He is God the Son.

Here's how Matthew put it in 16:13:

<sup>13</sup> When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

<sup>14</sup> They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

<sup>15</sup> "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah ...”

On our way back from that Yellowstone trip, we stopped for an evening at Post Falls, Idaho, and I went out the next morning to do my run. When I came back, I was coming down the hall and I looked in this little laundry room, where people can do their laundry, and there was a man standing there. A young man, wearing a yarmulka and a prayer shawl. He had his Hebrew Bible open, and he was reading Torah, the books of Moses. We struck up a conversation together. I found out he was a rabbi, visiting from the Seattle area over there, visiting synagogues. So he asked me, are you Jewish? I said no, I’m a follower of Jesus. We struck up a very interesting conversation. In the course of the many things we talked about, I asked him, “So, are you looking forward to the coming of Messiah?”

He said, “Absolutely. It’s the hope of my people.”

I said, “Good. It’s my hope too. In fact I’m looking forward to Messiah’s coming, and when He comes I believe you are going to discover with me that His name is Jesus.”

“I can’t accept that.”

I said, “Why not?”

He said, “Well, because Torah (the books of Moses), doesn’t change.”

I said, “You’re right. Torah doesn’t change.” But I said, “What about this? What if Torah hasn’t changed. What if instead, it has been fulfilled?”

He said, “Well, we will have to agree to disagree.”

We can disagree all we want, but it isn’t going to change the fact of who He is. Jesus IS the Messiah.

Now, I don’t know what that young rabbi is going to do with that information. I don’t know how God is going to work it in his heart. I’m hoping he will come to trust in Jesus as his Messiah. But I’ll tell you what: when Jesus comes back, he is going to remember that conversation in that hotel laundry room. Because I know that day, he at least heard the Messiah’s name is Jesus.

Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. That’s what Jesus was driving home that day with the disciples in Caesarea Philippi. You see, that’s why in verse 15, Jesus asked the question:

<sup>15</sup> “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah ...”

“You are the Christ!” Both the Greek word “Christ” and the Hebrew word “Messiah” mean the same thing – the Anointed One. He is God’s anointed. The chosen Messiah and

Savior. He is the one and only Savior. Not only is that depicted throughout Moses' writings, but the whole Old Testament and the New Testament as well.

In Isaiah 43:10-11, in one of his great revelation moments, Isaiah writes:

<sup>10</sup> "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD,  
"and my servant whom I have chosen,  
so that you may know and believe me  
and understand that I am he.  
Before me no god was formed,  
nor will there be one after me.  
<sup>11</sup> I, even I, am the LORD,  
and apart from me there is no savior.

There is no Messiah, there is no Christ. When you pick it up in Titus 3:3-6, Paul was so taken by this, he writes to Titus:

<sup>3</sup> At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. [Now watch this:] <sup>4</sup> But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, [who is our savior? God] <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior

See that? There is only one Savior, God told Isaiah. God is the Savior, and Jesus is the Savior, and there is only one Savior! That's because Jesus Christ is God – the Great I AM in human flesh, the Savior of the world. You see, that's an identity that in scripture, cannot be escaped, no matter who tries to alter it. God is Savior; Jesus is Savior. There is only one Savior. Jesus is God, the Messiah, the Christ.

That's why when cults come to my door or when I have a chance to embrace them, their common denominator is – doesn't matter which cult you're involved in – they all deny the deity of Christ, the very nature that He is God in human flesh. They want to say He is the Savior, they want to say He is the Son of God, they want to say all these things, but they will not acknowledge that He is God in human flesh. So, when they come to the door, I try to confront them with their own literature.

Now when the Jehovah's Witnesses come, or any cult for that matter, many of them have taken the Bible and altered it to fit their warped theology. But the Word of God is so saturated with the true identity of Jesus, no human being could possibly have changed them all. So if you know where to look, the New World Translation, for example, is a good translation to use. Now I'm not recommending you use it for Bible study, it's got so many distortions in it, that it's like walking a mine field. But in places where they didn't change it, it still speaks powerfully to the identity of Jesus.

So when I talk to them, I'll take out the New World Translation and I'll say to the Jehovah's Witness, "Read for me Isaiah 43:10-11 (the passage we just read)." Here's how it reads in the NWT:

“You are my witnesses,” is the utterance of Jehovah, “even my servant whom I have chosen, in order that you may know and have faith in me, and that you may understand that I am the same One. Before me there was no God formed, and after me there continued to be none. <sup>11</sup>I – I am Jehovah, and besides me there is no savior.” (NWT)

So I asked him, “How many Saviors are there?”

“There is only one.”

I ask, “Who is that Savior?”

“It is Jehovah God.”

I said, “You’re right. There is only one Savior and He is Jehovah God. Now, read this for me.” I turn in their own Bible to Titus 3:4-6, NWT:

However, when the kindness and the love for man on the part of our Savior, God, was manifested, <sup>5</sup>owing to no works in righteousness that we had performed, but according to his mercy he saved us through the bath that brought us to life and through the making of us new by holy spirit. <sup>6</sup>This [spirit] he poured out richly upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior (NWT)

I said, “Now, how many Saviors are there again?”

“Well, there’s only one.”

“Well, it says right here in your Bible, that God is the Savior and Jesus is the Savior. So how many Saviors are there?”

“There’s only one Savior.”

“That’s right. And God Jehovah is that Savior, isn’t He?”

“Yes, He is.”

“And Jesus Christ is that Savior, isn’t He?”

“Yes, He is.”

So I said, “Your Bible is teaching me that there is one God who exists in more than one person, who are all equally God, so either - EITHER - Jesus is God, the Savior, or your interpretation of your own translation is wrong when you deny His deity. *Which is it?*”

You see, truth cannot be hidden. The same thing happens when you read with them Revelation 1, where God said, “I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, I was dead and now I am alive.”

I ask them, “Who is the Alpha and the Omega?”

“Jehovah God.”

“That’s right. It’s Yahweh, Jehovah God. He said, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega’, that’s Jehovah God, ‘I was dead and now I am alive.’” So I say to them, “When did Jehovah die?”

They don’t accept that God died on the cross. It was Jesus who died on the cross.

“Yes it was Jesus, but He is God in human flesh, dying on the cross. It says right there in Revelation chapter one in your translation.”

You see, the truth of Christ’s identity cannot be hidden. It so saturates the scripture that you can’t get away from it. Peter got it right. (Matthew 16:)

<sup>15</sup> “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

This is why Jesus was always affirming His true identity as the Messiah. Remember John 4:1-4 when He walked to the Samaritan village and met the Samaritan woman by the well? She was out there all alone in the heat of the day because of her reputation.

Jesus said, “Hey, why don’t you call your husband and come back.”

“I have no husband,” she said.

He said, “You’re right. You have no husband. In fact you’ve had five husbands and the guy you’re living with right now is not your husband. You are right when you said, ‘I have no husband.’”

She said, “Whoa! Man! You must be a prophet.”

Then, it immediately shifts gears. John 4:25-26 – look what the woman says next:

<sup>25</sup> The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us.”

<sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am He.”

There is no denying His true identity. He is God in human flesh, the long-awaited Messiah. He is the Savior of the world, and anybody who tries to convince you of anything less than that, or tells you about a false Jesus - any false Jesus can never save you. That’s why we must know the true Jesus.

Not only Messiah, the Christ, but **the true Jesus is the Son of the living God**. He is God, the Son.

Matthew 16:13 -16

<sup>13</sup> When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

<sup>14</sup> They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

<sup>15</sup> “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

I grew up in the country, so I saw a lot of critters being born. There was no confusion where things came from for me, growing up. One thing I noticed was, that no matter what kind of animal was having a baby, “kind” always begot “kind.” What that means is this: the dog always begets a dog; a cat always begets a cat; a cow always begets a cow; sheep always begets a sheep. You get the idea. Kind always begets kind. When our children were born, all three of them, I had the privilege there watching them come into the world. Karla’s perspective was a lot different than mine, but I was standing there watching. Karla and I, contrary to other opinions, are both humans, and I saw that kind begets kind. Humans beget humans. That’s how it works. So when God begets a Son, what’s the result? God begets God! That’s the way it works.

When God has a Son, He begets God. That’s the significance of Peter’s declaration in Matthew 16. Verse 15-16:

<sup>15</sup> “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

The very offspring of God Himself, is what he was saying. That’s why when John wrote that famous verse in John 3:16, it reads like this:

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal [or ever-lasting] life.

That phrase “for God so loved the world that He gave His *one and only Son*” that’s a great translation. It could also be (in the King James) *only begotten Son*. The ESV has *only Son*. But the point is this: God begot that Son. It’s His only one. God begets God. It’s an affirmation of His deity. You see, by calling Jesus the Son of Man, it was affirming His full humanity. By calling Jesus (as Peter did), the Son of the Living God, or the Son of God, He was affirming His full deity.

It’s very important for us to understand that Jesus didn’t become God at His birth. That’s falling into the Jehovah’s Witness lie. [They say] he was “a god”, the first creative act of “Father God, “ which creates a situation where God’s first creative act was a false god. This is another very interesting discussion with Jehovah’s Witnesses. (That’s for another time.) Jesus didn’t become God at His birth, He has always been God. He is God, the Eternal Son, otherwise, you couldn’t have God the Eternal Father. If there was a time when the Son wasn’t eternal, there wouldn’t be an Eternal Father. Jesus has always been God, and He took on human flesh. When I used to teach this to my kids, by the

way, they'd say, Dad! You're making my head hurt! It's hard to grasp this stuff! John 1:1 and verse 14:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Some of the cults try to change this, like the Jehovah's Witnesses do, and make it "a god," so they say "the word was a god." There is no indefinite article in the Greek. In fact, it has to be implied by the context, and you can't do it here. Know why? Because the definite article IS in the Greek. The phrase literally reads like this: "God was the Word." There is no way to get around it. "The Word" and "God" are one and the same.

<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

You see that's why, when Jesus accepted the title "Son of God" or "Son of the Living God," He was affirming His deity, and the religious leaders knew it. Which is what made them so hopping mad. Do you remember in John 5:16, Jesus was healing and doing all these things on the Sabbath. It says:

<sup>16</sup> So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. <sup>17</sup> In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." <sup>18</sup> For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself **equal with God**.

That's exactly what He was doing, because that's who He is.

Remember His response to Philip when Philip, one of the disciples, started picking up that Jesus knew the Father? John 14:7-9:

<sup>7</sup> If you really know Me, you will know My Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him."

<sup>8</sup> Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

<sup>9</sup> Jesus answered: "Don't you know Me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Philip basically said, "Man! That's awesome! Show us the Father and that will be enough for us. You know Him, Jesus! Show us the Father!"

Jesus answered, "Don't you know Me, Philip? Show us the Father? Here I am! Don't you know Me? Even after I've been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen Me, has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?'"

One God, existing in three persons. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You've seen Me, you've seen the Father. I'm God in human flesh.

John 1:18:

<sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made Him known.

Jesus is the Eternal God, come in human flesh. This is why Jesus claimed to be the Great I AM. The most holy, sacred, reverent name for God, is how Jesus identified Himself, "I AM."

Do you remember when Moses met God on Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments? God said, "Moses, I have another assignment for you. I want you to go back to Egypt, I want you to confront Pharaoh, and I want you to lead the Israelites out. You just tell them I sent you and it will be good enough."

Moses said, "Well, wait a minute, God. This is a tough assignment. Pharaoh isn't going to be real open to this, and I'm not sure I can convince the Israelites. I know those people! They are going to say, 'God sent you? That's cool. . . What is His name?' So Lord, what am I going to tell them?"

Exodus 3:14-15

<sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

<sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.'

"This is my name forever,  
the name you shall call me  
from generation to generation. I AM.

Now, in Hebrew, it is four letters that are translated "I Am." That's what God said on that day. There are no vowels in Hebrew, so it's Y-H-W-H. That's the Hebrew word. So you have to put vowels in there to pronounce it. In Hebrew it's kind of a guttural sound. But legitimately, the "I AM" could be the name Yahweh, it could be the name Jehovah. Both of them are perfectly acceptable. The name "I AM" was so holy among the Jews, the most devout ones would never say it.

When Jesus was being confronted as to His identity among the religious leaders, He identified Himself as the Great I AM, who met Moses on the mountain. Remember in John 8:51-19:

<sup>51</sup> Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death.” [Notice, not just God’s word, whoever obeys My word, because it’s one and the same.]

<sup>52</sup> At this they exclaimed, “Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. <sup>53</sup> Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?”

[It doesn’t say this here, but you can assume Jesus was thinking, “Man, am I ever glad you asked me that!”]

<sup>54</sup> Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. <sup>55</sup> Though you do not know him, I know Him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know Him and obey His word. [Wow. Here’s these people claiming to know God and being the religious leaders, and Jesus said, “You don’t know Him, in fact whenever you say you do, you are lying and if I told you I didn’t know Him, I’d be lying like you.”]

When you say today, “I know God,” would Jesus say, “Yes you do,” OR would He say, “You’re lying”?

<sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”

<sup>57</sup> “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”

<sup>58</sup> “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” [That’s not bad English, that’s good theology. Jesus said, “Before Abraham was born, I am – the eternally existing God, who met your Moses on the mountain, you’re standing here talking to Him. That’s who I am. Amazing!]<sup>59</sup> At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

Why were they going to stone Him? Because they knew exactly what He was saying. Which is why at Jesus’ death, when the sky grew dark and the wind blew and the earthquake struck and the temple curtain tore and the tombs opened up – remember that Centurion who was standing there with his pitiful little spear, watching all of this? He saw all this and the way He died. He said, “Surely this man was the Son of God.”

Not just ‘a son’, but thee Son. Not just a man, but the God-Man. C.S. Lewis in his book, *Mere Christianity* wrote:

I’m trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.” It’s one of the things we must not say. A man who is merely a man and said the things Jesus said, would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic, on the level of the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God, or else a madman or something

worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

The true Jesus is the Son of the Living God. The true Jesus is the Great I AM.

I was reading a piece recently by Kevin DeYoung, author, speaker. He said:

The greatness of God is most clearly displayed in His Son. The glory of the gospel is only made evident in His Son. That's why Jesus' question to His disciples in Matthew 16 is so important. *Who do you say that I am?* The question is doubly crucial in our day, because no one is as popular in the U.S. as Jesus. Not every Jesus is the real Jesus:

There's the Republican Jesus, who is against tax increases and activist judges, for family values and owning firearms.

There's the Democrat Jesus, who is against Wall Street and Wal-mart, for reducing our carbon footprint and printing money.

There's Therapist Jesus, who helps us cope with life's problems, heals our past, tells us how valuable we are and not to be so hard on ourselves.

There's Starbucks Jesus, who drinks fair trade coffee, loves spiritual conversations, drives a hybrid and goes to film festivals.

There's Open-Minded Jesus, who loves everyone all the time, no matter what, except for the people who are not as open-minded as you.

There's Touchdown Jesus, who helps athletes run faster and jump higher than non-Christians, and determines the outcomes of Super Bowls.

There's Martyr Jesus, a good man who died a cruel death so we could feel sorry for him.

There's Gentle Jesus, who is meek and mild, with high cheekbones, flowing hair and walks around barefoot while wearing a sash, looking very German.

There's a Hippie Jesus, who teaches everyone to give peace a chance, imagines a world without religion, and helps us remember that all you need is love.

There's Yuppie Jesus, who encourages us to reach our full potential, reach for the stars, and buy a boat.

There's Spirituality Jesus, who hates religion, churches, pastors, priests and doctrine, and would rather have people out in nature finding the god within, while listening to ambiguously spiritual music.

There's Platitude Jesus, good for Christmas specials, greeting cards, and bad sermons, inspiring people to believe in themselves.

There is Revolutionary Jesus, who teaches us to rebel against the status quo, stick it to the man, and blame things on the system.

There's Guru Jesus, a wise, inspirational teacher who believes in you and helps you find your center.

There's Boyfriend Jesus, who wraps his arm around us as we sing about his intoxicating love in our secret place.

And there's Good Example Jesus, who knows how to help people, change the planet, and help you to become a better you.

And then, there is Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. Not just another prophet, not just another rabbi, not just another wonder-worker. He was the one they had been waiting for. The Son of David, and Abraham's chosen seed. The one to deliver us from captivity. The goal of the Mosaic Law. Yahweh in the flesh. The one who established God's reign and rule. The one to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, freedom to the prisoners, and proclaimed good news to the poor, the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sins of the world. This Jesus was the Creator, come to earth, and the beginning of a new creation. He embodied the covenant, fulfilled the commandments, and reversed the curse. This Jesus is the Christ who spoke to the serpent, the Christ prefigured to Noah and the flood, the Christ promised to Abraham, the Christ prophesied through Balaam for the Moabites, the Christ guaranteed to Moses before he died, the Christ promised to David when he was king, the Christ revealed to Isaiah as the suffering servant, the Christ predicted through the prophets, and prepared for through John the Baptist. This Christ is not a reflection of the current mood or projection of our own desires. He is the Lord and God, the Father's Son, He is the Savior of the world, He is the substitute for our sins, more loving, more holy, more wonderfully terrifying than we ever thought possible, He is the Messiah of the world, He is the living Son of God, He is the Great I AM.

That is the true Jesus! (applause)

So, when Jesus asks you (and He has, or He will), "Who do you say I am," you can answer like Peter did, "You are the Messiah, the Christ. You are God the Messiah. You are the Son of the Living God. You are God, the Son."

I love the way Jesus responds to this (Matthew 16:17):

<sup>17</sup> Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for [you were not ever smart enough to figure that out! (laughter) In fact nobody is! Flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you, but My Father revealed to you who I am.]

That's a great reminder for us. You see, we can have our own version of Jesus, or we can go with the popular definition of Jesus, or when we are asked the question, "Who do you say I am," we can give the Father's answer to His identity. This is the Messiah, the Christ. This is My Son. The Son of the Living God. He is the Great I AM.

*Father, I want to thank you for this. This is not a popular message in this world. Satan has been fighting us all week on this. God, he loses again, because greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world. I know I can only imagine how this is going to affect a lot of the people who are hearing it, God, but it's not up to me, it's up to You. This is who You are. And over the next few weeks, if you grant us that time, we want to get even deeper into the revelation of the many facets of Your identity that lead us right back to the same place. There is one God, existing in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus, You are God come in the flesh, the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, the Great I AM. As we sing this closing song today, God, this is our prayer, our tribute, our confession. If there be any in this room today who are not certain of who they have believed in, or who You are, and they want to be sure that they have trusted and put their faith in the true Jesus, I pray, God, that wherever they are, they would come forward and find the true Jesus waiting to receive them, the One who alone can save us from our sins. God we commit this time to you. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



