

Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up

By Pastor Greg
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Matthew 16:13-17

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(Sermon begins with video *He Was*)

That video we just watched reinforces the many things Jesus did for us (He was beaten, He was rejected, He was pierced). And if we were to compare the things Jesus did against the prophecies found in the Old Testament, it's easy to see that Jesus was the Messiah. He fulfilled all the things promised to us by the word of God.

Now, I'll admit that not everyone sees this truth as easily as I do. Some claim Jesus was the figment of the early Christian's wild imagination (<http://www.vexen.co.uk/religion/index.html>). And every time I read an argument against Jesus or God, I get the feeling that they just don't get it. They are speculating in the dark; walking blindfolded down a path of reason that ends at a cliff. It's difficult to understand Jesus without spending time with Jesus. How can someone know Jesus intimately without first drawing near to Him? From a distance, people will come up with all sorts of wild answers. It's what happened to the crowds who had simply been following Jesus for food and healing. ¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴"Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets." ¹⁵Then he asked them, "But who do you say I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah. (Matthew 16:13-16a)

Apparently the crowds had been muttering among themselves about Jesus; speculating about His true identity (not much has changed in seems). They thought He was a great teacher, evangelist, or prophet, but apparently none knew the real Jesus. But Peter seems to know. His observation is that Jesus is the Messiah.

What did Peter mean when he made this statement about this Man? What were the weight of his words? The word "Messiah" can mean "anointed one" or "one set apart", and could be used for many people throughout the Old Testament; Noah (as one who rescues for God), Abraham (one who obeys God), Moses (one who leads for God), and David (one who reflects the royalty of God). Even though these men had

acted with messianic characteristics, none were the Messiah. Peter says here that Jesus was THE Messiah, not a Messiah. It's like the difference you would understand when I say "a constitution" instead of "The Constitution". In fact, Peter is saying that this Man Jesus is the One the Jews had been waiting for; the One sent by God to redeem, restore, and glorify. This wasn't too hard for Peter to grasp. Of course, Jesus was the Messiah. Look at the evidence and see what He has done! But what Peter says next is totally unexpected. "(You are) **the Son of the living God.**" ¹⁷ **Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being.** ¹ (Matthew 16:16b-17) He calls Jesus the Son of the Living God. And to say that the Man standing before him was God in human flesh was a monumental insight indeed.

Peter has just made a step beyond human reason. C. S. Lewis observes *"Among these Jews there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if He was God. He claims to forgive sins. He says He has always existed. He says He is coming to judge the world at the end of time. Now let us get this clear. Among Pantheists, like the Indians, anyone might say that he was a part of God, or one with God: there would be nothing very odd about it. But this man, since He was a Jew, could not mean that kind of God. God, in their language, meant the Being outside of the world, who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips."*²

To those listening, Peter's claim would sound about as absurd as if I claimed to you that my toaster changed the oil in my truck last week. We all know that a toaster can't change oil, no matter how brave it may be. How would it grip the wrench? So the chance of one of these people seeing deity in the Man Jesus was very slim indeed. Peter's observation shows insight beyond his own understanding and reason, especially since he was Jewish. And Jesus knew this. That's why He told Peter that this understanding came from the Father in Heaven.

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

² C.S. Lewis *Mere Christianity* Page 55

Does Peter fully understand just what has happened in his life? The finger of God has just reached down and touched his mind. The Father has just torn away the veil that has clouded his understanding for so long. And (here's the part I like) God has just demonstrated the grandness of His love, mercy, and tenderness by giving Peter the ability to see God in the flesh. I think one of the tenderest things the Father does for us is to open our eyes so that we may see Him. For the Father to give us the Messiah, well that's one thing. But to pull away the veil and reveal Himself to us, well, that's a love that is way off the scale.

Robert Funk, the founder of the Jesus Seminar, claims: "The only Jesus most people want is the mythic one. They don't want the real Jesus. They want the one they can worship." Yea Robert, you're right. I want a Jesus that blows my socks off. I want a Jesus that will drive me to my knees. I want a Jesus that is a reflection of the Father. I want a Jesus I can worship. A Jesus who is the Messiah receives my gratitude, but a Jesus who is the Son of God receives my worship. See, that's the difference between Mr. Funk and me. He's still wearing the veil. Obviously he's not been touched by the finger of God. It's obvious because of the Jesus he and his movement are trying to create.

Like Peter, the moment we start saying that Jesus is God in the flesh we too begin to change. Peter was first called Simon, but right after he makes this declaration Jesus adds to his name. "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."³ (Matthew 16:18). Jesus says that Simon is a *Petros* (a small stone), but upon this *Petra* (a large immovable rock) He will build His church. Upon this truth (that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of the Living God) Christ will build His church. This is what is immovable and unshakable. This is the foundation of the church. And by our declaration we become a stone in the mighty Church of God (1 Peter 2:5)

The Father, in a grand demonstration of love, continues to reach down to people like you and me, pull away the blindfold, and reveal Himself through His Son, Jesus the Christ. And the Church will be established upon people like you and I who have seen and who now know and who now worship the Son of the Living God.

³*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update*. 1995 (Mt 16:18). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.