



“BUT WHO
DO YOU SAY THAT
I AM?”

"But who do you say that I am?" That was the question that Jesus asked His disciples in the Gospel accounts found in Luke 9:20 and Matthew 16:15. We know that in both accounts Peter responded, *"The Christ of God."* (Luke 19:20)/ *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."* (Matthew 16:16) Jesus then tells Peter that He was correct and that he was only able to see that truth as it was revealed to him by God, the Father (Matthew 16:17)

Through the years as we have been in church, we have all heard of this account. We are told how great it was for Peter to have been given that revelation and truth concerning Jesus and who He was - the Messiah/the Christ. However, did Peter really and truly have the correct concept of what he had just declared concerning Jesus? This discussion came up recently at one of our BibleShare gatherings as we were discussing Luke 9.

Let's look at this account in its context within the scriptures. It took place somewhere between the end of Jesus' first year of His ministry and the beginning of His second. His notoriety was discussed even in the palace of Herod the Tetrach (Luke 9:7-9) People were saying and thinking all sorts of things concerning Jesus. Up to this time, the religious leaders were constantly pressing Him concerning this point of who He was, where he came from and who His father was. It was the talk of the countryside - Who is this Jesus?!!! Could He possibly be the Messiah? Would He be the one that they were waiting for?

We also see, just prior to this account that Jesus had sent out the disciples on their first "missionary" trip which was a very successful one. (Luke 9:1-6,10) Many people had heard the message to "repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is as hand," through the disciples that Jesus had sent forth. When the disciples returned from their missionary journey, Jesus took them to a "desert place." However, they were followed by the multitudes. We then read that He had compassion on the multitude and performs the miracle of the loaves of bread and the fish in which 5000 are fed. Which, by the way, was accomplished by Jesus through the hands of the disciples.

Now, they are alone - just Jesus and His disciples. We see that Jesus had just completed a time of prayer with His Father. He then asks the question, *"Whom say the people that I am?"* (Luke 9:18). They responded as expressed in Luke 9:19, *"They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again."* He then asks the question, *"But who do you say that I am?"* As we mentioned previously, Peter responds with what we know was the "correct" answer. In Matthew's account, we see that Jesus continues on concerning the truth of what Peter had said about Him. We read that Jesus told His disciples that this truth of Him being the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One of God, was the "rock," the very "foundation" on which the soon coming Body of Christ, the Church, must be built upon. Peter, who originally was called Simon by birth, now had a "name change" which signified the revelation that He had received from the Father. Jesus was saying through this symbolic gesture with Peter, that anyone who would receive and believe the revelation that Jesus was indeed the Messiah would become a part of His Church (*ekklēsia*), which means that they would become a part of Jesus' spiritual governmental system upon this earth. The revelation that Jesus is indeed the Anointed One of God is truly where it all begins.

However, as we look at this account in both Gospels, we see that after Jesus tells Peter that he was correct in his answer, the scripture tells us in Luke 9:21 that, *"He straitly charged them and commanded them..."* not to tell anyone concerning Him being the Messiah. He then goes into a dissertation concerning the persecution, rejection and even death that He is about to endure at the hands of the religious leaders - *"The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be*

slain, and be raised the third day."(Luke 9:22) As we all know Peter takes Jesus aside and promptly tells Jesus that He was wrong concerning the "dying stuff." And, as we also know, Jesus rebuked Peter with those well know words, "*Get behind me satan...*"

So what exactly happened in this account other than the obvious? What exactly was Jesus trying to point out to Peter, to the rest of the disciples and to us even today? I believe that Jesus asked that question to the disciples at the prompting of the Father. As previously mentioned, Jesus was alone praying. His disciples were nearby. Prompted by His time with the Father, Jesus then proceeded to ask the questions. It was time to begin to really get into the hearts and minds of His disciples what this whole thing was truly about. In asking the question to them concerning who they thought He was, He was "putting them on the spot," *per se*. It was time for them to begin to truly understand what they had gotten into and ultimately what they were going to get themselves into in the times to come.

Peter responded and we can "assume" that the other disciples were in agreement with what Peter spoke. The fact was that they were totally correct about Jesus being the Messiah. However, their concept of what that exactly meant was where the problem would lay. They were in agreement that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. However, Jesus also knew that their concept of what the Messiah would be and should be was incorrect. The disciple's concept of what the Messiah should be and would do was just like that of every other Jewish person in that time and even to this day. This is seen most vividly in Judas. He was right there when this account took place. He most likely was in total agreement with Peter and the others that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. However, we have come to know that Judas' idea and concept of what the Messiah should be and would do was very different than that of the plan of the Father concerning Messiah. At this point, most likely all of the disciples had a similar concept as Judas. After all this is what they were taught by the Jewish Elders and Religious Leadership.

So what was the "concept" of Messiah to the Jewish people? First of all their concept of Messiah was that he was not divine but totally man. Yes, he would be anointed by Yahweh but he would not be God/Man. This was, and still is, their biggest "sticking point" with Jesus. Their concept of their Messiah was that he would come as a conquering, victorious ruler and king and set them free from the tyranny of their enemies and restore the land back to them. What was lacking in their concept of Messiah was that they failed to grasp the full scope of God's ultimate plan. They failed to grasp the true heart of Yahweh. His heart was to restore the relationship between God and all man that was breached because of the sin of Adam. Everything in their Jewish scriptures not only pointed to the redemption of the Jewish people back to the land but the primary point of their scriptures was to express the love of Yahweh Adonai not just to them but to all Mankind. The scriptures were to reveal God's heart of ***spiritual redemption*** from the ultimate enemy called sin. It was not only the redemption of the land of Israel back to the Jewish people from the hands of the Romans. The redemption of the "land" back to the Jewish people was literally a "type" that was actually pointing to the redemption of Man back to the "land" known as the Kingdom of God.

That is why Jesus told the disciples to tell no one even though they were correct in their recognition of who He was. The problem would be that just like the disciples, the people's concept of their Messiah was incorrect. In proclaiming and declaring outwardly at that time that Jesus was the true Messiah, it would affect the rest of His real mission here on earth. The people would come and swarm Him and make him their king. There would be armies of Jewish Zealots that would flock to him and wage war and battles for him and "in His name" against the Romans, all of which had nothing to do with Jesus' primary mission.

Jesus' primary mission was to walk upon this earth and reveal what the true character and lifestyle should be of a true son of God. In living that lifestyle, it would lead to Him revealing another aspect of His mission. He would express a selfless lifestyle. A lifestyle which was to be "self-sacrificing," to the point of laying

down His life. In dying on the cross He would take the punishment that man was destined to receive because of sin. His mission was to be the spotless perfect Lamb of God so that through His death and resurrection, salvation would be available and the relationship between God and Man would be restored. Jesus' main "mission" was to bring Man back into "oneness" with Him and the Father. (John 17:20-23)

Jesus was trying to "break their man-made mold" of their "Messiah concept." After the revelation that Peter received of Him being the Messiah, it was vital for Jesus to continue to express what that truly meant. It was vital for His disciples to truly grasp what the correct concept of the Messiah truly was. At that time, everyone's concept of their Messiah was incorrect. How could this be?

One of the reasons is that the Jewish people made their Messiah to be exactly what they needed and wanted their Messiah to be. They needed someone to free them from the Romans. If we look at the history of that time, we know from the writings of Josephus and others that there were many who claimed to be the Messiah and had men join them in the battle against the Romans only to be devastatingly defeated. Why? Because that was not what God's Anointed One, the true Messiah was going to do. No, God's Anointed One was not going to come to set the Jewish people free from the Romans. No, God's Anointed One was not going to come to be crowned king to rule over just the land of Israel. No, God's Anointed One, the Messiah, was not going to be one who would come in this world's splendor and glory.

Instead, God's Anointed One, the Messiah was going to come and bring the Kingdom of God upon the earth. God's Anointed One, the Messiah was going to, not free people from the Romans, but rather He was going to set all people free from the bondage of their sin and the tyranny of the evil one. To do this God's Anointed One the Messiah would come and teach us God's ways and teach us how to live the Christ-like lifestyle - a lifestyle that pleases and blesses the heart of the Father. To do this God's Anointed One, the Messiah would have to go through the rejection by His own people, suffer tremendous persecution from the religious leaders and ultimately pay the ultimate price as a sacrifice and take the punishment for the sin of all man.

Jesus immediately expressed the "job description" of the Messiah when Peter received and expressed the revelation that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. That job description included, *"The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day."* (Luke 9:22) Jesus also, went on to express the "job description" for anyone who chooses to believe in and accept the truth of what Messiah really is and will do - both at that time and forever. The job description of a disciple of Jesus includes, *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."* (Luke 9:23-26) If we look closely we see that the "job description" of a disciple of Jesus is very similar to that of Jesus. It is a lifestyle of selflessness. It is a lifestyle of losing your own identity and being identified with the lifestyle, character and nature of the Messiah - Jesus. It is a lifestyle of "dying to self" for the purpose and betterment of others by bringing them back into "oneness" with Jesus and the Father.

After being told by Jesus that he responded correctly to Jesus question, Peter immediately thought that he had it all together and that everything would now fit into the "little box" that he had Messiah placed in. After all if Jesus were the Messiah then that meant that as His disciple, Peter would have a pretty good position in Jesus' Kingdom. He was probably picking out his room in the palace. Then Jesus told them what it really meant for both Jesus, the Messiah, and anyone else that followed Him. That is when Peter went to Jesus to try to "straighten Him out" about all this "Messiah" business. Jesus promptly rebuked the enemy

that was working through that wrong idea and concept of Peter's Messiah. Jesus had to change the faulty concept of "Messiah" that both the disciples had and the people had.

I believe it is the same today. If we would ask people, "Who do you say Jesus is?" you would get some pretty interesting answers. If we would ask this question to those that call themselves "Christians," I am confident that they would say that He is their Messiah, their Lord and their Saviour. And they would be correct in their answer. However, are their concepts and thinking of what that actually is correct?

Herein lies the difficulty. I had heard that it is estimated that within the earth today, there are over 46,000 denominations. That is not including those we do not know about and all the "lone ranger" ministries out there. Whether this is totally accurate is not the point. The point is as follows: the term "denomination" comes from the mathematical function of division. What that statistic just mentioned reveals is that there are over 46,000 divisions within the Body of Christ which could possibly mean that there are over 4600 or more concepts of what it truly means for Jesus to be the Messiah, God's Christ, our Lord and our Savior!!!

I am not saying that I have the definitive concept on this matter. What I am saying is that we must go to the scriptures and truly read them with the illumination of the Holy Spirit who is the "Spirit of truth." This may be one of the problems why the Body of Christ is not as effective in this earth today as we should be and as God had intended for us to be. Jesus stressed to His disciples to get rid of their manmade concepts of what the Messiah should be and what He would do. He stressed and trained His disciples in this new lifestyle of being a follower of His as well as being, through Him, a son or daughter of the most High God. He stressed that it was about "dying to self" and "taking up your cross." It was about laying down your life for others and pointing them to Jesus who brings them back into "oneness" with Him and the Father. It is not about what God can do for you. It is about doing all things unto Him for His glory and for His honor. We have not been given the position of being a "son of God" for our own betterment, although God does indeed bless His children. However, the "primary mission" of the disciple of Jesus is having "oneness" with Jesus and the Father and bringing as many people as possible to that same relationship with Jesus and the Father.

The disciples needed to rid themselves and purge themselves of the faulty, manmade, incorrect concepts of who their Messiah really is and what it meant to truly follow Him. It was not what they were told. It was not what they thought. I believe, in this hour of awaiting and preparing for Jesus' Second Coming, He is asking those who call themselves His followers, "Who do you say I am?" I believe He is well aware of our faulty, manmade and incorrect concepts that are prevalent within His Body. Whether we realize it or not, we have made Jesus and God, the Father after our own image - the image of what we want Him to be and do. Unfortunately, we may be looking at Him incorrectly and therefore portraying Him to others, incorrectly. I believe those that truly have a desire and passion for God's Anointed One, Jesus the Messiah, Yeshua ha Meshiach will begin to hear the heart of God and receive the correction of the Lord. Who the Lord loves as a son, He corrects. (Hebrews 12: 5-8) There will be those that will "own up," admit and repent that we may have been looking at many things incorrectly. I believe that there will be a remnant that will come forth and walk in the correct understanding of who Jesus really is. It is found within the scriptures. The truth is not hidden. The Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of Truth" that was given to us for this express purpose.

I encourage every one of us to open the scriptures for ourselves. Don't wait for Sunday or Wednesday or any time when you may gather corporately to listen and hear someone tell you what they think the scriptures say. There is nothing wrong with that. However, unfortunately, many of us have been negligent in searching the scriptures for our selves. We have become too reliant on others. 1John 2:27 exhorts us very clearly concerning this: ***"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no***

lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. This was the way God had originally intended for His people to correctly understand His concepts - directly from His Holy Spirit to the born again spirit man.

As we gather together, instead of just listening and taking in one person's concepts, we should share and learn from each other's spirit and glean God's truth together through His Holy Spirit and His holy scriptures. That is what Paul exhorted the Body of Christ to do when they gathered as found in 1Corinthians 14:26, *"How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying."*

If Jesus would ask each of us the question, "Who do you say that I am?" I am sure that we would answer correctly, just as Peter did, *"You are the Christ (the Messiah) the Son of the living God."* However, do we, like Peter and the other disciples, have an incorrect concept of what we just answered? Is it possible that we may have made Jesus and God, the Father after our own image? Have we made them to be what we want them to be and desire them to do things in the way that we think is the way things should be accomplished instead of the other way around? Each of us may be able to answer Jesus' question correctly if He would ask; "Who do you say that I am?" The real question is, "Do we really understand and grasp correctly who Jesus, as the Messiah, really and truly is and are we willing to yield ourselves to His ways?"