

Whom Say Ye That I Am?

For Christmas we took time to marvel not just at the miracle of birth when Christ came to us, but even more at the great mystery of God becoming flesh.

1Tim 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Our focus, at Christmas time, was on the fact that Christ can so very much identify with us with what we go through, in the flesh. It is not that this was a new experience for God, but it fulfilled the requirement for our redemption that as the first Adam made us sinners, the second Adam made us saints.

1Cor 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit.

1. More than a man -

When Jesus was on earth, He referred to Himself as the Son of man. However, the title *Son of man* has a greater context than just being human. As a title, this is a reference for the Messiah.

Ps 80:17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself.

Dan 7:13-14 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting

dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed.

Only God is depicted as riding on the clouds.

Ps 68:4 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.

Isa 19:1 The burden of Egypt. Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.

Ps 104:3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind:

Jesus referred to this title in many ways, like He did in Matthew 25 to speak of His deity when He would come in glory and sit upon the throne of glory.

Matt 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

Putting all of this together, one like the Son of man coming on the clouds to His throne of glory, and God coming and conquering, riding the clouds, this is why the Sanhedrin accused Christ of blasphemy, claiming to be the divine Messiah.

Mark 14:61-64 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?
62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?

64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

The title, *Son of man*, was more than a statement about His humanity, it was also a statement about Him being one with "the blessed," or God.

2. Whom do *men* say that I am?

Now, we turn from focusing on the humanity to focus on the deity of Christ. We don't want to diminish the fact that He is the Almighty God by overemphasizing His common experience with us. As Jesus was demonstrating that He was more than a prophet, Jesus asked of the disciples, "Whom do *men* say that I the Son of man am?"

Matt 16:13-14 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

14 And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

People were unsuccessfully trying to fit Jesus into one of their categories that they had constructed. Today, in our climate of neo-orthodoxy and non-absolutes, people will interpret that question as encouragement to define who Christ is to them. "To me, Christ is Buddha, or Allah, or Shirley Maclaine (the actress with New Age claims of being god), or me."

When I was a kid, I had an image of God from a children's story book. I saw a picture of an old man, who was very round with white bushy hair and beard, rosy cheeks, smooth youthful skin, and had a bunch of children playing with him and sitting on his lap. Somebody else might interpret that image and conclude

that God was an obese, unkempt man long overdue for a haircut who had a penchant for young children.

Jesus Christ is not a personal construct. A construct is an abstract definition that meets your personal requirements. Constructs can be useful when you are trying to organize your life, but Jesus Christ is not a construct.

Someone who was trying to create a construct would try to create a neat, internally consistent pre-conception of what God would be like. They would say, for example, "If I met God, I would expect him to be loving, but would give us what we need, not just what we want, but sometimes He would give us a little of what we want, too, but not too much of that because we might get spoiled, but maybe if we were extra good he'd give us a little extra..." Our constructs would sound a little bit like Jackie Mason the comedian wrote our theology books.

For the people of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus fit into their category of a prophet. This was not necessarily such a great advantage to see Him in that way because Israel also had a reputation for killing its prophets.

3. The deity of Christ is not optional -

The issue of the deity of Jesus Christ has been hotly debated for centuries. As early as the 300s AD Arius taught that Jesus was created by God. His teachings were contested for the next 400 years. Such doctrine has never gone away and is held by Unitarians, Iglesia ni Cristo, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christian Science.

Islam denies the deity of Christ:

O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion or say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of Allah and His word which He directed to Mary and a soul [created at a command] from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers. And do not say, 'Three'; desist—it is better for

you. Indeed, Allah is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son.

– Qur'an 4:171 (Surah An-Nisa)

To Jesus, who men and women believed Him to be was of fundamental importance. To say what Jesus said and to claim what Jesus claimed about Himself, one couldn't conclude He was just a good moral man or a prophet. That alternative isn't open to an individual, and Jesus never intended it to be.

– Josh McDowell

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level of a 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.

– C.S. Lewis

God declared that there is no god beside Him.

Ex 34:14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God:

Ex 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Deut 6:14-15 Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you;

15 (For the LORD thy God *is* a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.

There are those who say that Jesus never said He was God. The problem

is that they just don't like *the way* He said it.

John 5:23 That all *men* should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

You can't honor the Son the same way you honor the Father if God said that there is no one beside Him *unless* if Jesus is one *with the Father*.

1John 2:22-23 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.
23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: *(but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*

People understood that Jesus was claiming to be one with the Father and sought to kill Him for blasphemy.

John 8:19,58,59 Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

There is no option but to accept Christ as God.

4. But, whom say *ye* that I am?

We have considered what the *Bible* says about Who Christ is, what *people* think of Christ, how we cannot avoid Who Christ is as God, but there is a question that is left for us individually.

Matt 16:15-18 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Whom say *ye* that Christ is? Peter answered plainly that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. The word *Messiah* means the anointed one. There were others such as kings and priests who were anointed in the Old Testament so that Jesus could have looked like He was just another prophet, king, or priest. He did not just say that He is *a* messiah. Peter was clear that Jesus was *the* deliverer in the sense that Isaiah used:

Isa 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound;

Isa 9:6,7 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, **The mighty God**, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from

henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Even more than *a* Messiah and *the* Messiah, Peter declared that Jesus was the Son of the living God. Jesus then pointed out that this is the basis for His whole agenda. If you say that Christ is God then there are certain things that follow.

- Salvation

Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Our whole relationship with God is founded on Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Consider how the Jews reacted to Christ when the palsied man was brought before Him.

Mark 2:5-11 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7 Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy* sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

They recognized that only God can forgive sins. The only way His forgiveness makes sense is if He is God.

Now unless the speaker is God, this is really so preposterous as to be comic. We can all understand how a man forgives offences against himself. You tread on my toe and I forgive you, you steal my money and I forgive you. But what should we make of a man, himself unrobbed and untrodden on, who announced that he forgave you for treading on other men's toes and stealing other men's money? Asinine fatuity is the kindest description we should give of his conduct. Yet this is what Jesus did. He told people that their sins were forgiven, and never waited to consult all the other people whom their sins had undoubtedly injured. He unhesitatingly behaved as if He was the party chiefly concerned, the person chiefly offended in all offences. This makes sense only if He really was the God whose laws are broken and whose love is wounded in every sin. In the mouth of any speaker who is not God these words would imply what I can only regard as a silliness unrivalled by any other character in history.

– C.S. Lewis

- Church

Christ's church is built on the confession that Christ is God. It is built *up* of His disciples, but it is built *on* Him.

1Cor 3:6-11 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.
11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The church is not built up from its programs except the programs are preaching Jesus.

- The destruction of all that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

2Cor 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

4(For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

5Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Jesus told us that the gates of Hell would not prevail against His church.

It's a fact of earthly life that when God opens the windows of heaven to bless us, the devil opens the doors of hell to blast us. When God begins moving, the devil fires up all his artillery.
— Adiran Rogers

The gates of Hell does not refer to fortifications in Hell. The "gates" refers to those who sit in judgement and power that sat in the prominent place of entrance into a city. It refers to the powers of Satan and his angels. Satan's powers, no matter how organized or strong, will never defeat Christ's church. Even more than that, the church is not in a defensive *stance*, but an offensive *advance*.

Whom do *you* say Christ is? Is He your Lord and Savior? If not, would you surrender your heart to reign in your life?

If you *do* proclaim that Jesus is your Savior, is He also your God? Are you ready to work in His church to preach His Gospel? Would you declare your commitment to Him by following Him in baptism? Do you visit the Gates of Hell with your mouth and behavior or are you attacking the Gates of Hell with the Gospel?

1Tim 3:16, 1Cor 15:45

1. More than a man - Ps 80:17, Dan 7:13-14, Ps 68:4, Isa 19:1, Ps 104:3, Matt 25:31, Mark 14:61-64
2. Whom do men say that I am? Matt 16:13-14
3. The deity of Christ is not optional - Ex 34:14, Ex 20:3, Deut 6:14-15, John 5:23, 1John 2:22-23, John 8:19,58,59
4. But, whom say ye that I am? Matt 16:15-18, Isa 61:1,9:6,7, Mark 2:5-11, 1Cor 3:6-11, 2Cor 10:3-5