

WHO IS JESUS?

Jesus is the Christ to whom all of Scripture points.



TRANSFORMATION
for Adult LifeGroups

MATTHEW 16:13-28

JANUARY 3, 2018/JANUARY 7, 2018

TODAY'S TEXT AND MAIN IDEA

Text: MATTHEW 16:16 (NIV), "Simon Peter answered (Jesus), "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Main Idea: Jesus is the Christ to whom all of Scripture points.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Today we are going to look at a time when Matthew gives us an account in which Jesus talks with His disciples about His identity. In this account, Jesus shows His disciples then and now the need to identify Him correctly. Everyone seems to have an opinion about who Jesus is and what He came to do. Some of the opinions come close to what the Bible teaches, while others have no basis in truth. Believers share a conviction about Jesus that compels us to declare that He is the Christ. Declaring Him to be the Messiah means something to us, in us, and through us. The account in Matthew encourages us to make our declaration and to live it out each day.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Matthew 1–13 focuses on Jesus' birth, the beginning of His ministry, and His rise in popularity as a preacher, teacher, and healer. The second half of Matthew's Gospel focuses on events and teachings that reveal Jesus' mission as the Messiah-King. Jesus moved from the peak of His popular public ministry to increasing opposition from Jewish religious leaders. The narrative culminates in the description of Jesus' last days, from His triumphal entry into Jerusalem to His suffering, death, resurrection, and commission of His disciples.

As chapter 14 opens, the setting is Jesus' public ministry in Galilee about a year before His crucifixion. Matthew began the chapter on a somber note, describing John the Baptist's murder at the hands of Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee (14:1-12). This event prompted Jesus to withdraw with the Twelve into a wilderness area—away from the towns and large crowds. However, the multitudes soon found Him and flocked to where He was. The feeding of the 5,000 was the pinnacle of His public ministry, at least in terms of numbers of people directly affected (14:13-21). That night, Jesus also walked on water during a storm, and the next day He healed more sick people (14:22-36).

In Matthew 15, we see startling examples of the impact of Jesus' ministry. For example, the Pharisees picked a fight with Him concerning religious tradition (15:1-9), which Jesus turned into a teaching moment about defilement (15:10-20). Then an outsider—a Gentile mother—demonstrated great faith in Jesus, and more people were healed (15:21-31). Soon Jesus provided another feeding miracle, feeding 4,000 people this time (15:32-38).

Chapter 16 opens with another account of fierce opposition to Jesus, this time initiated by a joint committee of Pharisees and Sadducees, two groups that normally did not get along but agreed on this occasion to oppose Jesus (16:1-12). With hostility mounting, Jesus took His apostles to a region outside Galilee. There the events occurred that are the special focus of this session: Peter's confession of Jesus (16:13-20), Jesus' prediction of His coming death and resurrection (16:21-23), and His teaching on what it means to take up one's cross and follow Him (16:24-28).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

MISUNDERSTOOD IDENTITY

> Read Mathew 16:13-14

- Consider the disciples' responses in Matthew 16:14. How do people today respond to the question, "Who do you think Jesus is?"
- Why is the knowledge of Jesus' true identity crucial for all people?

TRUE IDENTITY

> Read Matthew 16:15-16

- Highlight verse 15. Jesus made the question personal. Why is your answer to Jesus' question critical to your relationship with Him?
- How did Peter's response confirm Jesus' true identity?

NEW IDENTITY

> Read Matthew 16:17-20

- What is the significance of Jesus' affirmation of Simon Peter's declaration?
- In Greek, Peter's name means a specific stone or rock (petros). How does a rock symbolize the value of Peter's affirmation?
- In verse 18, Jesus referred to another type of rock, a petra, or bedrock. What is the bedrock of the church?

CROSS IDENTITY

> Read Matthew 16:21-28

- Recall other times when Jesus told His disciples about His impending death. Why were they slow to grasp the importance of what He was saying?
- How would you characterize Jesus' words to Peter? Explain.
- Why is following Jesus a daring commitment?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Today marks the first LifeGroup of 2018 and there is no better way to start our New Year than to answer this question. It is in fact the most important question you will ever answer. And it is found in verse 15. "But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?" I want you to close your eyes for a minute and imagine you are sitting across from Jesus - just the two of you and He asks, "Who do you say that I am?" How would you answer? Is he a good teacher, is He someone your mom or dad believed in, your husband, wife or friend? Regardless of what other people think, who do YOU say that He is?

We do not know what 2018 may bring but we do know that Jesus is our Rock – a strong, unchanging, trustworthy foundation. Don't leave here with a case of mistaken identity. There is no question who He is.

UPCOMING LESSONS

- Read Matthew 17: 1-13.
- As you go about your week, notice how people give reverence and awe to something.
- Think of ways you give reverence and awe for Jesus in your personal life.

READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

7th - Genesis 18-19; Psalm 3; Luke 7 | **8th** - Genesis 20-22; Luke 8 | **9th** - Genesis 23-24; Luke 9 | **10th**- Genesis 25-26; Psalm 6; Luke 10 | **11th** - Genesis 27-28; Psalm 4; Luke 11 | **12th**- Genesis 29-30; Luke 12 | **13th** - Genesis 31-33; Luke 13