



A just weight
and balance



are the
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

- Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ
 - Matthew 16:13

Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is?

- 16:14 And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah: and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

- Matthew 16:15

He saith unto them,
But who say **you** that I am?

- 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said,

Thou art the Christ,
the Son of the living God.

- Today, we find Jesus in the districts of Caesarea Philippi.
- It was outside the domain of Herod Antipas, who was the ruler of Galilee.
- The population was mainly non-Jewish, and there Jesus would have peace to teach the Twelve.

- Before we begin
let's set the stage
for this
dramatic event.

- What is Jesus doing in
Caesarea Philippi?

- The area was scattered with temples of the ancient Syrian **Baal worship.**
- Here was an area where ancient **ungodly religions** dominated the atmosphere.
- Here was a place **in the shadow of** the ancient gods.

- Not only did the Syrian gods have their worship here.
- There was near by Caesarea Philippi a great hill in which was a deep cavern; and that cavern was said to be the birthplace of the great pagen god Pan, the god of nature.

- The legends of the gods of Greece gathered around Caesarea Philippi.
- But there was something more.
In Caesarea Philippi there was a great temple of white marble built to the godhead of Caesar.
 - It had been built by Herod the Great.

- Here indeed is a dramatic picture.
- Here is a **homeless**, penniless Galilaean carpenter, with twelve very ordinary men around him.
- At the moment the orthodox Jews are actually plotting to destroy him as a dangerous heretic.
- He stands in an area littered with the temples of the Syrian gods;
 - In a place where Caesar--worship dominated the landscape.

- And there
of all places
Jesus,
the carpenter's son,
asks men who they
believe him to be,
and expects
an answer.

- Has Jesus deliberately set himself against the backdrop of the world's religions in all their history and their splendor, and demanded to be compared with them and to have the verdict given in his favor.

- There Jesus demands to compare his Divinity against all the vain religions of the known world.

- What will the answer be?

- So it is here
at Caesarea Philippi
that Jesus
demand
a verdict
from his disciples

- At some point or another **we've all been told** who Jesus is.
- Maybe you heard it from **teachers**, **parents**, **friends**.
- Maybe you read it in books, Sunday school lessons, **or on bumper stickers**.

- Some of the answers may have been helpful.
Some were not.
- Some were just plain silly and some may have even been hurtful and destructive.
 - Regardless, the question remains.

- I can't answer that question for you.
- Each of us must answer it for ourselves.
- It is not, however, a theology or Bible exam.
- If anything it is an examination of our own lives.

- I don't think Jesus is asking us to parrot back the answers we've heard or read.

- Maybe that's why he pushes the disciples to move from what they are hearing around them to what they are hearing within themselves.
- “But who do you say that I am?”

- This is not an easy question.
- I wonder if we sometimes too readily accept and settle for “Sunday Jesus” answers.
 - You know, the easy, feel good, sentimental ones.

- The problem is life isn't always easy, feel good, or sentimental.
- It's one thing to say who Jesus is here in Tryon, North Carolina, on a Sunday morning, in safety and comfort.
- It's a very different thing to say who he is outside of that.

- The question is never merely academic or abstract.
- It always has a context.
- Here's what I mean.

- Who do we say Jesus is following the death of a loved one?
- Who is Jesus when you get that dreaded medical report?
- Who is Jesus when life is falling apart?

- Who do we say Jesus is when we are faced with decisions **that have no easy answers,**
- Who do we say Jesus is when the night is dark **and the storms of life overwhelm us,**
- Who do we say Jesus is **when faithfulness means risking it all?**

- Here's my point.
- Who we say Jesus is has everything to do with who and how we are and will be.
- Our answer says as much or more about us than Jesus.

- It reveals how we live and what we stand up for.
- It guides our decisions, and determines the actions we take and the words we speak.

- It discloses the depth of our motivation and our commitment to following him, when Jesus invites us to take up our cross and die with him.

- Jesus' question isn't so much about getting the right answer as it is about getting our lives right.
- It is less about our intellect and more about our heart.
- It is grounded in more than simply knowing about Jesus to knowing him personally.

- We are always living with the question.
- Who Jesus was when I was a child is different from who he is for me today.
- Hopefully, who he is for me next year will be different from who he is today.

- It's not that Jesus has changed.
I have.

- We are constantly engaging his question and in so doing we not only discover Jesus anew
we discover ourselves anew.

- Sometimes our answers
are too simple,
too small,
too easy.
 - They are
no match
for the complexities of life
and the pain of the world.

- At Caesarea Philippi Jesus determined to demand a verdict from his disciples.
 - He must know if any of the disciples had comprehended who He is.
 - He did not ask the question directly; but led up to it.

- He began by asking what people were saying about him, and who they took him to be.
 - Some said that he was John the Baptist.
 - Herod Antipas was not the only man who felt that John the Baptist might have come back from the dead.

- Others said that he was Elijah.
- In doing so, they were saying two things about Jesus.
- **# 1** They were saying that he was as great as the greatest of the prophets,
- **# 2** They were also saying that Jesus was the forerunner of the Messiah.

- As Malachi had it,
the promise of God was:
**"Behold, I will send you
Elijah the prophet
before the great and terrible
day of the Lord comes"**
(Malachi 4:5).

- To this day the Jews expect
the return of Elijah
before the coming of
the Messiah

- Some said that Jesus was Jeremiah.
 - It was believed that, before the people went into exile, Jeremiah had taken the ark and the altar of incense out of the Temple,
 - and hidden them away in a lonely cave on Mount Nebo;
- and that, before the coming of the Messiah,
 - he would return and produce them,
 - and the glory of God would come to the people again (2Malachi 2:1-12).

- In 2 Esther 2:18
the promise of God is:
"For thy help
I will send my servants
Isaiah and Jeremiah."
- Of course, there is NO
2nd Malachi
or
2nd Esther.
- These are additions
to the Hebrew Bible.
- Apocrypha - related biblical writings not forming
part of the accepted canon of Scripture.

- When the people identified Jesus with Elijah and with Jeremiah they were paying him a great compliment
- And setting him in a high place, for Jeremiah and Elijah were none other than the expected forerunners of the Anointed One of God.
 - When they arrived, the Kingdom would be very near indeed.

- When Jesus had heard the verdicts of the crowd, he asked the all-important question:

- "And you--who do you say I am?"

- At that question there may very well have been a moment of silence.

- Imagine being asked that question by Jesus himself.

- Into the minds of the disciples must have come thoughts which they were afraid to express.

- Remember, when the teacher asks a question and we are afraid to answer?

- But, Peter, always bold dares to give an answer.

- And it is the answer
Jesus is seeking.

- Jesus knew now that His teaching had not fallen on deaf ears.
- Peter, at least, had come to the correct conclusion.
- “You are the Messiah, the Anointed One of God, the Son of the living God.”

- The words Messiah and Christ are the same;
- The one is Hebrew and the other is the Greek for The Anointed One.

- Kings have always been ordained to office by anointing, as they still are.
 - The Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One is God's King over men.

- Within this passage there are two great truths.
- (# 1) Peter realized that human categories, even the highest, were inadequate to describe Jesus Christ.
- When the people described Jesus as Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the prophets they thought they were setting Jesus in the highest category they could find.

- It was the belief of the Jews that for four hundred years the voice of prophecy had been silent; and they were saying that in Jesus men heard again the direct and authentic voice of God.

- These were great tributes;
but they were
not great enough;
 - For there are
no human categories
which are adequate
to describe Jesus Christ.

- **Napoleon Bonaparte**
and Jesus Christ.
- Though no one is certain of the religious beliefs of the French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, **he did have a strong opinion** toward the Person of Jesus Christ.
- Evidenced by the many **eloquent statements** about the Messiah that are attributed to him.

- **“The nature of Christ’s existence is mysterious, I admit; but this mystery meets the wants of man.**
- **Reject it and the world is an explicable riddle;**
- **Believe it, and the history of our race is satisfactorily explained.”**

- **With unbelievable insight,**
Napoleon saw how
Jesus Christ **conquered.**

- It was
not by force,
but by
winning the heart.

- The one thing of which Peter was quite certain was that no merely human description was adequate to describe Jesus.

- (# 2) This passage teaches that our discovery of Jesus Christ must be a personal discovery.

- Jesus' question is:
"You--what do you think of me?"

- When Pilate asked him if he was the king of the Jews, his answer was:

- "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?"
(John 18:33-34).

- Our knowledge of Jesus **must never be second hand.**
 - A man might know **every theological doctrine** that the mind of man had ever thought out;
 - He might be able **to give a competent summary** of the teaching of Jesus,
- And still **not be** a Christian.

- Jesus' life and presence **calls into question** everything about our lives, our world.
 - That's why we ought not answer his question **too quickly** or with too much certainty.
 - It's not a question **to be figured out** as much as it is **a question to be lived out.**

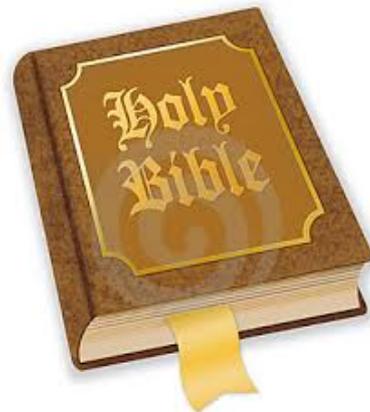
- Christianity never consists in knowing about Jesus;
- It always consists in knowing Jesus.
 - Jesus Christ demands a personal verdict.
 - He did not ask only Peter,
 - He asks every man/woman:
 - "You!
What do you think of me?"

**The doors of the church
are open.**

**The Spirit and the Bride
Say**

“Come”.

Revelation 22:17



- 05-13-2018 Tryon, NC

