

Is That Your Final Answer?  
Matthew 16:13-20  
August 24, 2014

*When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.*

Reality TV shows have become the latest rage on the airwaves. One of the early ones was “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?” Contestants were asked questions, each one worth more money than the last. Each time the contestant answered, the answer was challenged with this question, “Is that your final answer?” The implication was that once the answer was given there was no turning back, no changing of the mind.

We might consider a million dollars a lot of money. But, when compared with eternity, a million dollars is nothing. No matter how much money you have, when your time on this earth is over, you take nothing with you. When you leave this earth, the only thing that will matter is how you answered the question Jesus asked his disciples, “*Who do you say I am?*” (Mt 16:15 NIV).

Today, we are going to look at various answers to this question. We will examine answers from unbelievers, answers from the spiritual realm, answers from believers, and then we will take a look at our own answer to the question, “*Who do you say I am?*”

When unbelievers are asked the question “*Who do you say I am?*”, they always come up with the wrong answer. That’s because in our natural state we cannot believe the truth about Jesus. The disciples gave some of the most common answers of their day.

- § John the Baptist – The 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew tells us that Herod believed Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead after Herod had him beheaded.
- § Elijah – Many Jews believed Jesus might have been Elijah back from the dead because of a verse in Malachi: “*See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes*” (Mal 4:5 NIV).
- § One of the Prophets – Because of the miracles and great teaching, some people were, at least, willing to accept that Jesus had been sent by God as had other prophets.

Although wrong, all of these answers granted Jesus some status above just an ordinary

man. But even the best of these answers fall far short of the right answer – the answer that leads to salvation.

But, not everyone of Jesus' day was willing to give him an elevated status. Many took offense at Jesus and in their opinions he was common or worse. Here are some of those answers.

§ *Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?* (Mk 6:3 NIV).

§ *A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."* (Jn 9:24 NIV).

§ *But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."* (Mt 12:24 NIV).

§ *Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad."* (Jn 10:20 NIV).

Unbelievers of this day have this to say about Jesus.

§ Jehovah's Witness – Jesus was a good man but not God. Some think he was previously Michael the Archangel.

§ Mormons – Jesus was a pre-existent spirit and brother of Satan. He was born a normal man and was so good he was elevated to being "a" God. He was married to multiple women, including Mary and Martha, and had many children.

§ Islam – Jesus was a great prophet sent to Israel. It is blasphemy to call him the only Son of God.

§ Man on the Street – Many today believe Jesus was nothing more than a good man, or a great teacher of morality, but not God.

Now, let's move to the spiritual realm and see what answers we can find for the question "*Who do you say I am?*"

§ When Jesus was baptized by John, God the Father said, "*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.*" (Mt 3:17 NIV).

§ God the Father reaffirmed that statement on the Mount of Transfiguration. There God told the disciples, "*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!*" (Mt 17:5 NIV).

§ The angel Gabriel had this to say about Jesus' true identity. *"I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."* (Lk 2:10-11 NIV).

§ Even the demons from hell know who Jesus is, *"What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"* (Mt 8:29 NIV).

§ Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John opens his Gospel account with these words, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* (Jn 1:1 NIV).

§ The book of Acts tells us that Paul certainly knew about Jesus. *At once, [Paul] began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.* (Acts 9:20 NIV).

§ Our last spiritual witness is Jesus. What did Jesus say about himself?

*"I and the Father are one."* (Jn 10:30 NIV).

*"I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!"* (Jn 8:58 NIV).

*"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*  
(Jn 14:6 NIV).

*"I am the bread of life."* (Jn 6:35 NIV).

*"I am the light of the world."* (Jn 8:12 NIV).

In Matthew's account of Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin, we find these words. *The high priest said to [Jesus], "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say."* (Mt 26:63-64 NIV).

Next, let's turn our attention to what some believers had to say about the real nature of Jesus.

§ An old man named Simeon cradled the baby Jesus in his arms and prayed a very familiar prayer. *"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."* (Lk 2:28-32 KJV).

§ The first time the disciple Nathaniel came face to face with Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, he said, *"Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of*

*Israel.*” (Jn 1:49 NIV).

§ After her brother died, Lazarus’ sister, Martha, made this confession, “*Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.*” (Jn 11:27 NIV).

§ The doubter, Thomas, put his doubt aside when he realized how wrong he was. He said to Jesus, “*My Lord and my God!*” (Jn 20:28 NIV).

§ At this point, we need to hear from one person who wasn’t a believer, but who recognized the truth when he saw it. *When the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”* Mk 15:39 NIV).

We’ve done this short Bible study in order to give you the opportunity to think about whom you believe Jesus to be. We’ve heard that the world at large doesn’t believe Jesus is the one and only Son of God. We’ve heard the testimonies of those who believe Jesus is true God. We’ve heard the testimonies of both angels and demons. We’ve heard Jesus described by the Father and himself.

Now it’s time for you to decide. Many of you have made your decision in the past. If you have, I want you to think about all you’ve heard and reaffirm your decision. Here are the questions you need to answer for yourself.

§ Is Jesus just a baby at Christmas and a guy on a cross at Easter, or is he the crucified and risen Lord of your life?

§ Is Jesus just another way to God, or is he the way, the truth, and the life, and therefore the only way to God?

§ Is Jesus a good man, a great teacher and prophet, or is he the Son of God and your only hope for salvation?

§ Is Jesus a liar, a lunatic, or is he the Lord?

Having reviewed the facts, I now ask you. Do you believe that Jesus the one and only Son of God? Do you believe that Jesus the author and finisher of your faith? Do you believe that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the atoning sacrifice that puts you into a right relationship with God?

Do you believe all that to be true?

Is that your final answer?

Then you are a child of God and you will spend eternity in heaven with the Jesus you confess and believe in.