

## ***“Christ for Your Time”***

“Who do you say that I am?” That’s not only a question for Peter and the disciples and the people of Jesus’ day – but it’s the question that Jesus asks of you today. And the answer has great significance for your life – transforming your life – giving wisdom, purpose, meaning, and direction.

In Jesus’ day, many were skeptical, questioning His identity – including the religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They wanted signs, proof – but they couldn’t interpret “the signs of the times.”

The preaching and teaching and miracles all pointed to Jesus as the Messiah, the Promised Savior – but they were skeptical. Most of them concluded that Jesus is not the Messiah. Some thought of Him as a teacher, some thought He was a heretic. Most of them used Jesus for their own purposes (and often, against one another).

The people of the day had a better answer to Jesus’ question. They identified Him as John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. But that’s not the same as confessing that Jesus is the Christ, the Promised Messiah. In their minds, He was a prophet to be listened to – but they were still left to look for another to save them.

“But who do you say that I am?” Jesus asks His disciples. And Peter answers on their behalf. He hits the nail on the head – a homerun – “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And, I would suspect, that would be your confession as well – but, what does this mean? What does this mean for you, for your life, for living in these times?

Before we get to that, it’s important for you to notice the distinction in revelation that Jesus makes here in our text. Many staked their interpretation on the revelation of the world. In other words, their faith depended upon man’s wisdom, man’s way of thinking.

Not so with Peter. “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but “MY Father who is in heaven.” Peter’s given name is Simon, and “Bar-Jonah” literally means, “son of Jonah.” What Peter confesses is not from his father, Jonah, but is revealed to him by Jesus’ Father who is in heaven.

In the OT reading the Lord says, “Listen to me” – and then tells us to “look to the rock from which you were hewn.” Yes, listen and look to your earthly father and mother, but only insofar as they are like Abraham and Sarah – who listened to the Lord’s revelation, who believed what the Lord had spoken to them, who looked for the Savior He promised to send.

Today is much like the days of Jesus and Abraham. Many have their own thoughts about who Jesus is – and many different uses for Him. To some, He’s the heretic – a false teacher who is evil and leads people astray – a crutch for the naïve. For some, He’s a teacher – but one can pick and choose which teachings they want to believe and follow – as it suits their own desires.

“But who do you say that I am?” Jesus asks you today? Whether you believe what God the Father has revealed to you, or not – Jesus IS “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

What does this mean? It means that He alone is the One Anointed by God to be the Savior of the world. He alone is the One Anointed for sacrifice – whose blood takes away the sin of the world – whose blood sets you free from the bondage and decay of all evil – whose blood delivers you from death.

He is the “Son of the living God” – which means that Jesus is the Son of God, He along with the Father and the Holy Spirit is the one, true God – there are no others. And He is the “living” God. Yes, He died, but He has been raised and now lives eternally. He is the living God who drew near to the tent of Abraham and Sarah, and who lives and reigns with you in these days.

He is not dead. He is not far away, far removed from your life. He is present and active in your life – for your good – that you too may be called “blessed.”

It's hard for us to fully comprehend what this means for our life. All history is centered in Christ. The signs of all the times point to Him. You have something that the world does not have when you believe that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" – and not even the gates of hell can prevail against you!

In the "flesh and blood" of Jesus – God Himself reveals to you His justice, His "light for the peoples" – His righteousness, His means for judging all people – His salvation (this is the language from Isaiah 51).

What does this mean – for you, for your life in these times? Well, as the Lord has always said, "Listen to me." Listen not to the opinions and beliefs of the world – but to the revelation of God which directs you to look to Jesus Christ alone – for He alone forgives all your sin. Everything else wears out and will vanish – they cannot save you – but Jesus says, "my salvation will be forever."

Faith in Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" – transforms your life – it renews your mind, your way of looking at your life and at the world. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things." Instead of looking at life through the lens of your sports season, your girlfriend, your work or money, your health and your death – look at all things through Christ from whom all blessings flow.

"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice ... which is your spiritual worship." Faith in Jesus as the Christ means living with Christ who lives in you and with you. With Him, you sacrifice yourself for the sake of others.

Your wants and desires are set aside so that you can serve others – teaching your children the way they should go – providing for your family – having mercy on those in need – a life marked by cheerfulness because your life is wrapped up and taken care of by Jesus who died and was raised to life for you.

Blessed are you who know, believe, and live by faith in Jesus who is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Savior – your Savior – who delivers you from guilt and shame – who resurrects your flesh and blood with His living-and-never-to-die-again flesh and blood – who bars the gates of hell and opens heaven to you.

Blessed are YOU – in these times – for Jesus, the Christ, lives and reigns with you and for you – now, and for all eternity. This is most certainly true. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.