

‘Thou Art The Christ’

We now begin a very important period in the Lord’s ministry and His dealings with His disciples. The education of these men was not yet complete but it was progressing rapidly. They had heard the Lord’s doctrine and received private explanation of His parables. They had witnessed many, many wonderful miracles, proving the power and authority of the Lord Jesus upon the bodies of men and women, and signifying spiritual parallels for Gospel healing in people’s souls. Now the Lord called for an expression of the disciples’ faith in Him and a personal testimony from them as to His true identity.

Two questions

We remind ourselves the Lord’s enquiries are never to gain knowledge for Himself but intended to draw a suitable response from those questioned. So here. The Lord’s first question set the scene for His second and prompted confession of His true identity by Peter on behalf of himself and the other disciples. In truth, it is of little importance what the world in general thinks about the Lord Jesus, and the Lord does not give idle speculation another mention. What is important, though, is what the disciples thought, and this was the Lord’s purpose in asking both questions. What is important is that the disciples, and the church, know who the Lord Jesus Christ is, believe in Him, and confess their faith in Him.

One glorious answer

Peter’s answer, whether made impulsively knowing what the others believed, or by agreement on behalf of all the disciples, is succinct, accurate and powerful. He declared, “Thou art the Christ (v. 29) and Matthew’s account adds, “the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). This brief answer encapsulated the hope, expectation, and prophetic truth of the Old Testament saints who looked for God’s Messiah. Peter confessed Jesus of Nazareth to be that Messiah; the chosen, anointed deliverer of God’s people and the only Saviour of the world.

One right answer

Peter’s answer was right and refuted every conjecture of men at the time or since who see Jesus at best as an exalted man or forerunner of the Messiah yet to come. Peter and the disciples knew better because they had been taught better. Jesus was the Christ who by His pure doctrine and evident power over life, death, sickness and health, demons and nature, had shown Himself to be very God and very Man.

Knowing Christ is eternal life

Peter’s expression of this truth was what the Lord was seeking from the disciples. The Saviour was both teaching and preparing His disciples for the role they would serve as His apostles. Preaching Jesus Christ; His person, works and accomplishments, is no mere notional idea or historical report, it is the truth of God’s dealings with the fallen world of sin for the salvation of His people. It is a message requiring a response of faith and trust. Later, Jesus would say in prayer to His Father, “this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (Joh 17:3).

Still a pertinent question

Our Lord seeks this confession from all those to whom His Gospel comes in power. You and I are called to hear this message and believe. To place our trust and hope and confidence in the accomplishments of Jesus Christ, the God Man. Matthew’s account of this conversation reveals Jesus calling Peter ‘blessed’ by God because discovering the Lord’s identity comes not from natural intelligence or wisdom, but by Divine revelation.

The question goes forth in the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ today: ‘whom say ye that I am?’ All who hear the Gospel by faith, having been well informed, should be able and willing to come to a settled testimony concerning the Lord Jesus Christ; His person, office, and achievements. They should be ready to make a confession of their faith, and give a reason for the hope that is within them, and their confidence in Him. May God bless us all by giving us the spiritual wisdom and understanding to know Him, whom to know is life eternal.