

## Matthew 16:15-16 (J. Wilson Smith) 136046

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“He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:15-16).

The significance of this question put by the blessed Lord to His disciples must be apparent to the reader. At that moment a crisis had been reached in His testimony by the only too evident refusal thereof on the part of the leaders of the nation. He had come to “His own,” and, now, in the panorama of His life, as presented in this first gospel, we see that “His own received Him not.”

He had been announced by the Baptist, the herald of the kingdom, in terms of charming interest; and the wise men had been attracted from the east by the finger of God to do Him homage. He had proclaimed, in the mountain, the holy principles of the kingdom of heaven; He had wrought miracles of mercy on every hand; He had bidden the weary to find rest in Himself — the Son of the Father; He had, as Son of Man on earth, pardoned sins; He had, as the promised Messiah, opened the eyes of the blind; He had been owned as Son of God by Satan, whom as “the strong man” He had bound, and, as the stronger, was able to spoil his goods; but, withal, He had been proudly rejected, even where His greatest works had been done. There was no national repentance. This sin and that of His rejection went together.

As to the common opinion regarding Him, He might have been John the Baptist, or Elias, or Jeremias, or one of the prophets: that was all! Unconcern, on this vital point, marked the mass. This “greater than Solomon,” both in wisdom and works, was ignored. He was despised and they esteemed Him not. Nevertheless, it was their Messiah whom they thus rejected. How blind, how culpable they!

Then it was that He asked of His disciples the question: — “But whom say ye that I am?” He could surely count on some hearts which would respond to it, for there must ever, in days the darkest, be those, in whose hearts God is working, for He never leaves Himself without witness; and accordingly Peter made answer: “Thou art the Christ [the Messiah], the Son of the living God.”

But this rich and true confession was by no means the fruit of the natural mind. Such knowledge does not originate in the heart of man. It was communicated to Peter, said the Lord, by “My Father which is in heaven.” It was necessarily a direct revelation.

But there it stands, in its eternal value, to command the faith of everyone who professes the name of Christ. Let the words “the Son of the living God” carry their due weight with every believing heart and conscience, and call forth the adoration that is meet.

“Whom say ye that I am?” Not only Jesus of Nazareth; nor alone the Christ known to us on high, seated, as Man, on the throne of the Father, Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, but as “Son of the living God,” over whom death had no power, nor could it hold Him. May this supreme glory of His infinitely glorious Person engage the attention of His saints increasingly. Let us remember that we live in a day when that Person is, in one way or another, disparaged.

The holiness of His humanity is denied on one hand, and the truth of His deity is assailed on the other; but, in this question and answer, “whom say ye that I the Son of Man am,” and “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” we have both facts stated as equally true — “the Son of Man” and “the Son of God.” Hence it becomes us to cherish both His perfect manhood and His essential deity. And it may be very fairly questioned if He can be worshipped aright unless this relationship be owned. My soul, dost thou truly recognize in thy once dying Redeemer, who bought and washed thee from thy ten thousand sins in His blood, the veritable Son of God? If so, then prostrate thyself at His feet, and magnify, adore, and worship Him.

When on the Mount of the Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John were privileged to hear the voice from out of the cloud saying, “this is My beloved Son, hear Him,” That voice Peter never forgot: nay, “we have not followed cunningly devised fables,” he wrote (in his second epistle) “when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” He received an indelible impress of the glory of our Lord as the beloved Son on the Mount, even though, in his written ministry, he treats more of “the Christ” than “the Son.”

James early earned a martyr’s crown (Acts 12), so that we have no ministry from his pen: but the writings of John are replete with the moral glories of “the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father.” And how we love those writings! How they enrich and call forth the adoration of the soul!

Then, if we refer to Paul, we find that his very first text in the Damascene synagogue, as soon as the scales had fallen from his eyes, was that “Jesus is the Son of God!”

This was the first note of his lovely song — the first tribute to the glory of Christ in his testimony. It formed the backbone of all the rest. Hence the extraordinary and Spirit-owned (as Spirit-given) power of his ministry. That ministry was manifold; it covered the gospel as it had been made known, in a special way, to him; and then he writes of Jesus being “declared to be Son of God with power... by resurrection from the dead,” so that not only the resurrection of our Lord, but His deity as well, give color and character to the apostle’s gospel (see Rom. 1:4.)

So, too, it covers his ministry of the Church; for in his Epistle to the Ephesians, in which he treats of the Church as the present vessel of the grace and purpose of God, he speaks of the gifts of the ascended Christ, as having for their object “the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (ch. 4:12, 13).

Here the knowledge of the Son of God is the acme of all spiritual attainment, and the grand object of the Spirit of God in the edification of the body of Christ. “Whom say ye that I am?” is still the great question for heart and conscience. That knowledge is clearly the deepest and most profound, as well as the initial, in the whole revelation of God: for, on the glory of His person the value of His atoning work depends. The issues for eternity, whether as regards glory or judgment, depend on the person and work of the Son of God.

Along with the knowledge of the Son is that of the Father, and this is “eternal life” in its full Christian or present aspect, even as we shall, when in glory with the Lord, enjoy it in absolute fullness forever.

May the Spirit of God give us fresh unfoldings of the Son of God day by day.

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I’ve a Place in the Heart of the Rock

Deuteronomy 32:4-11

If you are a child of God, wherever you propose to nestle, there your heavenly Father will plant a thorn, until you are driven like a bird from spray to spray, and from leaf to leaf, and taught by painful experience, that God, and God alone, is from everlasting to everlasting the “dwelling place” of His people.

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