

**Week Five reading:** Matthew 15 – 18 | Mark 7 – 9 | Luke 9 | John 7

**WHO DO THEY SAY THAT I AM?**

Matthew 16:13-19 gives an extensive dialog between the disciples and Jesus. Jesus begins with the question of “who do the people say that I am?” Rumors had been swirling that He might have been a resurrected **John the Baptist, Elijah or Jeremiah**. These assumptions or conclusions relied on superstitions or interpretations of Old Testament texts as the rabbis understood them:

\_\_\_\_\_ – People rumored about this and Herod suspected this in Matthew 14:2; this was his guilt and madness. Mark 6:20 gives us a glimpse that although Herod imprisoned John, he was drawn to John’s teachings. Herod had heard the truth of the Messiah but rejected it for his own web of power and greed – it was his own careless promise that brought the death of John...and his death haunted Herod.

\_\_\_\_\_ – from the prophecy of Malachi 4:5. One like Elijah was appointed as the forerunner of the Messiah. The original Elijah preached judgment of unrighteousness and called for repentance. The nation rejected his message and their captivity by Syria was the judgment. The Jews’ pattern of missed signs included missing John the Baptist as the one like Elijah. Jesus in Matthew 11:14 identified him as such.

\_\_\_\_\_ – from his prophecies in Jeremiah 1:10. The original Jeremiah announced coming judgment and denounced the Israelites for their sins. The nation rejected his message and their captivity by Babylon was the judgment. The Jews of Jesus’ day were looking for a king of Israel over nations and kingdoms that would root out, pull down, destroy, and throw down the nations. This Jesus did not fit their expectations and they rejected Him as their Messiah.

Each of these assumptions substituted a mere man of God for the Son of God; each of these assumptions was a rejection of the Truth.

**WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?**

Jesus set the disciples up for a confrontation of their assumptions. He then asked them, “but who do you say that I am?”

From *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*:

This question probed to see if their perception of the person of Christ went deeper than that of the multitude. Peter gave a confession of both the person and work of Jesus Christ. In his statement, “You are the Christ”, he affirmed his faith in the work of Christ. Jesus had come as the Savior who would redeem and the Sovereign who would reign.

With this declaration, Jesus reveals God’s plan of the Church. This is the first scriptural reference to “church”. And it is Matthew, the writer to the Jews, who includes it. Why do you think Matthew would have found this important to include to his gospel story to the Jews about the King of kings? \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 16:18 has some critical Greek inferences that bring meaning to this text:

“And I also say to you that you are Peter { \_\_\_\_\_ }, and on this rock { \_\_\_\_\_ } I will build My church { \_\_\_\_\_ }, and the forces of Hades will not overpower { \_\_\_\_\_ } it.

Definitions of the Greek words:

Petros: little rock; little stone; pebble

Petra: large rock; projecting rock

Ekklesia: an assembly gathered for worship; the whole body of Christians

Kateskhuo: to be superior in strength; to be strong to another’s detriment

In this one statement, Jesus laid the foundation of God’s plan set in motion with the arrival of Jesus Christ. He uses a play on words to identify Peter as a little stone, but that the whole assembly of believers who worship will be established upon the large rock...a rock not cut by human hands...the cornerstone. And no spiritual force of Satan will be superior in strength to the point of the Church’s demise.

This statement made such an impact on Peter that he writes about the Petra and petros in 1 Peter 2:4-8.

VERSE	WHO IS THE STONE?	DESCRIPTION OF THE STONE
2:4 - As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—		
2:5 - you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.		
2:6 - For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” {cf Isaiah 28:16}		
2:7 - Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” {cf Psalm 118:22}		
2:8 - and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. {cf Isaiah 8:14}		

Jesus is the precious Stone that is the cornerstone of the Church. And He was already experiencing the rejection prophesied about Him. His disciples crossed a pivotal milestone in their faith with the declaration that Jesus was the Christos, Son of the living God. Now the true discipling could begin!

### STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF A DISCIPLE

The gospels reveal three stages in the development of a disciple:

1. Multitudes were attracted to Jesus to hear His words and see His works. They came out of curiosity. Those were called His disciples (Matthew 5:2). We would call these the **curious**.
2. From among the curious there were many who came to put their faith in Jesus Christ (John 2:11). We would call these the **convinced**.
3. But now Christ demanded that the convinced make a commitment. We would call these the **committed**.

*Matthew 16:24-27: Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.*

It was necessary for individuals to decide whether to follow the Pharisees or follow Jesus. The gospels outline a few reasons why the decision should be to follow Jesus:

1. The first reason addressed **safety**. While the Pharisees instilled fear of death to those who identified with Jesus, the one who jeopardized physical life by identifying with Jesus would actually live. The only real safety is found in **identifying with Jesus**. (vs 25)
2. The second reason addressed the faulty logic of refusing to identify with Christ due to fears of loss of physical possessions. Such a person would actually **lose everything**. But if a person sacrificed material things for Christ's sake, that one would find **true riches**. (vs 26)
3. The third reason given is that when Christ comes in power and glory to assume His throne and reign over this earth, He will **judge people**. Those who have rejected Him will be excluded from His kingdom. Only those who have received Him will be **accepted** into that kingdom. (vs 27)

We discussed in Week Three, from Mark 8:34, that the meaning of deny is to forget one's \_\_\_\_\_, lose sight of one's \_\_\_\_\_ and one's own \_\_\_\_\_. Now read the parallel verse in Luke 9:23. What is the one additional word that Luke includes in his quote from Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

What does that extra word imply for a disciple? \_\_\_\_\_

**APPLICATION FOR WEEK FIVE**

Peter’s declaration that Jesus was the Christ was a direct revelation from the Father. And each person who comes to that moment of the saving knowledge of Jesus experiences that same revelation. Reflect and share a few details of that moment in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

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In that moment, we became a ‘living stone’ in the spiritual house and each living stone has a purpose. What is your purpose as a living stone in the House of God at this time in your life? \_\_\_\_\_

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The stages of discipleship are progressive and constantly being challenged. The 12 disciples had moved from curious to convinced to committed and yet, as we will continue to study, that conviction will be put to the test time and again and their commitment will either progress or digress. This is the application of the word “daily”. What area(s) of your faith is being challenged as Jesus works to move you from convinced to committed in every part of your life?

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What can you do daily to forget yourself, lose sight of yourself and your own interests to push toward commitment in every part of your life? \_\_\_\_\_

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*Lord, may we desire to come with You daily. May we learn what it means to deny ourselves daily. May we do what it takes to follow You daily.*

**Memory/meditation verse:** Simon Peter answered, “Lord, who will we go to? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that You are the Holy One of God!” John 6:69-70

**Week Six reading:** Luke 10 - 11 | John 7 – 10