

A confession of Faith for the Ages

The Lord's Day, April 30, 2006

A. Introduction

We are gathered here this morning as an assembly (an ekklesia) of the disciples of Jesus Christ. We have celebrated His death and glorious resurrection by partaking of the elements that He instituted in the Lord's Supper. We have prayed to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. We stand before almighty God, this morning, boldly because of the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We are outfitted in His perfect righteousness. We have with us a copy of the word of God which has the theme from beginning to end of the establishment of Christ's Kingdom. The preparation and establishment of His kingdom is the central theme of all history. Indeed history can make no sense without understanding this point as Phillip Schaff writes in the introduction for his eight volume History of the Christian Church:

The central current and ultimate aim of universal history is the Kingdom of God established by Jesus Christ. This is the grandest and most comprehensive institution in the world, as vast as humanity and as enduring as eternity. All other institutions are made subservient to it, and in its interest the whole world is governed. It is no after-thought of God, no subsequent emendation of the plan of creation, but it is the eternal forethought, the controlling idea, the beginning, the middle, and the end of all his ways and works. The first Adam is a type of the second Adam; creation looks to redemption as the solution of its problems. Secular history, far from controlling sacred history, is controlled by it, must directly or indirectly subserve its ends, and can only be fully understood in the central light of Christian truth and the plan of salvation.

All this being true we rightly bear the name Christian, to identify ourselves as Christ's servants and students and we do so by His grace. However, although we rest in these truths, we must never fall asleep on duty. John Bunyan reminds us of the result of such folly in his brilliant classic, Pilgrim's Progress, when Christian falls asleep at the arbor on top the Hill Difficulty. Because he took a prolonged sleep instead of a short break, the place made for the refreshment of pilgrims became a burden. We must be always on our guard because this world, Christ's world, is in a state of war. I am not speaking, primarily, of the mobilization of armies and navies on the physical globe, although the two are related. Not all battles are fought with gunfire and grenades. As a matter of fact, some of the wars of the greatest impact on mankind have been and are being, fought without one sword unsheathed or one shot fired. It is a war that has raged for centuries, even millennia. The enemy is cunning and cruel. It is a war for the hearts and minds of men and women of every language, and culture on the earth. Our Lord's righteous rule is being challenged on every front. Although He is on the throne, although in the view of eternity every knee will bow to Him, He is currently in the process of working out His victory in History claiming all His own. This conflict is first described in the third Chapter of Genesis. On that dark day when mankind lost communion with God and was placed under his wrath and curse, God describes this cosmic conflict, while cursing the serpent.

Gen 3:14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it[HE] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

On Genesis 3:15 Matthew Henry commentates:

A perpetual quarrel is here commenced between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil among men; war is proclaimed between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. It is the fruit of this enmity, that there is a continual conflict between grace and corruption in the hearts of God's people. Satan, by their corruptions, assaults them, buffets them, sifts them, and seeks to devour them; they, by the exercise of their graces, resist him, wrestle with him, quench his fiery darts, force him to flee from them. Heaven and hell can never be reconciled, nor light and darkness; no more can Satan and a sanctified soul, for these are contrary the one to the other.

In the deepest depths of darkness on the very day that mankind transgressed the His holy Law, the God of grace speaks not only of this great war between mankind and the legions of the Evil one, but He also begins to tell of a deliverer and redeemer of His elect, the man Christ Jesus, the One who will “Bruise the head” of the accuser of the righteous. John Gill further explains:

The Messiah, the eminent seed of the woman, should bruise the head of the old serpent the devil, that is, destroy him and all his principalities and powers, break and confound all his schemes, and ruin all his works, crush his whole empire, strip him of his authority and sovereignty, and particularly of his power over death, and his tyranny over the bodies and souls of men; all which was done by Christ, when he became incarnate and suffered and died.,

From this time forward the battle lines are drawn, sometimes more clearly than others, but always there for God's people to observe by the light of His word. As the pages of Scripture unfold the story line becomes clearer as the Lord tells faithful Abram:

Genesis 12:3 I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

The great promise of the emergence of the deliverer, that will reconcile God and man will come from the line of this one man, Abraham. God's promise tries even the faith Father Abraham, but is perpetuated by the birth of Isaac, the son of the covenant. God, who is always true to His word blesses Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. He breaks the physical shackles of slavery bringing His people out of bondage in Egypt, a blessed type pointing to what God would do for the more tyrannical spiritual bondage of His people through the promised deliverer. A fuller understanding of the Promise is given to David, Abraham's, decedent when he is told:

2Sa 7:14 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

2Sa 7:13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

2Sa 7:14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:

2Sa 7:15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.

2Sa 7:16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

With these words, God does not abandon the Promise to Abraham in favor of another, but builds upon the Abrahamic promise covenant giving it more clarity. He will prosper the seed of Abraham, as promised, and that seed will come from the kingly line of David. His “throne shall be established for ever”. These gracious promises of deliverance and blessing are at the heart of Biblical theology, but are only made possible through that ultimate “seed” of Abraham, Jesus Christ the “Son of David”. The genealogies of Christ in Matthew and Luke trace this lineage. Matthew clearly presents Christ as the promised seed of Abraham in 1:1-17, where as

Luke continues back to Adam, presenting Him as the son of God (LK 3:23-38). Matthew Henry explains why the evangelists have done this when he writes:

Matthew designed to show that Christ was the son of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed, and that he was heir to the throne of David; and therefore he begins with Abraham, and brings the genealogy down to Jacob, who was the father of Joseph, and heir-male of the house of David: but Luke, designing to show that Christ was the seed of the woman, that should break the serpent's head, traces his pedigree upward as high as Adam, and begins it with Ei, or Heli, who was the father, not of Joseph, but of the virgin Mary.

Even after the birth of our Lord, God raised up those to testify of the miraculous event. Both angels and men proclaimed the importance of the coming of Messiah. The angel on the night of His birth declared:

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Soon after, upon His parents bringing the child to the temple, the God fearing man Simeon made the wondrous proclamation, known as the Nunc Dimitis:

Luk 2:29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

Luk 2:30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

Luk 2:31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

Luk 2:32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

The Messiah had come as promised. David's greatest son would be a light to the Gentiles and a glory to Israel. Simeon's words agree perfectly with God's promise to Abraham that "All the nations of the Earth would be blessed through him." The One who would redeem His people and crush the head of the serpent was alive on the earth. He had come to establish His kingdom and redeem His people. But, although some such as Simeon were prepared for the consolation of Israel to come in the flesh, most were not. And unfortunately the most unprepared were the religious leaders of the day. Although the one who personified the sacrificial system, the High Priest and the Passover walked before them, they received Him not. Matthew 16 is a vivid contrast of the Religious leaders faithless tempting of Christ to that of Peters faithful confession of Christ.

Please turn to Matthew 16. Today, it is my intension to consider the first four parts of the chapter:

I. The faithless Christology of the Pharisees and Sadducees (v. 1-4)

II. Christ's caution and counsel against faithless doctrine. (v. 5-12)

III. The faithful Christology of Peter (v.13-16)

IV. Christ's blessing and promise to the faithful. (v. 17-20)

READ Matthew 16:1-20

B. The Unbeliever's Christology

Christology is the systematic study of the person, and works of Jesus Christ. This study is the foundational element of one's understanding of Christianity. Indeed, one may believe in a god and not be a Christian. The streets of ancient Greco-Roman world were littered with temples and statues celebrating false deities, as Paul himself mentions in Acts 17 while in Athens, they even had a altar to the unknown God, but these folks surely were not Christian, a belief in "G"od is Christian, but not exclusive to Christianity. One may believe in special revelation in written form, but that does not exemplify Christianity either. The Muslims claim a written revelation, but they are not Christian. Christianity is what it is because of the risen son of God, the

Lord Jesus Christ, for whom it is named. He is the foundation of the Christian Faith, but further the bedrock of all of life. A proper understanding of Christ allows one to view all of life in proper perspective. For one's understanding of Christ effects his understanding of all else. Speaking of Christ The Apostle Paul writes:

Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Paul clearly teaches four great truths about Jesus Christ:

1) Christ is the creator all things. "By Him were all things created"

2) Christ is the great purpose of the created order. All things were created for him.

John Gill clarifies the "for Him" of Col 1:16-"that is, for his pleasure, that he may take delight and complacency in them, and in his own perfections displayed by them; and for his service and use, as the angels, to worship him and minister to him and for others, he sends them to: elect men are made to serve and glorify him with their bodies and spirits, which are his; and even the non-elect are made to subserve his mediatorial kingdom and interest; yea, the whole world is built and kept in being purely on his account, until he has finished the great affair of the salvation of his people, in the application of it to each of them, as he has completed the impetration of it; and then he will dissolve the heavens, and burn up the earth and all the works that are therein: all are made for his glory, and that end is, and will be answered by them in one way or another."

3) Christ is before all things. His existence is before creation. He is eternal. As the glorious ascended Lord himself confessed to St. John on the Isle of Patmos in Revelation 1:8 "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

4) All things consist by Christ's power- "The whole creation is kept together by the power of the Son of God, and made to consist in its proper frame. It is preserved from disbanding and running into confusion." says Matthew Henry

Thus it is one of the grossest, but most common errors of the unregenerate mind to believe that Christ is irrelevant to their transitory existence, when in fact He is the origin, purpose and preserver of their being. Nonetheless, this is the sad state of the unregenerate mind. The great Doctrine of Christ is, has been, and will continue to be a arena of debate and rebellion until that cosmic conflict of the cosmos spoken of earlier, between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, is no more. The enemy rightly understands the strategic importance of this doctrine to the peace and prosperity of the universe and to the Glory of the Father and thus is working tirelessly to trivialize its truth in our day. This is the message of Psalm 2:1&2.

Psa 2:1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

Psa 2:2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,

Psa 2:3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

The evil one has always sought to convince proud men that they could be prosperous all on their own, without God. He used this tactic in the garden and continues to wield it to this day with success. Sinful man does not see any need for the guidance and counsel of God. Nor does he desire to pay homage to the Lord's Anointed. Instead, he considers God's law a burden, a prison from which he must escape, and Christ one to be opposed or trivialized, but not one whom he owes worship and submission. Some have vigorously, openly and proudly opposed Christ and His Church. One favorite instrument of the evil one, Frederick Nietzsche once said, "The Christian church has left nothing untouched by its depravity; it has turned every value into worthlessness, and every truth into a lie, and every integrity into baseness of soul." Others have payed Christ lip service over the years calling him a "Great Prophet" or "good moral example", but this caricature falls far short of the Jesus of the Scriptures. To stop at these portrayals is nothing but further example of those who will not pay homage to King Jesus, because they make Him into someone less than he really is. This may not be violent rebellion, like Nietzsche, but is rebellion none the less. The Religious leaders of Jesus' day are a prime example of the response of the natural/unregenerate man when confronted with the truths of Christ. Their actions and words continually attest to their hatred of the God's anointed.

1. Example of the Pharisees

Mat 16:1 The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.

- Irony- "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came" The Pharisees and Sadducees rarely saw eye to eye.
 - Pharisees- mostly the ordinary working class, who payed strict adherence the traditions of their fathers. They believed in bodily resurrection of the dead, spirits, and an after life of rewards and punishments.
 - Sadducees- The rich land owners of whom the High Priest was selected. They denied resurrection, spirits and believed in private interpretation apart from tradition.
 - Example of discord between them in Scripture:
 - Act 23:6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.
 - Act 23:7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.
 - Act 23:8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.
 - Act 23:9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.
 - Act 23:10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.
 - Why then the comradery? These old enemies find a common cause in raging against God's anointed.

misreading the signs that point to Messiah's coming was fatal.

- Christ calls them Hypocrites. They claimed to be schooled in understanding the Prophets of old. They called themselves guides to the people in applying the law of God. Yet, their depravity had blinded them to the One who fulfilled both the Law and the Prophets. Instead of leading the people in embracing Christ they insisted on His crucifixion. They were also hypocrites because they came pretending to be open to Christ's teaching when they really sought to destroy Him. Thus they were hypocrites.
- Christ also calls them "an Adulterous Generation". This refers to their deviation from the Faith of Abraham to the embracing of legalism. As has been pointed out recently in the studies of Galatians, the teachings of Judaism and the teachings of the Old Testament as understood by the patriarchs and prophets are very different.
- Christ tells them that they will be given no more signs but that of the prophet Jonah. This is not the first time they heard these words. This previous encounter is recorded in Matthew 12:38-41
 - **Mat 12:38** Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.
 - Mat 12:39** But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:
 - Mat 12:40** For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
 - Mat 12:41** The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.
- Christ tells them they shall have one great sign that shall not be misunderstood. This sign is the one that really matters. It is the sign of his resurrection. By this sign he will leave no doubt of His identity as Messiah. By this sign He will gain victory over death for himself and His people. By this sign he will justify those whom the Father had given Him before the creation. This sign is the Sign of signs.
- Note the similarities between Jonah and Christ.
 - Jonah was inside the great fish 3 days, so Christ spent 3 days in the grave.
 - Jonah's sacrifice was in the stead of the sailors on the ship, so Christ's sacrifice was in the stead of His people.
 - Jonah was freed from the fishes stomach, so Christ burst from the tomb.
 - Jonah preached to the heathen the good news of salvation, so Christ charges His followers to preach the Good news to the "uttermost parts of the earth".
 - Spurgeon writes, "Jesus will be buried, and will rise on the third day, and in the power of His resurrection will win the Gentiles to repentance: in this He will be the antitype of Jonah, and this shall be the sign that He is indeed the Christ of God."

But when confronted with even this supreme sign, they attempted one to the most devious coverups of all time denying that which was evident before them, exchanging the truth for a lie.

2. Testimony of the world. (1) Spiritually dead

- This however it is the way of the unregenerate to rail against the truth of the Gospel and deny the obvious just like the Religious leaders of Jesus day. The unregenerate mind despises the truths of Christ. The Scripture describes the unregenerate mind as thoroughly corrupted by sin.

■ Rom 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Rom 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be .

Because of this truth we can not reason sinners into submission. They do not merely need more evidence of Christ's person and work to convince them to submit to Him. The veracity of this fact is proved by the witness of the Godless Frenchmen Voltaire when he said:

- "Even if a miracle should be wrought in the open marketplace before a thousand sober witnesses, I would rather mistrust my senses than admit a miracle.

Thus the only hope for the heathen heart is the generous application of the Saving Grace of God by His Spirit. In this however, I wish to be clear, I am not suggesting that there is no place for reason in evangelization or apologetics, only that it alone will never be effectual. For this reason Christ would no longer be distracted by the insincerity of the Sadducees and Pharisees. No more signs would be given. He rested His case on the Doctrine of the resurrection. He allowed room for the moving of the Spirit and the gift of faith. Christ then got in a boat and left them.

C. Christ's Caution against faithless doctrine.

Mat 16:5 And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

Mat 16:6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Mat 16:7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.

Mat 16:8 Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

Mat 16:9 Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

Mat 16:10 Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

Mat 16:11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

Mat 16:12 Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

- In this section Christ cautions His disciples against the faithless doctrine of the Religious leaders. This is at first unclear to them. They, as men often do, are thinking of the physical, when Christ is referring to the spiritual.
- Christ says to **beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees**. They then begin to debate about what He is referring. It is assumed He is speaking of their forgetfulness to take provisions with them.
- Jesus rebukes them **O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?** Mat 16:9 **Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and**

how many baskets ye took up?

Mat 16:10 Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

Mat 16:11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

- Christ's rebuke to His friends is three fold as explained by Matthew Poole:
"Our savior here charges them with three things, ignorance, unbelief, and forgetfulness. Ignorance, in that they did not understand that His usual way was to discourse spiritual things to them under earthly similitudes, and so by leaven He must understand something else than leaven with which men use to leaven their bread. Unbelief, that they having seen the power and goodness of the Lord and Master, to feed four thousand with seven loaves and five thousand with five loaves, leaving a great remainder, and that He did this for a mixed multitude, out of a mere compassion to the wants cravings of human nature, should not judge that He was able to provide for them, although they had brought no bread; or doubt whether He would do it or no for them, who were much dear to Him. Forgetfulness, which is often in Scripture made the mother of unbelief and disobedience."
- Upon His rebuke they then understand His warning to be against the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. He used the metaphor of leaven because in a similar way false doctrine, though but a little can exercise great influence in the life of the Church. What was the false doctrine that Christ warned about?
 - Pharisees- 1) Justification by the works of the Law
2) Obligation to the traditions of men above the commandments of God
Simply stated they were guilty of Legalism and formalism.
 - Sadducees- 1) Denied existence of spirits, angels
2) Denied the resurrection of the dead
Simply they were guilty of liberalism and skepticism.
- The Church must constantly be on Her guard against the toxic effect of false doctrine. The Doctrine of Christ has always been a magnet for such poison. The first four hundred years after Christ is a collage of Christological blunder from Arianism to Nestorianism, Eutychianism to Apollonarianism. But false doctrine about the person of Christ is not a relic of the ancient past. The Liberal theology of the of the late 19 and early twentieth centuries still effects our current world. The Unitarian universalist Church of our day glories in their open mindedness of all faiths, and all creeds. Literally all ideas are welcome but further all ideas are accepted. One pastor of the Unitarian Church recently said of Christ:
 - "The man called Jesus of Nazareth was the inheritor of the Hebrew prophetic tradition of bearing witness to justice, the primacy of ethical living in community, and the possibility of reformation for all. His life was an example of the supremacy of human agency, as well as the model of struggle for healing and recognition of the inherent worth and dignity of the poor and oppressed."

This ideology is "leaven" indeed. It is not based on the inspired truths of the Word of God, but the reasoning of

fallen man. Not there is not controversial statement of the deity of Christ. Just “nice” words about the savior. This is exactly the kind of false doctrine Dr. J. Gresham Machen warned against in His book Christianity and Liberalism when he wrote:

“ There is a profound difference, then, in the attitude assumed by modern liberalism and by Christianity toward Jesus the Lord. Liberalism regards Him as an example and guide; Christianity, as a Savior: Liberalism makes Him an example for faith; Christianity, the object of faith. This difference in the attitude toward Jesus depends upon a profound difference as to the question Who Jesus was. If Jesus was only what the liberal historians suppose that He was, then trust in Him would be out of place; Our attitude toward Him could be that of pupils to a Master and nothing more. But if He was what the New Testament represents Him as being, then we can safely commit to Him the eternal destinies of our souls. What then is the difference between liberalism and Christianity with regard to the person of our Lord? The answer might be difficult to set forth in detail. But the essential thing can be put almost in a word—Liberalism regards Jesus as the fairest flower of humanity; Christianity regards Him as a supernatural person.”

D. The Believer’s Christology “Thou art the Christ the son of the Living God.”

1. Example of Peter

- There is a remarkable contrast between the attitude of the Pharisees and Sadducees toward Christ and that of Peter. The former was one of faithless contempt, the latter one of faithful confession. This section in many interpreters minds is the climax of Christ’s teaching ministry on earth with His closest disciples. He had taught and retaught them. He had demonstrated Truth in both word and deed. He now begins to question them to test their understanding of the events and words of the past few years.
 - Mat 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?
 - Mat 16:14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.
 - Mat 16:15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?
 - Mat 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- Christ did not ask them who men said He was because He was uninformed, or ignorant of their opinions but to only to engage His disciples in the debate over his person. Matthew Henry talks of Christ catechizing his disciples. The question is preliminary to set the stage for the greater question that follows.
- Christ refers of Himself here as the son of Man. Some have stated the obvious, when they say this refers to His incarnation, He was a man. But much more than this observation is meant. He is identifying Himself with the son of Man in Daniel 7.
 - Dan 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.
 - Dan 7:14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting

dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

- By using this title He is claiming that He is the fulfillment of this prophecy. He is the long expected Messiah. He would rule the Kingdom made up of all people languages and nations.
- People had numerous opinions of who he was, but note that they were all honorable. These “people” were not of the group that opposed Him but sincere followers. They knew the scriptures and believed Him to be one of the prophets.
- Christ does not spend any time talking through the opinions of the people. He gets right to the point. He asks them for their confession of Faith. Who is he? This is a question that no man can evade. It is a question that one way or the other must be dealt with. Blaise Pascal the brilliant mathematician and scientist said, “Jesus Christ is the center of everything, and the object of everything, and he that does not know Him knows nothing of nature and nothing of himself.” Because it is Christ’s world and “all things are for Him”, as Colossians told us, men either are for him or against Him, there is no neutral ground.
- Peter’s answer is bold and thorough. **“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**
 - Peter confesses Jesus to be the anointed of God, the Messiah. In doing so, he identifies Christ as the seed of the woman, who would crush the head of the serpent. The fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise, through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. And the Son of David, who’s kingdom would have no end.
 - Peter also confesses Jesus to be the son of the living God. He is the Messiah, the deliverer, but He is He is the son of God. Peter confesses Jesus as the divine only begotten of the Father, the second person of the Trinity. This statement seals his confession. There was no mistake about it Jesus was the son of Man but also the son of God. He is the God-Man.
- Peter’s confession was not one of mere reason alone, but of faith as well. It was the polar opposite of the faithless tempting of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Every Christian must hold to this confession; it is the heart of Christianity. It is the first confession of faith and all subsequent are built on it.
(CONFESSIONS of Faith)

E. Christ’s Blessing and Encouragement

- Christ immediately affirms Peter’s faithful confession by blessing him.
 - Mat 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.**
 - Mat 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**
 - Mat 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.**
- By pronouncing His blessing the Lord Jesus showed His acceptance and validation of Peter’s proclamation.
- Christ’s blessing is not for Peter only but all who rightly confess Him, as Calvin explains:
 - “Christ justly pronounces him to be blessed who has honestly made such a confession. This was not spoken in a peculiar manner to Peter alone, but our Lord’s purpose was, to show in what the only happiness of the whole world consists. That every one may approach him with greater courage, we must first learn that all are by nature miserable and accursed, till they find a remedy in Christ. Next, we must add, that whoever has

obtained Christ wants nothing that is necessary to perfect happiness, since we have no right to desire any thing better than the eternal glory of God, of which Christ puts us in possession.”

- Christ further explains that such a confession is rightly made only by those who are regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit and give the gift of faith to believe such a confession.
- “Flesh and blood” that is natural man does not make such a confession apart from the grace of God.

F. Charge to the Faithful

Peter by God’s grace confessed Jesus to be “the Christ the son of the living God.” By doing so he received the blessing of our Lord. In our day it is not popular to make such a confession. Confessions are acceptable as long as they are personal opinion. Our national polytheism frowns upon any statement of absolute truth. And yet, Peter’s confession of Christ’s dominion and deity spills forth with universal truth. Our world today has followed the wicked example of the Pharisees and Sadducees all too closely in contempt for Christ. This should be no surprise, Christ Himself told us that a faithful confession was not revealed by “flesh and blood” but from the Father in heaven. But the sad fact is large portions of the Church have defrocked Christ in one way or another. In America, escapades such as the multi -faith debacle at the National Cathedral after times of tremendous tragedy, where every so called deity is entreated except the Messiah the Son of the Living God, attests to our nations’ unfaithfulness. Christ’s church must heed Christ’s warning to beware the “Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” and return to the faithful example of Peter in confessing Christ as Christ and God; if we ever hope to fulfill Christ’s command to make disciples of all nations.