

It was a case of mistaken identity! I think! My granddaddy was recovering from heart surgery. And he was laying there in the hospital room with my mama sitting next to the bed, when the door opened and in walked a beautiful young lady. And with tears in her eyes, she walked up to granddaddy's bedside and said, "*Oh daddy, do you know who I am?*" Granddaddy shook his head and she kept going, "*I'm Shirley ... I'm so sorry that you're in the hospital and we had to meet like this, but I was afraid something would happen and I'd never have the opportunity to meet you.*" And granddaddy's eyes got big and he looked over at my mama. And my mama said: "*Hi. I'm Lynne. And who did you say you are?*" She held out her hand and said: "*I'm Shirley; I'm his daughter.*" Mama looked down at granddaddy and said: "*Daddy, is there something you need to tell me?*" And he shook his head from side to side.

If there was a pivotal moment in the life and ministry of Jesus, it happened one day in the region of Caesarea Philippi. Jesus spent the first part of His life in relative isolation. We really know very little about the first 30 years of His life. And then, one day, He walked down to the Jordan River where His cousin, John, was baptizing and was baptized. Then, the Bible says Jesus spent the next 2 to 2 ½ years traveling around Galilee preaching the good news of the Kingdom and healing the sick and diseased and even raising the dead to life. And then, He and His

disciples took a trip to the region of Tyre and Sidon where He met a persistent Canaanite woman and healed her daughter.

Then, Jesus and the disciples went south along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the region of Caesarea Philippi and Jesus turned to the disciples and said: “What are people saying about me?” And they said: “Well, some say you’re John the Baptist come back to life; some say you’re Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.” And Jesus said: “What about you? What do you say?” And Peter spoke on behalf of the others and said: “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” And Jesus said: “Blessed are you Peter, son of John, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven.”

Well, it’s time for a pop quiz. Now, this quiz only has one question, and the answer you give is the most important answer you’ll ever give to any question in your life. Your answer is the difference between life and death, between just existing and really living! Here’s your question: Who is Jesus? Now, while you’re trying to decide, let give you some of the answers that people have come up with.

Some say Jesus is just an ordinary man. That’s what the people in Nazareth believed. Jesus went to the synagogue in Nazareth one day and they asked Him to read the scripture and so, He took the scroll of Isaiah and read a passage. And then, He said: “Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your presence.” And the people began to look around at one another and

say, “*Who does this man think he is? Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Don’t we know his brothers and sisters?*”

Yes, He was an ordinary man. He was flesh and blood. He felt the joys of life and the hardships of life just like us. He was a man, but wasn’t He more than that?

Some say Jesus is just a great preacher. The disciples said: “***Some say you are John the Baptist come back to life.***” John was known for his preaching. People came from all around to hear John preach and to be baptized by him in the Jordan River. And so it was with Jesus. Early in His ministry, Matthew describes a great sermon, *The Sermon on the Mount*, in which a great crowd of people sat down with Jesus on a hillside to listen to Him preach. Another time, there was such a crowd around Him that He had to get into a boat and row out from shore to be able to teach them.

He was an awesome preacher, but wasn’t He more than that?

Some say Jesus is a great miracle worker. The disciples said: “***Some say you are Elijah.***” Elijah was Israel’s great miracle worker. Elijah stopped the rain from falling and to end the drought, Elijah called down fire on Mt. Carmel. And so it was with Jesus. Jesus went around doing good, healing the sick, the diseased, the crippled, the blind, and raising the dead to life.

He was an incredible miracle worker, but wasn’t He more than that?

Well, not according to most of the people of His day. They believed He was a good man, a great teacher, a prophet, and a miracle worker. And many people today believe the same thing. They have to acknowledge that He was a great teacher; some even acknowledge His miracles, but at the end of the day, they ask: so what?

And so, Jesus turned to His disciples and asked: “*Well, what about you? What do you say about me?*” And Peter said: “**You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.**” You see, the disciples knew Jesus was a man, but He was more than just a man. They knew He was a great teacher, but He was more than that. They knew He was a prophet, but He was more than that. They knew He was a miracle-worker, but He was more than that. He is “**the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.**”

Peter said two things about Jesus that clearly identifies who He is. **First, he said, “You are the Messiah.”** The word “*Messiah*” or “*Christ*” means “*The Anointed One*” or “*The Chosen One.*” It is used to describe someone who has been ordained by God to accomplish a special task. Early in His ministry, Jesus said: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me for He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captive and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Later, Jesus said: “**The Son of Man has come to see and to save those who are lost.**”

Second, he said, “You are ... the Son of the Living God.” Here, Peter was describing Jesus’ nature. You see, anyone could be chosen or anointed by God, but

Jesus was different. He was God's Son! He was God!

Now, I'm a baseball fan. A few years ago, while Lori and I were living in Kentucky, an extraordinary event took place in Cincinnati. That night, the Cincinnati Reds played the Seattle Mariners. Playing for the Cincinnati Reds that night was Ken Griffey, Sr.! And playing for the Seattle Mariners was Ken Griffey, Jr.! It was the first time that had happened in Major League Baseball. And during the game, one of the announcers said: "*The physical skills of the father are so evident in his son.*"

One day, one of the disciples said, "*Jesus, show us the Father.*" And Jesus said: "*If you've seen me, you've seen the father.*"

Jesus is God's Son and God's Anointed One!

Now, like I told you before, what you believe about Jesus is very important. In fact, what you believe about Jesus is the difference between life and death, between just existing and really living, between ordinary life and abundant life.

Verse 17 says: "*Blessed are you Simon, son of John, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven.*" And then, He went on to say two things that point to the importance of this statement of faith.

First, Jesus' identity is the bedrock of the church!
Verse 18 says: "*And I say to you, you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.*" It is Peter's statement of faith – that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living

God – that Jesus said is the foundation for the entire church. The whole church – everything we do – our worship, our discipleship, our evangelistic outreach, our fellowship with one another, and our service to one another – depends on what we say about Jesus.

If Jesus is just an ordinary man, a great teacher, a miracle-worker and nothing more, then our worship is misplaced; our discipleship is misguided; our fellowship is a sham; our evangelism is a lie; and our service to one another is meaningless. It is this single truth that gives everything we do eternal significance.

It is the bedrock upon which the church is built.

Second, Jesus' identity is gateway to eternity. Verse 19 says: ***"And I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*** You see, if Jesus is an ordinary man, just a great teacher, a prophet, or a miracle worker then there is no way that He could provide salvation for us. But as the Messiah and the Son of God, Jesus becomes the gateway to the Kingdom. And the key that opens the gate is faith in Him as Messiah and Son of God.

It is the gateway to eternity!

So, how did you do on the quiz? Who is Jesus?
I wonder ...

Invitation to accept for first time

Invitation to recommit

Prayer