

This week we begin a new series WHO DO THEY SAY THAT HE IS? with *Who am I?* focusing on Matthew 16:13-17. During this series, we will explore how other faiths view Jesus Christ in light of our own expressions of faith in him as Savior and Lord.

1. Have you ever asked a trusted friend to share with you what others thought of you? Maybe you had interviewed for a new job or a new school and wondered how the interview went. Perhaps you remember a time when you had a romantic attraction and wondered if it was reciprocated, then sought a mutual acquaintance to try to find out the thoughts of the other person. How did you feel when you heard the possibly inaccurate impression of the other?
2. **Read Matthew 16:13-17.** This passage comes after Jesus had given many of the signs we recently studied. Earlier in chapter 16, Jesus spoke of people calling for signs but not understanding what they see. What are some of the ways Jesus was misunderstood in his lifetime?
3. The first answer to the question, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” mentioned in this passage is John the Baptist.
  - **Read Matthew 14:3-13 and Mark 6:17-29** for two accounts of the death of John at the hand of Herod. How did this death affect the actions of Jesus?
  - **Read Matthew 11:2-19 and Luke 7:18-35.** What did Jesus Himself say about John?
  - Why might people have said that Jesus was John, in spite of the logical problem that Jesus and John were contemporaries and had been at the same place at the same time (see **Matthew 3:13-17** for an account of Jesus’ baptism by John, for example)?
4. The second answer given is Elijah. **Read Malachi 3:1 and 4:5.** How might these passages provide some Scriptural basis for the expectation of Elijah’s return?
5. **Read 2 Kings 2:1-12.** How might the unusual circumstances at the end of Elijah’s life have led to a perception of Jesus as Elijah returned to earth?

6. Jeremiah was the third name given as an answer. Some of the non-scriptural Jewish writings of the period between the times of the Old and New Testaments reflect such expectations. Other prophets were also mentioned. **Deuteronomy 18:15-18** speaks of God raising up prophets like Moses over the times.
  - What were the problems with all these answers?
  - What do we expect from Jesus today?
7. **Read Matthew 16:16.** What are some of the significant parts of Peter’s answer?
8. This event with Jesus’ question and Peter’s confession also occurs in Mark’s and Luke’s Gospels. **Read Mark 8:27-33 and Luke 9:18-22.**
  - What similarities are there among these three accounts?
  - What differences do you find?
9. Spend some time reflecting on what other religions and the secular culture say about Jesus. We will be exploring some of these conceptions and misconceptions over the next few weeks.
  - Be ready to share with your group what your beliefs about Jesus may have been in the past.
  - How can the perceptions of other religious groups serve as a point of contact to share the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
  - How can some of these false perceptions be stumbling blocks hindering others from knowing Jesus?

Spend time this week with your group praying about your answer to the question of Jesus and your answer to others around you who may ask who he is. Ask God to reveal to you new aspects of who he is. Consider what you can do to help others know Him better.