

## **Who do you say that He is?**

It seems that every time we turn around, there's another "Do you know who I am?" type of story in the news media. It might be an anecdote about a politician ... or a business tycoon ... or perhaps someone from the entertainment industry.

One such story going around begins with the hectic scene at the Atlanta airport after one of the closures caused by the huge thunderstorms that seem to plague that part of the country.

Any frequent traveler on Delta will have experienced one of those frenzied adventures! Or will one day. I've had mine ... and one was definitely enough!

This day was typical of such chaos. Business travelers, airport employees, pilots, flight attendants, sports teams, tourists, military personnel and – yes – even clergy were crammed into every nook and cranny of the concourse ... two, three and even four people deep ... hoping to be rebooked on one of the few remaining flights out of the city before the airport shut down for the night.

At one of the crowded counters, gate agents were doing their best to process each passenger as quickly as they could. A man toward the end of the snaking queue of travelers was obviously impatient at having to wait in the slowly moving line.

Deciding not to wait a minute longer, he marched right up to the counter and demanded a boarding pass for the already overbooked and twice delayed flight.

The agent turned, looked at him, took a deep breath, forced a smile, and said, "Sir, as you can see, there are many people ahead of you. We're doing our best to help each passenger as fast as we can. I'm afraid you'll have to get back in line."

Outraged, the man screamed at the gate agent, yelling at the top of his voice, "Do you know who I am?!?!?"

At that, the agent paused, looked at him carefully, took another deep breath, picked up the public address microphone and calmly announced, "There's a man at Gate 23 on the C Concourse who doesn't know who he is. Anyone who may be able to identify this man is asked to please step forward."

Amid the uproar of approval from the throng of tired, hot travelers, the man beat a hasty retreat ... perhaps heading for the car rental counter where, presumably, they would know who he was.

Of course, this man – and the others like him – who demanded special treatment because of who they thought they were, was driven by arrogance.

That’s exactly the opposite of what our Lord – who did not seek this type of recognition – was asking when He inquired of His disciples who they thought He was.

That question got me to thinking about who **I** thought Jesus was ... so I did what any professional web manager would do ...

I googled “Jesus of Nazareth” ... !!!

I hit the jackpot my first try and it led me to Wikipedia ... the online encyclopedia ... which said:

“**Jesus of Nazareth** (c. 5 BC – c. 30 AD), also known as **Jesus Christ** or simply **Jesus**, is the central figure of Christianity, which views him as the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament ... ”

Well, Wikipedia got that right ... as far as it went.

It pretty much agrees with what Peter said to Jesus when our Lord asked him  
“Who do you say that I am?”

Would Jesus rebuke us if we responded with the answer found in  
Wikipedia?

For that matter, why did Jesus react like that when Peter told Jesus that He  
was “The Christ of God”?

That’s right, isn’t it?

After all, it must have been the Holy Spirit that led Peter to say that.

He certainly didn’t look it up on Wikipedia!

The difficulty – as Jesus surely must have seen – was that while He was and  
is the Messiah, there was nothing in Peter’s use of that Hebrew title that would  
indicate that Jesus would have to die ... nor did it indicate how He would die.

One of the major problems with Peter’s statements that Peter was – and  
thought like – a Jew ... and in Judaism, the Messiah is not considered to be the  
literal, physical God ... or Son of God.




In the Jewish tradition, the word messiah refers to a leader anointed by God, a future King of Israel, physically descended from David, who will rule the people of a united Israel and herald the Messianic Age of global peace.

In other words, the Jews were looking for a warrior king ... someone to lead an army against the Romans and all other oppressors of the Hebrew people. Messiah ... or Christ ... simply meant someone who was chosen – and anointed – by God to lead the people.

Our Christian Messiah – our Christ – is a completely different type of leader ... one who fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies ... but who would be a spiritual leader, not a political ruler or military general.

Our bishop ... in his pastoral letter of last December ... asked “Who do we say Jesus is?”

He asked us to look into our hearts with the help of the Holy Spirit and answer a few questions of ourselves:


-  Who is Jesus to us?
-  What difference does Jesus make in our lives?
-  Do we live our lives in communion with Jesus?

- ✚ Do the daily choices we make reflect a desire to love as Jesus loved?
- ✚ In difficult times, do we turn to Jesus for strength and wisdom?
- ✚ Do we know, deep within us, that in Jesus, God became human in order to show us that God's love for us is greater than we will ever understand?

And when we have answered those questions, we can try to answer the really tough ones:

- ✚ Who do we say Jesus is when we encounter the less fortunate than we are in education or material goods?
- ✚ Who do we say Jesus is when we encounter people who society marginalizes because of their poverty or appearance?
- ✚ Who do we say Jesus is when we encounter people whose ethnicity, or race, or marital status, or income ... or other social status is different from our own?
- ✚ Who do we say Jesus is when we are challenged by the decisions of political or church leaders?

And finally ...

 Who do we say Jesus is when we are alone with our own thoughts,  
decisions and desires?

These are questions **I** can't answer for you.

We each have to search our hearts and ask ourselves:

“Who do I say that He is?”