

## **The True Identity of Christ**

By: Keith R. Keyser

The Lord Jesus Christ has impacted world history more than any other great historical figure. Like other famous individuals, Christ's real identity is the subject of great debate among scholars & ordinary people alike. Such disagreement is neither surprising, nor new. During His own time, many questions swirled around the person of the famed preacher from Nazareth. When He asked His disciples: "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?", they responded by linking Him with great religious men of the past. Jesus led them into this line of conversation during a visit to Caesarea Philippi, a city whose name was synonymous with idolatry.

In Ancient Israel, this city boasted noted shrines to various pagan deities. In this place, which was associated with man's false concept of the nature of God, Jesus asked them: "But whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter was quick to answer: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." The Lord Jesus commended him for this correct response, & pointed out that this had been made known to Peter by God the Father Himself. He discloses that He is the Christ, the long promised Savior. What's more, in contrast to the many statues of wood, stone, & metal at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus was shown to be the Son of the Living God. He is not a son of God in some generic sense; rather He was God the Father's Son, co-equal with the Father & the Holy Spirit. Here was God manifest in human flesh, revealing Himself to His creatures.

Matthew records the startling teaching that came next: "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." The disciples were understandably perplexed. Peter even began to rebuke the Lord. They could not fathom how the long promised Christ—God the Son—could suffer a shameful end like crucifixion. This form of execution was reserved for the lowest type of criminal. Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus willingly endured the Cross, bearing the sin of mankind, in order to provide a way of salvation for helpless sinners like each of us. As John 3:16 expresses it: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The reality of this promise is demonstrated by the fact that the Lord Jesus rose again from the dead, & ever lives to save those who will repent & place their faith in His completed work on the Cross.