

## A More Natural Jesus

*“Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’” Matthew 16:13.*

Jesus is a person about whom many have opinions but very few know. This was true during the time He walked on earth. Here in Matthew's gospel Jesus asked His disciples who the people think He was. The disciples told Jesus that some said John the Baptist. There were others who said Jeremiah. Some thought one of the prophets. In their responses, no one thought Jesus was unique. They thought He was a version of something or someone that had already happened. Jesus was not His own. He was a kind of anomaly like other anomalies. He belonged to a group of people they had heard about before.

The responses of people who have never read Jesus's own words about Himself are not very different today. Some think Jesus is like a Buddha, employing foggy language to hide some greater spiritual truth that He knew. Or maybe he is like a Tony Robbins, a great life coach whose motivational sayings can be cherry-picked and memorized as good advice to get one through a tough workday. Or maybe He is like a Martin Luther King, Jr., a political activist inveighing against social oppression and injustice.

People often think Jesus is someone other than who He is. As if there *has* to be some other explanation other than the one He claimed. Many want a Jesus without miracles, or a Jesus without proclamations of deity, or a Jesus who died but was not raised from the dead. Many want a more natural Jesus. But this is not the Jesus of Scripture. This is not who Jesus claims to be. The problem with a Buddha Jesus or a Tony Jesus or a Martin Jesus is that we choose who Jesus is rather than letting Jesus speak for Himself. In this way we try to get the benefits of Jesus without the whole *being held accountable to Him* stuff.

We can search all we want for another explanation for Jesus, but there is none. When asked who the disciples thought Jesus was, Peter replied, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* There is only one true explanation for the man Jesus of Nazareth. Let us not do Him the dishonor of lumping Him in with what has already been. Let us honor Jesus by searching diligently for the truth of who He is. Because when we come to know Jesus, we will see that the only answer is the one Peter gave. Jesus is nothing less than the Son of God. [DJR]