

## The Generic Jesus

### Matthew 16:13-17

#### Introduction

1. “I cannot conceive of there having ever been a time in all of the history of the church that distinctive preaching was not needed. Perhaps there have been periods of that history in which such preaching was more sorely needed than at other times; but if so, the failure of some to preach a distinctive gospel was responsible for the increase of the need for it. And it may be that there was never a time when the need for distinctive preaching was more imperative than now. We have entirely too much preaching that means nothing, and the need of the hour is of men who have the courage to preach a distinctive message.” (W. Curtis Porter, “Distinctive Preaching,” Originally appeared in the Gospel Advocate, Guardian of Truth XXXII: 7, pp. 207, 213, April 7, 1988)
2. The problem Curtis Porter alluded to in his time has prevailed. Still now indistinctive preaching is a widespread problem and is intensifying.
3. We must remember that the Jesus which the world (denominations) claims to believe in is not the Jesus we believe in, and our preaching and teaching needs to make this clear.
  - a. Just because the same name is referred to does not mean the same man is referred to.
  - b. EX: Michael Jordan – actor vs basketball icon.
  - c. If the description of Jesus in all that He did and taught (ALL NT INCLUDED) does not match the information found in the inspired word of God it is not speaking of the same Jesus of the NT. (**cf. 1 John 4:1-3** – the Gnostics did not believe in the Jesus of the NT)
4. Too many are preaching/teaching a generic Jesus which would fit into the concepts of denominationalism. (Some are going as far to call those in the denominations as children of God, and disciples of Jesus – this is the logical consequence of preaching a generic Jesus.)
  - a. When clear distinctions are not made between denominational doctrine and the doctrine of Christ THE LOST ARE NOT GIVEN THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY ARE LOST.
  - b. Furthermore, those in Christ’s body are IN DANGER OF LOSING THEIR DISTINCTIVENESS FROM THE WORLD AND FALLING AWAY.
5. Christ is distinctive. Christ is exclusive. Christ is specific – **Matthew 16:13-17**
  - a. (**vv. 13-14**) – Jesus knows, but He is leading the disciples to a distinctive confession of faith.
    - i. Such will be different than what the masses think.
    - ii. Their opinions of Jesus are wrong – He is not many things to different people.
    - iii. “Their expressions compared with the confession of Peter, illustrates the difference between opinion and faith.” (R.L. Whiteside, The Interwoven Gospels, pg. 284)
  - b. (**vv. 15-16**) – He is calling for their distinctive conviction.
    - i. He did not give them room for speculation, generality, or ambiguity.

- ii. Any general answer, or opinion will not suffice. He requires them to know and be convicted in EXACTLY who He is.
  - iii. **(v. 16)** – “As to definiteness, in this concise statement, containing only ten words, the original uses the definite article no less than four times.” (Hendriksen)
    - 1. Greek order – **“You are the Christ, the Son of the God (4<sup>th</sup> definite article) living.”**
    - 2. **“You are THE Christ, THE Son of THE God – THE living [God]”**
  - c. **(v. 17)** – This does not come from their baseless opinions about the man Jesus but is a conviction of faith in an exact truth revealed by God (**cf. Romans 10:17**) – SUCH CANNOT HAVE CONFLICTING MEANINGS **(v. 14)**, BUT ONLY MEANS ONE THING, regardless of what others think.
6. Such is true regarding the doctrine of Christ (cf. **2 John 9**) – not only the doctrine about Him, but that which He teaches through the HS inspired NT.
- a. Because those who do not abide in this EXACT doctrine do not have God, we need to tell them such in definite language.
  - b. THERE NEEDS TO BE NO CONFUSION THAT THEY ARE LOST, AND THEY ARE NOT IN THE SAME CONDITION BEFORE GOD AS ARE WE.
  - c. Also, unless we distinguish ourselves from them we are in danger of losing our relationship with God – **2 Corinthians 6:16-17**
- I. The Distinctive Fellowship of God
- A. Fellowship with God through Jesus
    - a. Fellowship with God is spiritual (eternal) life – wages of sin death (**cf. Romans 6:23**); death is separation, and sin separates from God (**cf. Isaiah 59:1-2**).
    - b. **John 17:1-3** – eternal life is to know God.
      - i. **“as many as you have given Him” (v. 2) – John 6:37, 40 – “gives Me will come to Me,” “believes...have everlasting life”**
      - ii. **John 6:44-48** – come by being drawn, drawn by being taught by God, Jesus is God, taught by Jesus.
    - c. The knowledge of God, thus eternal life, comes through Jesus – **John 14:6**
      - i. **John 5:24-27** – Jesus given authority to grant everlasting life – through HEARING WORD AND BELIEVING.
      - ii. **John 8:31-32** – abiding in word frees from sin.
      - iii. **Luke 6:46** – abiding in word = doing all He says.
  - B. Knowledge of Jesus through the Holy Spirit
    - a. **1 John 1:1-4** – fellowship with God through declaration of “Word of life” – reference to Jesus.
    - b. Qualification to declare in so many words? First, witness, then – **1 John 4:1-6** – Possesses the “Spirit of God.”
      - i. **(v. 6) – “We...us”** = the apostles who have the **“Spirit of God”**
      - ii. Jesus said similarly – **John 7:16-18** – he shall know concerning the doctrine.

- c. Apostles promised the HS – **John 14:25-26; 16:12-15** – Jesus declaring that of the Father, the HS declaring that of Jesus, and that through the apostles.
    - i. **2 Peter 1:19-21; 3:2** – words of apostles are spoken as moved by HS.
    - ii. **Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:20** – continued steadfastly in apostles’ doctrine, for that is what their salvation was built upon.
  - d. FELLOWSHIP W/ GOD = ETERNAL LIFE = KNOWING GOD = KNOWING JESUS = INSTRUCTED BY THE HS THROUGH THE APOSTLES’ DOCTRINE.
- C. Sanctification by the Spirit
- a. Consider the Thessalonians
  - b. **1 Thessalonians 1:4** – election by God.
    - i. **1 Thessalonians 1:6** – followers of **“us”** (apostles), and **“the Lord”** – HAVING RECEIVED THE WORD.
    - ii. **1 Thessalonians 1:8-10** – faith in God, turned from idolatry to God.
    - iii. **1 Thessalonians 2:13** – received word of God, not as word of men (coming from the apostles who are men), but word of God.
      - 1. Works in you – **Philippians 2:12-13** – toward their salvation.
      - 2. **Cf. Philippians 1:6** – God will complete it.
  - c. **2 Thessalonians 2:13** – chosen by God for salvation. (**cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:6** – election by God)
    - i. Through sanctification – “separation to God” (VINE) – **“being set apart by” (NKJV, marginal reading)**.
    - ii. Spirit – HS (revealed truth through apostles) – belief in truth. (**v. 14 – “OUR GOSPEL”** – apostles.)
    - iii. **John 17:14-19** – DISTINCT FROM THE WORLD, “SANCTIFY” (SET APART – FROM WORLD) “BY YOUR TRUTH...YOUR WORD”
    - iv. DISTINCTION BETWEEN LOST AND SAVED – SET APART FOR SALVATION – THROUGH BELIEF IN TRUTH.
    - v. **2 Thessalonians 2:15** – to continue in that state you must hold fast to the Divine traditions.
- D. IF GOD DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN THE LOST (WORLD), AND HIS SAVED CHILDREN THROUGH CONFORMITY TO HIS WORD, IT IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE THAT HIS WORD IS DISTINCTIVELY TAUGHT.
- a. TO THE EXTENT THAT THOSE NOT IN LINE WITH IT KNOW THEY ARE LOST.
- II. The Distinctive Message and Proclamation
- A. Understanding is Necessary
    - a. We are commanded and urged to understand – **Ephesians 5:17**
      - i. How? – **Ephesians 5:18-19** – be filled with Spirit. (**cf. Colossians 3:16** – word of Christ)
      - ii. That revealed BY THE SPIRIT THROUGH THE APOSTLES – **Ephesians 3:3-5** – PAUL SAYS WE CAN UNDERSTAND.

- iii. Gifts given to further understanding/edification – **Ephesians 4:11-13**
  - b. Such teachers need careful attention – **James 3:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:15**
    - i. They must be distinct, and give the sense – **Nehemiah 8:2, 8**
      - 1. **Nehemiah 8:9-10** – distinctiveness pointed to tears of conviction of sin.
      - 2. Did not mince words or make the word vague.
    - ii. The word without understanding is USELESS – **1 Corinthians 14:6-12** (Spiritual gifts – infancy of church – piecemeal revelation – tongues vs prophecy)
    - iii. Preaching and teaching is by nature MORE THAN SIMPLY READING THE SCRIPTURE, OR REPEATING IT VERBATIM – it includes explanation of the passage.
  - c. Indistinct teaching/preaching leaves more questions than answers.
    - i. EX: Stephen to the Sanhedrin – believed in same OT scriptures – DIDN'T SPEAK ON THINGS THEY AGREED ON ONLY BUT MADE CLEAR THEY WERE NOT ON THE SAME PAGE.
    - ii. **Acts 7:51-54** (General history they would agree with, but then turned it on them – “YOU”) – not interrupted at all until the point of application.
- B. Misunderstanding is Deadly
- a. Believing something untrue leads to destruction – **2 Thessalonians 2:9-12**
  - b. What God has not planted He will uproot – **Matthew 15:10-14** – after addressing tradition of elders which is bound over God's word.
  - c. There will be those who THOUGHT they knew Jesus – **Luke 13:23-27**
    - i. **(v. 26)** – thought they had fellowship with Him.
    - ii. **(v. 27)** – but He does not know them. (*cf. Matthew 7:23 – “I NEVER KNEW YOU”*)
  - d. THE JESUS MANY BELIEVE IN IS NOT THE JESUS OF THE BIBLE – WE ARE GIVEN THE DUTY OF EXPOSING THIS TO THEM LEST THEY ARE SHUT OUT IN THE END.
- III. The Distinctive Kingdom of God
- A. The Kingdom – the church of Christ
- a. The Kingdom is important because that is where the saved are – **Colossians 1:13-14**
    - i. Not in kingdom = in darkness.
    - ii. Not in kingdom = not redeemed via Jesus' blood (still in sins)
  - b. Denominational doctrine of Premillennialism – Kingdom has not come.
    - i. Make a distinction between the church and the kingdom.
  - c. Jesus used “church” and “kingdom” in reference to the same institution:
    - i. **Matthew 16:17-19** – He will build church, give keys of kingdom.
      - 1. **NOT PHYSICAL** – **John 18:36** – contradicts Premillennial doctrine.

- ii. **Mark 9:1** – Some Jesus spoke to would be alive to see it – kingdom PRESENT WITH POWER.
  - iii. **Acts 1:5-8** – NOT MANY DAYS FROM NOW, KINGDOM, shall receive POWER, HOLY SPIRIT COME.
  - iv. **Acts 2:1, 4, 16-17** – HOLY SPIRIT, MIRACULOUS TONGUE SPEAKING – POWER.
  - v. **Acts 2:33-36** – Christ on throne – KINGDOM.
  - vi. **Acts 2:47** – THE CHURCH – THOSE SAVED.
  - d. Member of a church, but not citizen of Kingdom of God = not saved.
  - e. Church of saved = kingdom of prophecy:
    - i. Only one – **Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4**
    - ii. **“I will build My church” (Matthew 16:18)** – SINGULAR.
    - iii. NOT DIVIDED – **1 Corinthians 1:10-13** – CONCEPT OF DENOMINATIONALISM IS UNSCRIPTURAL.
- B. The Citizenship
- a. Entrance – **Matthew 16:19** – keys, authority of entrance.
    - i. The terms of entrance were disclosed through the apostolic teaching.
    - ii. They are NOT given the right to dictate the law, but are mere mouthpieces of God – **2 Peter 1:20-21**
    - iii. **“and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” (v. 19, NASB)**
  - b. Requires HEARING the apostolic message (gospel):
    - i. **1 Timothy 1:11; Romans 1:16-17** – Paul’s, and the Apostle’s gospel is the gospel of Christ.
    - ii. **Romans 10:13-15, 17; 1 Corinthians 1:21** – God’s design to spread the message was preaching. (Cannot be faith without hearing gospel.)
    - iii. NOTE: Not a creed or catechism, but the gospel – from God (**cf. Galatians 1:6-9** – not another gospel)
  - c. Requires BELIEVING the gospel message:
    - i. **Hebrews 11:6** – impossible to please God without faith.
    - ii. **Romans 1:16** – saves those who believe.
    - iii. **Romans 10:9-11** – a belief/trust.
    - iv. **James 2:24, 26; Romans 1:5** – more than simply ascent to facts, but an obedient faith.
    - v. NOTE: The Bible does not say one is saved at the point of faith, but when faith obeys.
  - d. Requires REPENTING of sin:
    - i. **Repent** – change of mind leading to change of action/behavior.
    - ii. **Acts 17:30** – repentance commanded.
    - iii. **Acts 2:38; 3:19** – required in the first gospel sermon and continued afterwards.

- iv. **Romans 6:1-2, 16** – continuing sin is to continue to be sin’s slave.
  - v. NOTE: Christ calls us as we are – sinners. BUT HE DOES NOT CALL US TO REMAIN AS WE ARE, BUT TO CHANGE. (**cf. Mark 8:34-35** – lose life to save it)
  - e. Requires CONFESSING faith in Christ:
    - i. This belief is NOT IN THE DARK.
    - ii. **Matthew 10:32-33** – must be willing to confess Christ before men.
    - iii. **Romans 10:9** – must confess belief in resurrected Christ, and that such confirms He is the Son of God (**cf. Romans 1:4**).
    - iv. **Acts 8:36-37** – After Philip said “If you believe,” the eunuch responded with a confession.
    - v. NOTE: Not a confession of Jesus as a good man, prophet, etc. but that JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD.
  - f. Requires BAPTISM into Christ:
    - i. **Acts 8:38** – After the confession the eunuch was baptized.
    - ii. **Acts 2:38, 41, 27** – Peter preached such at the church’s establishment, and those who were baptized were added to the saved – church/kingdom.
    - iii. **Colossians 2:12** – baptism is the action of submissive/obedient faith where GOD’S WORK raises us from being dead in sin. (**cf. Romans 6:3-4**)
    - iv. NOTE: Baptism is NOT an outward sign of an inward grace. It is not showing that we were saved back at the initial point of belief. BAPTISM SAVES – **1 Peter 3:21**
      - 1. Also, if you were not baptized IN ORDER TO be saved, then your baptism was invalid – for the wrong reason, thus, ineffective.
  - g. Requires FAITHFULNESS to retain citizenship:
    - i. **Philippians 3:19-4:1** – must stand fast in Lord as citizenship is in heaven. (spiritual kingdom)
    - ii. **Hebrews 3:12** – one can depart from God.
    - iii. **Hebrews 12:15** – one can fall short of grace.
    - iv. **1 Corinthians 8:11** – a “**brother**” (of household of faith) can “**perish, for whom Christ died**”
    - v. **2 Timothy 2:11-13** – we must endure and remain faithful.
    - vi. NOTE: “Once saved, always saved” IS ERROR. TO BELIEVE IT IS TO BE LOST.
- C. The Organization
- a. Christ as head (only universal organization) – **Ephesians 1:22-23**;  
**Colossians 3:17**
  - b. Autonomous local congregations:
    - i. Local congregations – **Romans 16:16** – all belong to Christ, operate under His authority only.
      - 1. **1 Peter 5:2** – flock among you.

2. Churches not working in a coalition, but separate.
  3. Prevents widespread apostasy – see 7 churches of Asia in Revelation 2 and 3 – Smyrna, Philadelphia – faithful.
  - ii. Elders and Deacons – **Philippians 1:1** (Bishops – overseers)
    1. **Elders** (Always plural – 2 or more) – **1 Peter 5:2-4** (Shepherd); **1 Timothy 5:17** (Rule – authority – enforce Christ’s word)
    2. **Deacons** – *diakonoi* (servant) – official sense – “one who gets someth. done, at the behest of a superior” (BDAG) – cf. **Acts 6:2-4** – attend to physical work.
  - iii. Members – **1 Peter 5:5** – submissive to elders
    1. **Romans 12:4-8** – active in the congregation to edify and serve as they are able and authorized.
  - iv. Evangelist – **Ephesians 4:11-12** – a preacher to preach the word.
    1. He is a member of the congregation and is to be subject to the elders as well.
    2. However, he must not compromise with the word – **2 Timothy 4:2**
  - c. NOTE: Catholic system is unscriptural. Denominational system is unscriptural (Pastors, conventions to determine practice and doctrine, etc.)
- D. The Work
- a. Evangelism – **Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 8:4** (all to be involved in this); **1 Peter 3:15** – ready with an answer.
  - b. Edification – **1 Corinthians 14:26, 40** – came together for edification (building up spiritually), requires order.
    - i. **Ephesians 4:11-16** – edification through “THE FAITH,” (v. 13) “KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD,” (v. 13) “THE TRUTH” (v. 15).
  - c. Benevolence – **1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Romans 15:26** – to needy saints.
    - i. Pattern of bringing in funds – free-will offering of members.
    - ii. Recipients – needy saints (no example of giving to those outside the church)
  - d. NOTE: The work is spiritual, just as Christ’s work was spiritual – **Luke 19:10**
    - i. Benevolence is the only physical aspect – even has spiritual significance (cf. **2 Corinthians 8-9**).
    - ii. NOT SOCIAL – MARRIAGE COUNSELING, DAYCARE, ENTERTAINMENT, PHYSICAL NOURISHMENT, POLITICAL, ETC.
- E. The Worship
- a. Spirit and truth – **John 4:24**
    - i. **Colossians 3:17** – only what is authorized by Jesus. (cf. **2 Timothy 1:13; Hebrews 8:5** – hold fast to pattern)
    - ii. **Matthew 15:8-9** – not according to man’s traditions/direction.
    - iii. **Spirit** – sincerity – hearts involved.

- b. Singing – **Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16**
  - i. All references to music worship in scripture only specify singing.
  - ii. Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs – word of Christ dwelling richly.
  - iii. NOTE: MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS NOT AUTHORIZED, CHOIRS NOT AUTHORIZED (speaking to one another).
- c. Praying – **Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 14:15**
- d. Lord's Supper – **Acts 2:42; 20:7**
  - i. First day of EVERY week – necessary inference.
- e. Giving – **1 Corinthians 16:1-2**
  - i. Who? – Members of the church.
  - ii. When? – First day of the week.
  - iii. Amount? – Not specified. As one has prospered – **cf. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7** – liberally and cheerfully.
  - iv. NOTE: Tithing is an Old Testament command. NO AUTHORITY FOR TITHING SYSTEM UNDER THE NT.
- f. Preaching – **Acts 20:7, 26-27** – the whole counsel of God.
  - i. Nothing less, nothing more!
  - ii. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – inspiration of scripture.
  - iii. NOTE: Not a motivational speech, but a proclamation of God's word.
- g. NOTE: Not entertainment. Not observation, but participation. Not social activities (common meal, plays, etc.)
- F. The Fate of the Foreigners
  - a. **Ephesians 2:19-22** – implication that before they WERE strangers and foreigners.
    - i. Not anymore because they submitted to the apostolic doctrine (**v. 20**).
    - ii. **Ephesians 2:8-10** – became citizens because saved by grace through faith.
    - iii. **Acts 2:40-41, 47** – saved by being baptized, thus, added to the church/kingdom.
  - b. Those not members of the kingdom are lost – **Colossians 1:13-14** – the kingdom is comprised of the saved.
    - i. Before they were saved by grace through faith in baptism – **Ephesians 2:1-3** – dead in sin, walked according to prince of the power of the air (Satan's kingdom).
  - c. **2 Thessalonians 1:8-9** – subject to eternal destruction from God's presence without conversion.

### Conclusion

1. We must avoid being generic in our preaching and teaching of the gospel.
2. We cannot convince souls of their lost state, and direct them toward salvation without be specific about where and how they err concerning Jesus, and His word.
3. Jesus made it clear that the way to heaven was through Him, thus, specific and exclusive – **John 14:6; Matthew 7:13-14**