

# “What Child is This?”

Analog Christmas Sermon Series | Week Two | Newbreak Church

December 5th, 2021

Newbreak’s Sermon Study Guide is an in-house resource that serves sermon-based Life Groups and/or individuals who want to reflect further on how the message contributes to their spiritual formation.

**In this week’s study, we consider how our view of Jesus shapes the way we live our life, taking a closer look at the Christmas Carol, “What Child is This?”**

## Icebreakers for Life Groups

- When do you start decorating for Christmas?
- What is your favorite Christmas song and why?

## Going Deeper Into the Message

### Read Matthew 16:13-15

#### Point 1 – How do I view Jesus?

It’s a good question for us all to ask ourselves. Notice that Jesus asks that of his disciples. Sure, He first asks who others say He is. But He gets to the point: “Who do you say I am?” (v. 15). We can assume there was a moment of silence before the brash and bold Peter speaks up (v. 16). Sometimes Peter gets it right, and sometimes he gets it wrong, but this time he got it *really* right!

This isn’t just an ancient question in an ancient text, though. This is a question for you and me to answer today, too. Who do YOU say Jesus is? Everything else hangs in the balance of your response, our purpose, identity, and very destiny. Because, of course, our answer isn’t just an intellectual one, it implies a sort of loyalty. If we say He is the Messiah, we are saying He is the promised King who would be the agent of all God’s promises coming to bear in His person and work.

At the same time, our answer does not have to be a stagnant one. We can grow in our understanding of Jesus! Perhaps our answer to who He is has grown and matured beautifully as we have walked with Him. Perhaps the words haven't changed much (He is "Christ the Lord"), but maybe the *meaning* of those words has increased in value, which has affected the way you orient your whole life around your relationship with Him.

May we encourage you? Develop a holy hunger to know Jesus more and more.

### Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- At what age did you first have a foundational understanding of Jesus? Talk about what your understanding of Jesus was at that point in time.
- If Jesus asked you today, "Who do YOU say that I am?" How would you answer the question?
- How has your understanding of Jesus grown over time? Is Jesus bigger for you this year than last year?
- In C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*, there is a great exchange between Lucy and Aslan (who represents Jesus): "Aslan" said Lucy "you're bigger." "That is because you are older, little one" answered he. "Not because you are?" "I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger." How does a "bigger" view of Jesus affect all other areas of our lives?

**Read Matthew 16:17-19; Isaiah 9:2-3, 6-7**

**Point 2 – When I recognize that Jesus is Messiah, my life and my purpose change.**

In the beginning, God fellowshiped with mankind, daily walking and talking with humanity. When humanity sinned that fellowship was broken and humans were separated from God. In order for that fellowship to be restored, we needed a Messiah, a Savior. We needed Someone to make a way for the relationship to be restored.

God loves us enough to make a plan for restoration. His Son, our Wonderful Counselor, became a babe, born of a virgin, and grew to live perfectly, so He could be our Messiah. Having made the final sacrifice in order to grant us access

to the Father, He calls to us to join Him as His sons and daughters. We have a seat at the table; we are part of the family.

Now, He is the focus of our life, following Him, being devoted to Him, seeking His will, and living for His glory. We have found the Messiah, the One who was promised long ago. We can rest in Him, knowing our identity is one of belonging to the family of believers and our purpose is to tell this good news of the promised Savior to others.

### -ADDITIONAL INSIGHT-

Excerpt from Newbreak's blog post: [newbreak.church/gates-of-hades/](http://newbreak.church/gates-of-hades/)

<sup>17</sup> Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and **the gates of Hades** will not overcome it. (Matthew 16:17-18)

Maybe you grew up in some church settings that would paraphrase this verse to say, "the gates of Hell." Even some English translations of the Bible render the verse that way (KJV, ESV, NLT). Well, to be candid, that is just a bad translation. Ready for a quick Greek lesson? The word for "Hell," comes Gehenna (γέεννα) and "Hades" (ᾍδης) speaks of the underworld, or the "realm of the dead" as the ancient Hebrew concept of Sheol attests to. The first point here is that these are two different words and are not synonyms. It is not the gates of "Hell" but the gates of "Hades" that Jesus speaks of here. So, why refer to the realm of the dead here?

**Peter's declaration of Jesus' identity, Jesus' affirmation of Peter's vocation, and Jesus' ensuing prediction of His own death and resurrection ([Matthew 16:21](#)) are all part of a larger framework.**

The ancients had a foggy, convoluted understanding of death and the afterlife, most of which was grim. Furthermore, death was often personified in the Old Testament, likened to a terrifying entity that had an endless appetite ([Habakkuk 2:5](#)). Indeed, you could say that Death (*let's pretend it is personal and has a name*) has established a kingdom with borders and is guarded by impenetrable gates. Has anyone dared to even challenge Death's power? No one can escape their eventual meeting with Death. And get this... neither was Jesus. Like everyone else, Jesus knew He had an inevitable date with Death, but Jesus did not see the meeting as despairing, but as a date with destiny. Why? Because Jesus saw Death as an Enemy to be destroyed. Spoiler alert, Jesus did *die*, Death had gotten his hands on Jesus. But what happened next? *Wait. There is a next? I thought Death had the final word?* Not according to Jesus.

**The early followers of Jesus saw His resurrection not just as a supernatural act against a force of nature but as a victory over an ancient Enemy.** That's why Jesus reveals Himself to John during his Apocalypse with this title.

*I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. (Revelation 1:18)*

The realm of the dead has a new Lord: King Jesus—He holds the keys! And that is why—and *this is key*—Jesus says the "gates of Hades will not prevail." Gates are not on the offense, they are immobile and on the defense. The realm of the dead, and Death himself, is on the defense as the kingdom of God advances and raids the fallen kingdom of Hades.

**Jesus, who robbed the grave (the realm of the dead), invites us to become grave robbers. We participate in the work that robs Death from having dominion over others!**

What could be a more exciting mission? Whatever the foggy understanding of death and the afterlife was in the Old Testament era, Jesus has revolutionized our understanding of death so that those who trust Him are welcomed into a wonderful existence with Him postmortem (example: [Philippians 1:12-26](#)) while, waiting for the age of resurrection ([1 Corinthians 15](#)).

### Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- Consider the Israelites waiting for the Promised Messiah for approximately 800 years from Isaiah's prophecy. How do you think they continued to believe God would fulfill His promise?
- What does it mean for Jesus to be *your* Messiah?
- If Jesus is your Messiah, how will you live differently for Him? If He is not yet, will you consider how much He loves you today?

**—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—**

How are you going to think differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?

What is one thing you are going to change in your life in light of the sermon?

**BONUS:** For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids?