



**The Oaks
Baptist Church**
Grand Prairie, Texas



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Class Leaders:
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Today's Guest Teacher:
Dr. Bill White

- Who Was He? -

In the mid-90s *Life Magazine* published an article entitled, "Who Was Jesus?" They included quotes from authors, professors and movement leaders. Among the many:

If Paul was going to create a person out of whole cloth, he never would have located him in this scrubby, dirty little Galilean town. —Bishop John Spong

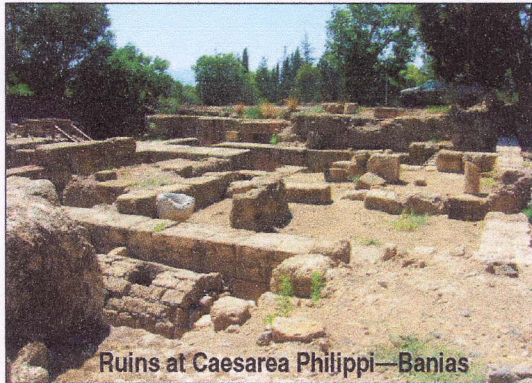
The Bible is the fundamental way to view him: There was a virgin birth. Jesus was born all-powerful. He was brought here to save man. He was God made flesh, God walking the earth. He was man and God. —Richard Miller, spokesperson for Brethren in Christ World Missions

There was no such person in the history of the world as Jesus Christ. There was no historical, living, breathing, sentient human being by that name. Ever. [The Bible] is a fictional, nonhistorical narrative. The myth is good for business. —Jon Murray, American Atheists



**The question now is:
"Who is Jesus, to you?"**

**Who Is Jesus?
Matthew 16:13-17**



Ruins at Caesarea Philippi—Baniyas

The eyes of the world will be on that "little town of Bethlehem" in a few days. But what really happened there? Did God actually "come to earth"? In human form? Do you have to believe this, or aren't all religions equally good for us?

The Place It Occurred (13)

Baniyas is the later Arabic name for the Hellenistic city of Paneas whose name derives from Pan, the Greek god who watches over flocks, forests, mountains, and all wild things. It was chosen by the son of King Herod (Philip) as the capital of his Roman territory and named Caesarea Philippi. It is about 25 miles NE of the Sea of Galilee; on the lower slope of Mt. Hermon, and is the source of the Jordan River. Temples and shrines to Pan were numerous. Pagan religion was everywhere. How striking that here Jesus chose to see if any of His disciples truly understood Him.

We often hear, "All peoples have their own faith systems. It does not matter what you believe, but that you believe something and do good works in this world." Such syncretism existed in the disciples' day. "Millions died for their quiet conviction that in the world of the relative the Absolute had arrived" (Michael Green, *Matthew, The Bible Speaks Today*).

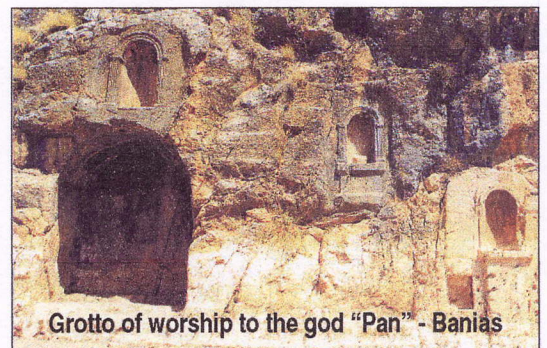
The Titles They Gave Him (14)

Jesus inquires about popular opinion concerning Him, then goes on to ask the disciples their own opinion. *Who do people say that*

the Son of Man is? (14). There were various popular views. *John the Baptist*—he would have to risen from the dead; but Herod Antipas thought just that. *Elijah*—the Jews believed he would come to life again, and many thought he would be the Forerunner of the Messiah. *Jeremiah*—in that day he was one of the most highly revered prophets. Legend had it that he had appeared to Judas Maccabeus and had encouraged him (Broadus). *Or one of the prophets*—opinions varied about a series of forerunners. This noncommittal group thought He might be one of them. But none thought Him to be the Messiah.

The Truth Revealed (15-17)

The word order is emphatic: *But you—who do you say that I am?* Peter answered: *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*—now Peter plainly calls Jesus the "Anointed One, the Messiah, the Son of [lit.] the God the living one" (ATR, on the Greek). Peter confesses the conclusion to which they had been driven by all they had experienced. Peter had said it before (John 6:69) and they had echoed it (Matthew 14:33) under pressure. This is the first time in this gospel that anyone calls Jesus the Messiah directly. Going far beyond the crowds, Peter lauds Him as God's final self-disclosure, the fulfillment of 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 2:7. There was no higher estimation of Him possible to them. At last! Jesus tells Peter that only God can reveal God. It is not by our wisdom or unaided insight. He then tells them the Messiah came to *suffer and be killed* (21)—a still more startling revelation—and that they were part of God's plan—His *church* (18)!



Grotto of worship to the god "Pan" - Baniyas