

## ‘Jesus, The Son of God’

A father and mother were celebrating the birth of their newly born child. Everyone just admired their new baby boy and as you can imagine made a lot of fuss over him. Full of excitement the baby’s older brother asked his father, ‘dad, where did he come from?’ His dad replied, ‘he came from heaven son’. To which the young boy replied, ‘wow, he’s ugly, I can see why they threw him out!’

There’s always something special about the relationship between a father and a son. But the most famous Father, Son relationship has to be between God the Father and Jesus His Son. I’ve been asked to speak about Jesus being the Son of God today but I want us to understand what we mean when we use the term ‘Son of God’.

We have to understand that when we say Jesus is the Son of God, we’re actually saying that Jesus is Deity. When the Bible speaks of Jesus being the Son of man, it’s speaking about His earthly nature. But when the Bible speaks about Jesus being the Son of God, it’s speaking about His nature as Deity. In other words, Jesus truly is man and truly is God, He’s the God man. When we call Him the Son of God, we mean that He is of the same nature as God.

In Matthew and Luke’s genealogy accounts we find that old K.J.V. word, ‘begat’ which is ‘gennao’ in Greek which simply means to procreate. You see fathers create things unlike themselves, but they beget sons like themselves. C. S. Lewis puts it like this, ‘When you beget, you beget something of the same kind as yourself. A man begets human babies, a beaver begets little beavers, and a bird begets eggs which turn into little birds. But when you make (or create), you make something of a different kind from yourself. A bird makes a nest, a beaver builds a dam, and man makes a wireless set (or a computer).’ So, when we say that Jesus is the Son of God, we mean that God has begotten his Son in His very same divine nature.

Philippians 2:5-8 “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” Paul says Jesus was the very nature of God, He took on the nature of a servant. He was made in human likeness, in appearance He looked like a man. Jesus is the God man, He was fully God and fully man, He’s the Son of God, He is God.

Now we all know that when a baby is born, they are covered in blood and mucus and they look ugly, they look like wrinkly old people. That’s why I used to get upset when people said to me when Josh was born, ‘oh, he looks just like his father!’ Now we all know what people actually mean by that, they mean they have some of their father’s features.

Well, in the same way, when Jesus was alive He looked, sounded, and thought just like His Father. That’s why in John 14 when Philip asked Jesus, to see the Father, Jesus replied in verse 9 “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” Do you want to know what the Father looks like? Look at Jesus. Do you want to know what God is like? Look at Jesus. Jesus is God’s only begotten Son, His nature is Deity because His Father is Deity. He speaks with authority because His Father speaks with authority.

But let me ask you, who do you put your faith in as you go through life? In Mark 8 we find the disciples being asked this very question by Jesus Himself. Jesus asks in Mark 8:29 “But what about you?” “Who do you say I am?” In other words, Jesus is asking them, “Am I the right person to follow? Who am I, that you should listen to what I say?”

Now this event took place around 2 ½ years into Jesus’ earthly ministry, which meant the cross was around 6 months away. Jesus realised that it was important for Him to have some quality time alone with His disciples to help prepare them for what was to come. In other words, time was growing short and He had to make sure they understood Who He was, why He had been born, and what was about to be done to Him.

But it was no accident that Jesus took His disciples to a place called ‘Caesarea Philippi’, which lies about 25 miles north-east of the Sea of Galilee. Caesarea Philippi is up in the hills about 9,000 feet above sea level which made it a much cooler climate than the Galilean lowlands. With the cool, fresh mountain air and the mountain stream and the spectacular views, even back then I can imagine that this was sort of a ‘weekend getaway’ kind of place. Maybe the disciples themselves were in a holiday mood that day, looking forward to some chill time alone with Jesus.

And they would have been alone because back then the population in Caesarea Philippi was mainly non-Jewish, which meant there would have been no interruptions by multitudes screaming for Jesus' attention. They wouldn't have to worry about the Jewish religious leaders who by this time were looking for any opportunity to find and arrest Jesus. Jesus deliberately chose to take them to Caesarea Philippi, because He knew he would get that much-needed, quality time alone with His disciples.

But Jesus took them to Caesarea Philippi for another reason. You see, when you went up the hills of Caesarea Philippi, there was not only beautiful views, but there were the ancient Syrian temples which were used to worship Baal. Experts tell us there would have been around 14 temples which could be seen on these hills.

But not only were the Syrian gods worshiped there, there was also a cavern nearby that was said to have been the birthplace of the Greek god Pan, the god of nature. In fact, Caesarea Philippi was originally called 'Pnias,' named after the god of nature.

But that's not all that Jesus and the disciples could see up on the hills. Another huge temple would have stood there in Jesus' day, built out of white marble by Herod the Great and dedicated to the worship of Augustus Caesar. In other words, Caesarea Philippi was like a one stop shopping supermarket for religion. Every conceivable variety was there in one place, it was a cross-section of the religious claims of Jesus' day.

Loved ones, [do we now understand why Jesus asked that question in Mark 8:29 at Caesarea Philippi?](#) Jesus deliberately asked them, ["Who do you say I am?"](#) at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus stood in this place which was literally crowded with temples dedicated to the worship of Syrian, Greek, and Roman gods and He asked His disciples, who they believed Him to be. He wanted them to know and come to the realisation that He was in fact the one 'true' God in the flesh, the long-awaited Messiah.

I believe Jesus deliberately set Himself against the background of the world's religions in all their history and splendour and demanded to be compared with them and to have the verdict given in His favour. In other words, with this setting as a backdrop, Jesus forced His disciples to wrestle with vital questions like, ["Who is the real God?"](#) ["Who is worthy of adoration and worship?"](#) I can imagine Jesus saying, ["Listen, look around at the magnificence of all these temples, to all these 'gods' and then look at Me. Who is right? Who is the truth, Me or the 'gods' of one of these temples? Whose guidance should you follow in life? Who is the real LORD?"](#)

Loved ones, [do you see the importance of this moment?](#) Coming here helped force the disciples to deal with this issue, an issue they needed to deal with because, as I said earlier, this was the climax of Jesus' teaching ministry. All the things Jesus had said and done over the past 2 ½ years had been in preparation for this moment. You could say that this question Jesus posed here at Caesarea Philippi was in effect, the disciples' final exam, an exam that consisted of only one question, ["who do you say I am?"](#)

But notice how Jesus went about getting them to answer this question. [Mark 8:27 "Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"](#) In other words, He's asking them, ["what are the crowds saying about Me?"](#) Now, please remember, He's not asking this question because He doesn't know the answer. Jesus knew the answer to this question, He knew what people were saying about Him but He wanted the twelve to think carefully about those popular perceptions as a way of building a foundation for their own conclusions.

You see loved ones, anyone can ask questions but Jesus is the Master at asking 'the' question. So, please understand, when Jesus asked this first question, He didn't ask it to find out how He stood in the public opinion polls. No, it was a probing question designed to determine the extent to which His students had discovered the true nature of His ministry and His message.

Now I believe there would have been a moment of pause, when Jesus asked them, ["who do the people say I am?"](#) I can imagine the disciples thinking to themselves, ["we'll we all know what the people are thinking and it's not all good."](#) Remember Jesus had been called a wine-drunkard, a glutton, a blasphemer, and a false prophet. He had even been labelled a madman and so I can imagine them thinking very carefully before they answer this question.

The disciples didn't share any of these negative reviews with Jesus and so they exercised some sensitivity and only told Him the compliments which people were paying Him. The disciples say in [Mark 8:28 "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."](#)

**Matthew 16:14** says, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

Now don't misunderstand me here, we need to remember that most of the people weren't criticising Jesus. The multitudes who had witnessed Jesus' miracles, the people who had seen what Jesus did and heard what Jesus said, they had high opinions of Him and this is what some of the twelve began to report.

One disciple pointed out that many believed Jesus was John the Baptist reincarnated. They believed that John had come back from the grave to continue his ministry of announcing the Messiah while criticising the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees.

Another disciple shared the fact that many people believed Jesus was Elijah, considered by some Jews to be the supreme Old Testament prophet. If you remember when we were studying the **Book of Malachi**, **Malachi 4:5** says, “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.” And so, some thought this Jesus was Elijah, fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi. And even today, in modern Jewish Passover celebrations, there is an empty chair reserved at the table for Elijah, in the hope of his one day coming to announce the Messiah's arrival.

Another disciple shared that some people said Jesus was Jeremiah but **why would they think He was Jeremiah?** Well, they held this opinion because according to **2 Maccabees** legend, Jeremiah had taken the Ark of the covenant and the altar of incense out of the temple and hidden them both somewhere on Mount Nebo in order to preserve them from desecration and destruction by the Babylonians. Some Jews thought that before the Messiah returned to establish His kingdom, Jeremiah would return to earth and restore the Ark and the altar to their proper places in the temple.

So, the people who said these things were paying Jesus wonderful compliments by comparing Him to the some of the greatest prophets and teachers God had ever sent. They were giving Jesus high praise, but not enough high praise because in their minds, none of these three prophets were the Messiah. They were just one of the Messiah's forerunners who had come back to life with God-given miraculous powers.

And nothing has changed today loved ones, **has it?** A lot of people still speak highly of Jesus but they don't recognise His Deity and His Lordship. Most people in our day and age will admit that Jesus was a great teacher but they won't concede that He was the Christ, the Son of God, the only Way to Heaven. Muslims recognise Our Lord as a great prophet, they even revere Him as the Son of Mary, the only woman mentioned by name in the Koran. Many Jews see Christ as an ‘**admirable Jew**’ but not as the Son of God.

Buddhists depersonalise the Jesus Who walked this earth and transform Him into a figure more like the Buddha. Many Hindus are drawn to Jesus because of His compassion and His devotion to nonviolence but they find the notion of a single god as an unnecessarily restrictive. So, the opinion of the multitudes of Jesus' day, isn't that different from the opinion of many people today. They thought that Jesus was great but not great enough.

And if we were to leave the story there in Mark, we would conclude that the disciples were no different from the multitudes. At first glance, it looks like they hadn't realised who Jesus was. Maybe when they mentioned John the Baptist, Elijah or Jeremiah, they thought that Jesus was going to say, ‘**yes**’ to one of those suggestions, and say, ‘**your right**’ But Jesus must have answered without saying a word, He must have given them the ‘**the look**’. You know the look I'm talking about, **don't you?** The look that every child knows when they have come up with the wrong answer to a question their father has asked them.

I can imagine there would have been an uncomfortable silence before Jesus spoke again. And so, Jesus, I imagine in a warm voice asking them, “**what about you? Who do YOU say that I am?**” This isn't about the multitudes' opinion anymore, this is a personal question. And loved ones, there was no one on the planet at that time who was more qualified to answer that question than these 12 men. Unlike the multitudes, they had been with Jesus 24-7 for two and a half years.

They had heard Him teach, they had seen all His miracles, they were the star witnesses of Jesus' life up until that point. Over the past 2 ½ years, at times He had shocked them, at times He thrilled them, at other times, He filled them with awe and wonder. There was even a time when Jesus walked on water and rebuked the wind and the disciples whispered to each other in **Matthew 8:27** “**What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!**”

Well, the time had come for them to confess their opinion as to what kind of man He was. It was time to fish or cut bait, it was time for them to take a personal stand.

And so, Jesus looked each of His students in the eye and asked this all-important final-exam question. And, I think that when He did, while the other disciples were still processing the question like scared schoolboys, Peter spoke up and said **what? What did Peter say?** According to **Mark 8:29** He said, ‘Right!’ ‘**You are the Messiah.**’ **Matthew 16:16** tells us a little more detail, Peter says, ‘**You are the Christ—the Son of the Living God!**’

And when He said this, I imagine a glow of pride would have showed on Jesus’ face. I can imagine Jesus saying, ‘**yes! correct! you got it right Peter!**’ Now out of all the people we think would get that question right, it was Peter. Peter moved to the head of the class and got it right that day and for once he said the right thing, at the right time!

And it was the right thing because in his well-worded reply, Peter forcefully, confidently expressed two foundational Christian truths. **First**, he identified Jesus as the Messiah, the One Who was to reign forever on the throne of His great ancestor David. **Second**, and even more important, Peter identified Jesus as divine, the ‘**Son of the living God!**’ Literally his words can be translated like this, ‘**You are THE Christ, THE Son of THE God, THE living One!**’

You see loves ones, everything Jesus said and done, were done for the divine purpose for us to come to the same conclusion which Peter came to. **John 20:30+31** ‘**Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**’

Now if you’re a Christian this morning, **do you remember when you had your ‘Caesarea Philippi’ moment?** I had mine back in **January 1997** during a Bible study, it was a moment that changed my life forever, but we all had that moment when we had to decide who we thought Jesus is. And if you’re not a Christian this morning, you still need to have your very own ‘**Caesarea Philippi**’ moment. Jesus doesn’t care about public opinion on this issue, He only cares about your opinion.

**The lead singer of the band U2, Bono, has always been open about his faith, and in a recent interview he said, ‘When people say that Jesus is a ‘good teacher,’ ‘a prophet,’ or He was a ‘really nice guy,’ this is not how Jesus thought of Himself. So, you’re left with a challenge, which is, either Jesus was who He said He was or a complete and utter nut case. But I believe Jesus was the Son of God.’**

You see, Jesus wants an answer from you on this, **who do you say He is? Matthew 27:54** ‘**When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”**’ The centurion had his ‘**Caesarea Philippi**’ moment right there at the cross.

He wants you to do what the Ethiopian Eunuch did in **Acts 8**. Philip had been speaking about Jesus to the Eunuch and the Eunuch understood that He needed to be baptised but notice the question Philip asked him first and the Eunuch’s reply. **Acts 8:36-38** ‘**As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” “You can,” Philip answered, “if you believe with all your heart.” And the eunuch replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.**’ The Eunuch had his ‘**Caesarea Philippi**’ moment right there with Philip.

Jesus Himself said in **Mark 16:16** ‘**Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.**’ **Believes what?** Believes that He is the Christ, The Son of God. And if you’re not a Christian this morning but you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Then let me encourage you to take that believe to the next level, because just believing isn’t going to save you. Jesus says in **Mark 16:16** that you not only have to believe but you also need be baptised to be saved.