

# Who Is Jesus and Who Am I?

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*<sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup> And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup> He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." <sup>20</sup> Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. <sup>21</sup> From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. <sup>22</sup> And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." <sup>23</sup> But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." (Matthew 16:13-23)*

## 1. Caesarea Philippi

One of the important places in the Bible is Caesarea Philippi. On our trip to Israel, we visited Caesarea, but did not have enough time to visit Caesarea Philippi. If you look at a map of Israel, you will notice the two cities are located in different places. Caesarea is a town located on the Mediterranean coast. The town was built by Herod the Great about 25-13 BCE as the port city. The site was recently restored and is a popular archaeological site. The restored Caesarea amphitheater hosts modern-day concerts.

Caesarea Philippi is located 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee and at the base of Mt. Hermon. This city was built by Philip, son of Herod the Great, and named Caesarea for the reigning emperor, Tiberius Caesar. The city was added the name Philippi to distinguish it from the Caesarea near the sea. The springs in Caesarea Philippi mark the beginning of the Jordan River. This water supply made the area very fertile and attractive for religious worship. The city was once the center of Baal worship. There were many pagan temples in the city, including the shrine to the Greek god of Pan.

## 2. Peter's Confession of Christ

Matthew 16:13 and the following tell us that Jesus withdraws from the Sea of Galilee and go north to Caesarea Philippi. Why did Jesus go there with his disciples? This was a critical moment in Jesus' career. Jesus' ministry in Galilee

was about to end and the journey towards the cross would soon begin. The disciples did not know what would happen to their teacher, Jesus. Before he goes to the cross, Jesus makes sure that his disciples know that all these things are happening because God sends Jesus to be the Savior of the world.

In Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks his disciples a question. “**Who do people say that the Son of Man is?**” (Matthew 16:13) His disciples give various replies: “**Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets**” (verse 14). Some believed that Jesus was the resurrection to John the Baptist. Others believed that Jesus was one of the prophets coming at the end of the age.

Now Jesus repeats the question to his disciples, “**But who do you say that I am?**” (verse 15) This is the question that the disciples have been asking since the start of Jesus’ ministry. Simon Peter answers, “**You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God**” (verse 16). Mark 8:27-30 and Luke 9:18-21 both record this confession of Peter. Both of the gospels say Jesus is “the Messiah.” But Matthew adds: “the Son of the living God.” This confession implies that Jesus is not only the promised Messiah but also recognizes the divine nature in Jesus.

The rest of the section (verses 17-20) is found only in Matthew’s account. Jesus declared: “**Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup>And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.**” Jesus tells Simon and to us that only a divine revelation from the Holy Spirit can allow us to understand that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of the living God. The confessing of who Jesus isn’t something we can make up in our minds but is a deep conviction that God gives to us through the Holy Spirit.

### 3. Who Is Jesus?

What does “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” mean? In the time of Jesus, the Jewish people were under the control of Rome and had waited for a long time for the coming of the savior. Peter and other disciples believe that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah who would bring them freedom from Rome. But the most Jews in Israel do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of living God. Many Jewish people to this day continue to wait for the Messiah. They pray every day at the Western Wall in Jerusalem asking God to send them the Messiah.

While I was in Israel, I felt a clear conviction that God continues to care for Israel through Jesus. Wherever we went in Israel, we saw many tourists like ourselves. When we went to the place where Jesus was crucified, we had to wait for a few hours to see the tomb of Jesus. We gave up to see the place.

Tourism in Israel is one of Israel’s major sources of revenue. I’ve heard that 1/3 of revenue is from tourism. 4 million tourists visited Israel in 2018 and

that number increases every year. In 2018, about 61% of all tourists were Christians. Just as God cared for the Israelites in the Exodus, God continues to care for the people living in Israel today. Do they give thanks to Jesus for his caring? Christians would do, but many Jews and Muslims would not.

#### 4. Importance of Peter's Confession

Why is Peter's confession of Jesus important for the disciples and us? Matthew 16:21 and the following say, "**From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.**" We notice that Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi constitutes a turning point in Jesus' ministry. From that time on, Jesus reveals to his disciples the real purpose of his mission on earth. Jesus reminds his disciples that he is supposed to die on the cross so that everyone would receive salvation.

Peter and other disciples are shocked that Jesus would suffer, be killed and be raised again. Peter responds in verse 22. "**Peter took him (Jesus) aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.**" Peter grabs hold of Jesus and declares that what Jesus says will not happen. Does Jesus thank Peter? Absolutely not. Jesus says to Peter, "**Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things**" (verse 23). The term Satan means "adversary." Jesus says if Peter urges Jesus to avoid the cross, Peter is acting the part of an adversary to God's will for Jesus' mission.

#### 5. Who is Jesus and Who are We?

Who is Jesus and who are we? Do we understand the identities of Jesus and ourselves? If Jesus asks us the question "**who do you say that I am?**" what would we say? Most of us would say "you are the Messiah and the son of living God." Then I believe Jesus would say the same thing to us today as he said to Simon, "**You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.**" "Church" in Greek *ekklesia* occurs here for the first time in the Gospels. The literal meaning of *ekklesia* is "called out." The church of Jesus Christ is composed of called-out ones. We are called out by Jesus.

If we declare that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of the Living God, we are called out by Jesus to focus our lives on the things that God calls us to. In verse 23, Jesus says to Peter, "**you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.**" Peter thinks that protecting Jesus from dying on the cross is what he has to do as a disciple. But Jesus says that Peter focused more on what humans want and not necessarily on what God wants. When we

say that Jesus is the Messiah, we need to remember that we are called-out by God to focus our lives on the things that God calls us to do.

## 6. Conclusion

In today's passage, one thing we may not understand is what Jesus says in verse 20. He says to his disciples, "***not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.***" The concept of the Messiah at the time of Jesus was quite different from what the messiahship of Jesus was. The Messiah would be a king and warrior who would bring political freedom to the Israelites. But Jesus died on the cross.

What about today? What does Jesus as the Messiah mean to us? Is Jesus the one that gets rid of all of our problems in life and makes sure that we are always happy? The answer as we all know is no. Jesus isn't the person who exists so that we will never have problems. Jesus is the one who would suffer and die for the sins of the world so that we would all be reconciled with God. Because of Jesus we are saved and our relationship with God is restored.

## 7. Application

Peter's confession of Jesus brings a big difference in his life and in our lives. His conviction and confession would make him a rock upon which Jesus would build his community. In the church history, Peter would be one of the most important persons. Because of Peter you and I became part of the church. Peter influenced and is still influencing our lives. Through his church you and I work together for God's kingdom. I am so grateful for such a blessing and privilege to serve the Lord and you.

Today's scripture tells us that our life journey would not be easy and full of happiness always. Even Jesus who is the Messiah and the son of living God suffered and was crucified on the cross because he focused on the divine things. As Christians we tend to focus on ourselves. And we forget what God wants us to do. There are so many people who do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah and the son of living God. Unless someone bears witness to the messiahship of Jesus, they can't come to Christ.

Since I came back from Israel, I remember the suffering of Palestinian Christians and pray for them. I also can't forget Muslim youth who visited the church of Nativity in Nazareth. I began to pray for them. I feel that praying for them is God's purpose for me to visit Israel this year.

When we are called out as part of the church, God would give us a mission. Have you found your mission in Swift Memorial United Methodist Church? I believe that the real happiness does not come from when we have everything, but when we help someone to come to Christ and make a confession that Jesus is the Messiah and the son of living God. Thanks be to God for giving us such a great mission. Amen.