

**TUTORIAL**  
**1.46**

# Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

See Tutorial 1.6 notes for overall instructions.

The portions of Scripture referred to in this tutorial are: **Mark 8:27-38, 9:1-10.**

## Last time

When some Pharisees from Jerusalem challenged Jesus about His disciples not following Jewish religious regulations, He exposed their hypocrisy. He said that it's what comes out of people's hearts that condemns them before God. He told a story, a parable that contrasted a self-righteous Pharisee and a repentant tax collector praying in the temple.

## Jesus asks the disciples who they believe He is

Mark records some events that serve as important landmarks in the disciples' journey toward understanding who this person is that they are following. (Mark 8:27-30) The account of what they hear and observe is no less important for us as we follow God's Narrative and consider the implications for ourselves and others we interact with. Mark says that Jesus and the disciples leave Galilee and head north to the area around Caesarea Philippi, a town at the base of Mount Hermon.

As they are walking along Jesus asks them what they've been hearing...who are people saying that he is? He, of course, already knows the answer to the question, but He asks these kinds of things in order to get them thinking, to challenge their existing paradigms, and then to communicate truth with them. The disciples reflect on some of the rumours and wild speculation about Him that have been going around. Some people are saying that He is John - the one who baptised so many in the Jordan - come back to life after Herod executed him. Others say Elijah, the Old Testament prophet who didn't physically die. Other prophets have been suggested as possibilities. On a number of occasions Jesus has clearly stated that He is God's Son and proved it by the incredible miraculous things He'd done. But it seems very few people are believing He is actually who He says He is.

Jesus isn't going to allow this pivotal question of His true identity to stay in the theoretical or the third person for His close companions - just a matter of what *others* think. The issue isn't finally about how their friends or their family or the majority of people would answer this question...it's who *they*, individually, believe He is. He puts it to them directly, "But who do you say that I am?" It's the question that God wants every human being to have the opportunity to answer...having heard His Narrative of what has lead up to Him graciously sending His Son to the world, for them to then stand before Jesus, as it were, and declare who they believe He is. Answers like, "A good, wise man", or "A prophet" are irrelevant. People need to have heard enough of His Story to either accept His claim to be God's Son who came to save the world, or reject the whole thing as a fabrication, a pack of lies. There's simply no middle ground on this issue.

Peter - always the first to speak up - says, "You are the Messiah". In other words, the long-promised, anointed or chosen One from God. His ultimate Storyteller, his *Prophet*, the great *High Priest* and the eternal *King* in the line of David. It's a bold statement for this humble fisherman from Capernaum. But after hanging out with Jesus for some time now, watching His life day after day, hearing Him teach and seeing the amazing things He's done...he is confident he knows who Jesus is, and we can assume he speaks for the other disciples. Jesus tells them not to be sharing their perspective on His identity with others...He doesn't want people just jumping on the bandwagon. If they come to the point of saying that He is God's promised Deliverer, He wants it to be something they've really believed for themselves, in their own hearts.

## **Jesus foretells His suffering, death and resurrection**

Jesus then lets them in on some things that are shocking to these men who've identified themselves with Him and made at least some level of commitment to His cause. (Mark 8:31-33) Haven't they, after all, just said that He's the Messiah? Doesn't that mean they've made a wise choice when they became His disciples? Okay, so far there hasn't been much in the way of obvious rewards or benefit, but surely things will get better. Soon He'll get the recognition and honor that are His right...and when He does, well, naturally things will also improve for His closest companions, right?

So now they listen in horror as He tells them that the religious leaders are going to vehemently and violently reject His claims. At their instigation He's going to be tortured and put to death. He does tell them that He'll come back to life after 3 days, that doesn't really register or make sense. It's all the other grim things He's told them that are playing on their minds. Peter pulls Him aside and tells Him not to say things like that. It's unsettling Master, unnecessary...all this negative talk about rejection, suffering and death. Let's be positive here...lay out a proactive strategy for the kingdom. But Jesus

rebukes Peter in the strongest terms. That's the story Satan has deceived humans with all along - that somehow things can be made right in this sin-cursed, pain-filled, death-soaked world, without suffering and death. That's not how things *are* in God's true rescue Story for His lost race. Jesus' coming to earth and what He has committed to do are the climax of that Story and He won't listen even for a moment to any alternatives, no matter how nice and positive and reasonable they might sound.

Jesus presses the point home, calling over the crowd that has inevitably gathered when He turns up somewhere. (Mark 8:34-9:1) He makes some profound statements about what becoming one of His followers involves. He wants no one under any illusions. Certainly it will be a journey, and the realities cannot all be understood from the outset, but those setting out to follow Him need to weigh up the realities. He's looking for people who grasp the fact that what they've built their lives around - their goals, their right to tell their own story, their whole "world" in fact, is seriously misaligned. And even though the realignment will take the rest of their lives and be a less than comfortable process, they are at least willing, by faith, to acknowledge His right to lead them through it.

## **Three of the disciples get a glimpse of Jesus' true glory**

The whole matter of Jesus' true identity is further highlighted in yet another remarkable incident that Mark relates next. (Mark 9:2-10) It's six days after the conversation about who people say He is and how they, the disciples, identify him. Despite His strong words to Peter less than a week before, Jesus specifically invites him, along with James and John, to walk together up what the text calls "a high mountain". Traditionally this has been identified as Mount Tabor in lower Galilee, but there's no way to be certain.

On the summit, things are as normal until at some point the disciples notice that Jesus looks different. What is it? Teacher, what's happening? Suddenly His whole being is glowing: His clothes, everything...is luminous, shining. It has an unearthly quality that they can only feebly define in human terms as "white". But a white like no white they've ever seen before. Then, there are two figures who they somehow recognise as Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. James and John are speechless, but Peter, being Peter, just has to say something. In his amazement and confusion he's babbling about how great this all is, and that they should put up some kind of monumental structures... But his foolishness is quickly forgotten when they see a cloud cover Jesus, Moses and Elijah and they hear a voice come out of it that says, "This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to Him".

When they look again, only Jesus is there, looking like normal again. On the way down He tells them not to tell anyone about this until after He has risen

from the dead. This will prove to be a defining moment...when these three of His closest companions for a very brief time are given a glimpse of who He truly is. They are left grappling with the mystery that his very normal human body is actually a container or vehicle, in a sense, for the being of God Himself. In physical terms He is just like them, but He also contains within Himself all the amazing glory of God, the Creator of the universe. They can look over and see Him right there next to them, walking down the mountain on two legs that are no doubt getting weary like theirs, in sandals that are just as dusty as theirs. But they'll never quite see Him the same way again, because up there on the mountain they caught a glimpse of His glory and they heard God identify Him - just like after His baptism - as His Son who completely pleases Him.

As the Narrative will show, there are many struggles and low-times ahead for these three men...but whatever anyone else says about who Jesus is, they *know*. No one can take away from them or make them doubt what they've seen with their own eyes and heard with their own ears. And despite failures and very real human struggles they'll face, they will go on to give up everything to be His storytellers, to help others to also realise who He really is.



## DISCUSSION POINTS

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1. As you reflect on Jesus' interaction with people so far in the Narrative, are there any specific points or principles that have been highlighted or that you've noticed yourself in how He went about communicating truth? Also make any applications you can that would be a help to us as we attempt to be His witnesses in this society.
2. (a) For someone to be saved - *born again* - how accurately and completely do they need to answer the question Jesus asks, "Who do you say that I am?" (E.g. Do they need to know He is God's Son? God in human form? The Messiah? David's descendant? Born of a virgin?)  
  
(b) How much background from the Biblical Narrative does someone need in order to know enough about who He is to be saved?

3. Why do think it is that many people - even many religious systems - are happy to acknowledge that Jesus was a good, wise, caring person, even a prophet of some kind, but refuse to even consider the possibility that He was God in human form?
4. What features of God's character stand out when you think about the two declarations He has made that Jesus is His Son who He is completely pleased with?



## ACTIVITIES

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1. On a map, find historical Caesarea Philippi, Mount Hermon and Mount Tabor. Trace Jesus and the disciples' possible route as they first went north from Capernaum then south to Jerusalem - as is likely if they went there for the obligatory Feast of Tabernacles that occurred soon after. (Note: this does not have to be submitted.)