

# The Declaration at Caesarea 1

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] this evening for a short time to Matthew 16, Matthew chapter 16 and verse 16 especially. But we can read from verse 13. Matthew 16 verse 13. Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people say that the Son of Man is?

And they said, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah and others Jeremiah, one of the prophets. He said to them, but who do you say that I am? Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Now as we've been following in the Gospels, the account we have of Simon Peter and how he is brought before us as a disciple of Jesus and the experiences that he went through and the statements that he made.

We've seen so far that Peter is learning more and more of the Lord's relationship with himself and his relationship to him as we've seen him in the previous passages we have looked at.

And you can see from that how, and we've seen from that how aspects of discipleship come through so clearly as you look at this life of Peter as it's brought before us in these passages.

[ 1 : 2 3 ] And we've seen from the last study we had in John chapter 6 where Peter again said, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We saw that discipleship is not simply an outward following of the Lord because many disciples, as we read in that passage, turned away from him at that point and walked no more with him.

They left him. They did not come back to follow him. And that's where Jesus turned to the 12 disciples of whom Peter was a member, of course, of the 12.

Do you want to go away as well? Or more literally, you don't want to go away as well, do you? And that's when Peter came with this answer. So we've seen already that to be a disciple, yes, it's a follower of Christ, but it's much more than an outward following or a formal following that it actually takes in issues of the heart.

To be a disciple, to be a follower of the Lord in the full senses, to have in your heart Jesus as your master, your Lord, your teacher, your savior.

And it really fits in very much with the whole biblical emphasis on knowing God and knowing Jesus Christ. That's very different to knowing things about him, knowing certain things in the Bible about him, even being able to gather a lot of the texts of the Bible that speak specifically about Jesus or about aspects of God's being or works or whatever.

[ 2 : 5 2 ] That's very different to that type of relationship. I'm sure many of the ladies here tonight, if George Clooney were to walk down Cromwell Street, would instantly say, I know who that is.

I know that's George Clooney. And we can imagine something of the consequences of that, I'm sure. But that's very different. You know him because you've seen a photo of him, or you've perhaps seen him from a distance before.

You know him because he is such a big celebrity in the world of entertainment as he belongs to. But that's very different from having a relationship with him where you can say, I know that person.

And to be a disciple of Jesus is exactly that. It belongs to that whole emphasis in the Bible of knowing. And the word know in the Bible is one of the most intimate words in the Bible.

It describes even marital intimacy, where you find Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore a son. And you'll find the same word used in God's relationship with his people, and in Christ's relationship with his believing people, with his disciples, who are disciples inwardly in heart.

[ 4 : 0 8 ] He knows them and they know him. They have a living relationship with him. They follow him not just outwardly, but the whole direction and the bias of their heart is very much given to be followers of Christ in terms of obedience to him and following his teaching and his lordship.

And that's precisely what you find in this great statement of declaration or confession of Peter in this passage as well, where he comes to say, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And then, as Jesus went on to speak of where the origin of that confession was, blessed are you, Simon, by Yonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. It's something that originated with God the Father's work in Peter's heart, revealing to him who Jesus really is. And that's, of course, at the heart of our passage too, the identity of Jesus.

And that brings in another element which is not very much part of our study this evening, but discipleship involves trust. When it's the discipleship of your heart, and when your heart is engaged in being a disciple of Jesus and following him and being obedient to him, then that obviously means you trust in him, you trust your life to him, you trust your future and your past to him in the way that he is the forgiver of your sins or brings you to the Father so that you know him as your Father.

[ 5 : 43 ] And you cannot trust someone fully or properly without knowing him and without knowing something about him and who he is and what his identity is and what his character is and what the caliber of his life is.

All of that is really built into the kind of language that's used in the Bible about discipleship. And as we go on studying the life of Peter, these things come more and more to the fore so that we'll put them to ourselves.

Well, two things this evening from these verses. First of all, let's look at Christ's questions as they lead towards this confession of Peter.

That's the second thing, Peter's confession. Christ's questions and then Peter's confessions. It's very interesting how Jesus actually dealt with the disciples here and what led to Peter's confession here.

When he came to the district of Caesarea Philippi and incidentally, this is really a great turning point in the whole account that Matthew gives of his account of Jesus and of the ministry of Jesus leading up to his death on the cross and resurrection.

[ 6 : 50 ] There's a turning point here from this time forth. As you read in 21 there, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things and be killed and on the third day be raised.

And Peter, of course, features in that too and God willing we'll look at that aspect of Peter's life too. But there you find there's the turning point. There's the, if you like, the fulcrum or the way in which the whole gospel of Matthew turns around this point.

Everything before now leads to this and everything afterwards goes back to this great point where Jesus is confessed as the Christ, the Son of the living God.

So what is this question? So in verse D says, who do people say that the Son of Man is? And they said, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Then he said to them, but who do you say? You plural, that is, you disciples, you twelve, who do you say? That I am. This is very interesting because it actually is part of Christ's method here of drawing Peter and the twelve disciples to a consideration of who he is and what his identity is.

[ 8 : 09 ] And then out comes this great confession of Peter. But these opinions of him were at the time circulating in these communities. Some people say, John the Baptist, the Son of Man is John the Baptist.

And of course, Jesus was referring to himself as the Son of Man, as we'll see in a moment, because not only did he say, who do people say the Son of Man is? He then said, who do you say that I am? So he's identifying himself with the Son of Man. We'll see something of that in a minute. But this is how he actually brought these questions before them. Who do people say that I am?

That's what he's saying to us tonight as well. Through the Scriptures, through the Word of God, through the Holy Spirit as tonight this Gospel is proclaimed to you and as you're hearing this Gospel proclaimed.

That is really how he's addressing you in order to come more closely, as we'll see, to address your own personal relationship with him. He's asking, who do people say that I am?

[ 9 : 06 ] Study history. Study the way that people even nowadays speak about Jesus Christ. What sort of opinions do people have of him? What sort of thing do other religions make of this Jesus? Well, some of them give him a prominent place.

But as we'll see, only the Christianity that has Christ at its foundation really has a proper view of him as Christ, the Son of God.

The man in the street has his own ideas about Jesus. Philosophy has its own ideas about Jesus. Different religions have their thoughts and their statements about Jesus.

And all of that brings us to the stature of Jesus. The stature of Jesus, not only in the Bible, but throughout the whole course of history, since the time of the apostles at least, demands an answer to the question, well, who is he?

Who is this person? What is his identity? Christianity. As Rabbi Duncan famously said in a three-fold dilemma, if you like, that he had, he said, when you analyze the stature of Jesus, the immensity of Jesus that comes across from the pages of the Bible and of the Gospels as they deal with his life, there are three possibilities.

[10:33] Either he's being deliberately evil to say things about himself that he knows are not true, or else he's completely mad or mistaken, saying things about himself, thinking they're true when they're actually not, or else he says he is exactly who he claims to be.

That's what we're confronted with tonight. Who is this Jesus? Is he someone who's mistaken about his own identity? Is he somebody who deliberately set out to mislead people, knowing he wasn't anything of what he claimed to be?

Or is he the Christ, the Son of God? Is he indeed who he claims to be? And if he is, then that has implications for us. And when I say if he is, there is no doubt about it, is there?

And that's why Duncan actually set out that three-fold question or dilemma about who Jesus was, because he clearly wished to state that the Bible establishes that this is who he is, that this is who he knew he was and is, the Christ, the Son of the living God.

But then he comes to the second question. That's, who do people say the Son of Man is? What sort of opinions do you find around you? Listen to what the world is saying, listen to what other religions are saying.

[12:03] Fine, says Jesus, but who do you say that I am? Now you see, he's drawing the net in, just like you find some people still to this day fishing with a specific kind of fishing net, especially when it's done manually and people have to physically haul that net to shore.

It's cast out very widely, first of all, but then the net is drawn in and it becomes more narrow when the focus becomes more narrowly upon that net as it gets smaller and smaller and captures the fish that are caught.

That's what the gospel is doing. That's what Jesus is doing with you tonight, with me tonight. He's beginning by saying, who do you think, what do people think of Jesus?

Who do people say Jesus is? But who do you say? And he's not left-leaving it, the word is plural. Who do you plural say?

You've got to actually narrow the focus down even more so to ourselves individually tonight. Who do you singular say that he is?

[13:15] What's his relevance to your life? how does he fit, if at all, into your way of life? Your hopes, your fears, your concerns, your questionings, your perplexities, your future, your past, your sins, your relationship with God, with eternity.

Where does Jesus feature in that in your case? That's really what we're confronted with, isn't it? It's not to challenge us so that we'll just find this just all too much and too harsh and too hard, and I hope that's not how it comes across.

It's not intended to. It's so that this truth of God will really come by his blessing to melt our hearts so that if Jesus is not already situated there as the Lord of our life and of our discipleship is not yet the kind that has discipleship of heart, then tonight we will come to think seriously about this and ask ourselves, well, what is he to me?

What have I made of him in my life? Where tonight do I stand in relation to Christ and his identity?

So Christ's questions, and they are so important, they draw us to considering who he is in himself. And then Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Now there's a whole lot of theology in that confession, in that statement, and there's no way we're going to be able to open up all the terms that are there in the short time we've got available.

[15:04] But this is really one of the great confessions of the Bible, one of the great statements and declarations of the Bible that brings before us something of the grandeur and the greatness of Christ.

You are the Christ. That's the first thing, you are the Christ. What does the word Christ mean? Well, you know, I'm sure, that it means the Messiah, the Anointed One.

And what does that actually indicate? What does it mean that he is the Messiah, the Anointed One? What does that anointing mean? What does it amount to?

What do we think of as we think of Christ as the Anointed One, the Messiah? How is he anointed? How has he come to be anointed? What's the significance of that anointment, of that anointing as we think of him in relation to ourselves?

Well, for that, we've got to just step a little bit deeper into the Godhead, into the Trinity. We'll see that for the second part of the confession to the Son of the Living God.

[16:09] But you need to take them both together, of course. And as the Christ, we think of him as the Anointed of God, as the Savior of his people, because as we think of God and as we know God to be, triune, to have the three persons, as we give the name to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

That's our religion. We have a Trinitarian religion. That's our confession that God is the Father, that God is the Son, that God is the Holy Spirit. And there are not three gods, there are one God together, these three persons.

The mystery of the Godhead, but the reality of the Godhead, that's what's revealed to us. That's what we have to hold on to. It's part of our confession. It's part of our Christian faith.

And in doing that, you know very well yourselves, especially in the Gospel of John, that Jesus spoke of himself as having been sent by the Father to a specific work in this world.

In other words, in the Trinity that God is, there's an arrangement which came to be carried out in the process of history, where the Father sent the Son into the world and the same, the Son willingly came and he came by taking our human nature to himself and in being born of a woman and in coming to be really human in every respect of humanness and in living that human life all the way through to his death on the cross and in accomplishing that death on the cross and then coming to rise from the dead on the third day as we find in the next passage, as he himself revealed to the disciples.

[17:48] And for all of that ministry, we learn from the Bible that Jesus was anointed and anointed especially not with oil but with the Holy Spirit.

Now that opens up a whole area that we can't actually go into this evening and that is that in terms of the human nature of the Son of God, there is a ministry of the Holy Spirit to him, to himself.

He is endowed with the Holy Spirit. He is given certain gifts, if you like, or he is endowed in such a way that he became in our nature the Savior who carried out these great tasks for our redemption. That is how God actually arranged and carried out the redemption of his people. He is anointed with that.

We sang something of that in Psalm 45 where we sang together the way in which he is prophesied about in that Psalm as one who has come to be God's anointed one.

[18:59] Psalm 72 has similar sentiments to that but here he is addressing these verses to the king. You are the most handsome of the sons of men. Grace is poured upon your lips.

Therefore God has blessed you forever. And then he prays in a sense seeking gird your sword on your thigh. This warrior Jesus, this endowed warrior of God, endowed with the spirit of God and in this splendid imagery that you have there of the warrior riding out in his majesty to bring people into subjection to himself, to form his kingdom, to actually bring about people who will be his disciples. ride out victoriously. And then of course verse 6 which we can relate to the son of God as we'll come to in a minute. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever under the epistle to the Hebrews. Right at the start of the epistle it's obvious that it is Jesus, it's the son that that is speaking about. So there's the Christ, the anointed one. He's anointed with the spirit.

He's given the spirit. You remember at his baptism the beginning of his public ministry that the spirit in the form of a dove descended upon him and in John's words and they're very important that he saw this and it remained on him.

[20:26] It didn't just come and then go. It remained on him. He was endowed with the spirit and very interestingly I just mentioned this in passing I think we've referred to it before but in Luke chapter 4 you have an arrangement of Christ's baptism and then subsequently his temptation by the devil in the wilderness.

He was baptized. We wait there. Jesus also was praying as he was praying the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove and a voice from heaven came you are my beloved son with you I am well pleased.

And chapter 4 begins Jesus full of the Holy Spirit. He was led by the spirit into the desert and afterwards but you see here he was full of the Holy Spirit returning from the Jordan and was led by the spirit into the wilderness to confront Satan or to have Satan really brought before them is really what you think about.

And when that was finished he came to Nazareth he returned in the power of the spirit to Galilee and then he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up and what did he do?

He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him and he unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor to proclaim liberty to the captives the recovering of sight to the blind to set at liberty those who are oppressed to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

[ 22 : 10 ] He rolled up the scroll he gave it back to the attendant and he sat down and he began to say to them today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

And then you read and all spoke well of him and marveled at the words of grace that were coming from his mouth. And then you read incredibly and they said is not this Joseph's son?

You see there's a very dynamic point being made there. Here is Jesus in Luke's presentation of it just fitting in with what Peter is confessing here as Jesus the Christ the anointed one.

he has that reference to Jesus being anointed with the Holy Spirit coming back in the power of the Spirit confronting the devil in the power of the Spirit coming back in the power of the Spirit to Galilee taking up the passage in the Bible in the scroll of Isaiah where this passage was especially referring to him as the Spirit endowed one and yet they don't accept him.

Now you see that tonight is important to you and to me. The fact that we know that this is who Jesus is that the Bible demonstrates that this Christ is the anointed one that he was anointed with the Holy Spirit for the redemption of his people does not automatically mean that you and I instantly say great news I'll follow him I'll give my heart to him.

[ 23 : 45 ] Who do you say that he is? This is what it's saying about him He is the Christ He's the anointed of God He's the specially endowed saviour of sinners He has the Spirit in order to carry through his ministry and tonight he's saying you know all this you're privileged to know all this you're privileged above most people in the world today to know this teaching from the word of God but is there anyone here who doesn't yet know him know him for themselves whose heart is not yet the heart of discipleship even if outwardly you are indeed following him to the measure you are you are the Christ are you convinced of this for yourself this evening but then he says you are the Christ the son of the living

God now that brings up this title that's given to him the son of God or as Peter has it here the son of the living God just to make it absolutely clear that it is God the only true God that he's speaking of and it raises of course the question of what is what is meant by this title the son of God or Jesus we're not again at all going to have time to do much with that except to notice that it's alongside the son of man here as he's put in the first two questions who who is the son of man some people think that the son of man describes Jesus in terms of his humanity whereas the son of God describes him in terms of his divine nature or his deity it's not entirely wrong but if you go to where the son of man appears in the old testament especially the book of Daniel in chapter 7 you'll find that it's actually a divine figure not a human one that's brought to the ancient of days and who is given a kingdom and authority it's Jesus not merely in terms of his human nature but Jesus the endowed son of God in our nature the Messiah the God man and you are the Christ the son of the living God now there are places in the Bible we could refer to a number

I'm just going to refer back to one of them in Matthew's gospel seeing we're in Matthew's gospel where the son of God is very clearly set forth as a title that sets out the deity or the godhood of Jesus Matthew 11 has a wonderful passage that leads into his great invitation though it could be an imperative as well as an invitation come to me all you who labor and Matthew chapter 11 verse 25 incidentally there are actually study sheets on these studies that we have in Peter's life you can find them online on the website I know some are using them in Bible study groups and I'll make one available as well on this study this evening so there'll be more detail of these things that we haven't time to go into you can follow that out in the study notes for yourselves that time Jesus declared I thank you Father Lord of heaven and earth that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children yes Father for such was your gracious will all things have been handed over to me by my Father and no one knows the Son except the Father

and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal them these are amazing words because they bring us into once again the stature the greatness the depth that you find in the person of Jesus as the Son of God as divine along with this humanness and what it's really saying to us is actually only God the Father really knows the Son in the entirety of what he is and who he is as the Son of God and yet the Son makes this known to those that he chooses to make it known to and what Peter is told here is that the Father has revealed this to him in other words there is such a grandeur such an immensity to Jesus that the Son of God describes him as God he is in every sense

God in every sense in which the Father is God and you go back to chapter 14 and you read that verse 33 that they worshipped him we had a look at something of those passages where he came across the sea and where he encouraged them take heart it is I be not afraid we mentioned at that time the greatness of that I it is I but then Peter got out of the boat and as we saw went to Jesus and Jesus rescued him from sinking verse 33 of those in the boat worshipped him saying truly you are the Son of God if Jesus is not divine if he is not God not only are we wrong to worship him tonight but we would be committing a gross sin in worshipping someone who is not actually God who alone is to be worshipped we have no embarrassment or sense of guilt in worshipping Jesus as we worship the Father and worship the Spirit as we worship God because he is the Son of God he is God he is divine and the greatness of his deity fills this confession of Peter you are the Christ you are the anointed one you are the Messiah the Son of the living God and you know some people would actually say and you'll find some species of theology saying this that actually Christ is not preexistent he is not divine this is something the Son of God a title that was given to him or invented by the early church or something like that so that as his ministry was reflected on this is something that came to be a doctrine of the church that as the Messiah as the Christ as one who was endowed indeed by God but not God as these versions of theology will say to you so also they tacked on the fact that he is the Son of God because God endowed him and being a very special person then he if you like adopted him into this title of sonship in actual fact it is the other way around the

[ 30 : 53 ] Christ hood of Jesus if you like his Messiahship is actually founded on his sonship his deity as the Son of God is foundational to his Christhood as the anointed Messiah in our nature the Son incarnate and the the statement Jesus is God is fundamental to our Christianity fundamental to the Christian faith that's one of the things throughout history that God's faithful people have sought to insist upon and to write against all kinds of thoughts and statements and articles and works that would deny the deity of Christ of course humanity is of critical importance to us as well but that's not before us at the moment other than it's an aspect of Christ as he is there before

Peter you are the Christ the Son of the living God but what's the point of all that are we just studying this tonight with a view to just filling our minds with theology good thing though that is is this just so that we'll know something more about Jesus and who he is and his identity and have something more of an appreciation of what it means that he is the Christ that he's the Son of God is it just so that we will be able to say to other people well you know this is something that I learned a bit more about on Sunday when the minister was preaching on this text what is the point to the Bible telling us that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God well the answer to that is actually in John's Gospel and in chapter 20 and verses 30 and 31 because this is what it says now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book but these are written so that you may believe that

Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name that's why we're looking tonight at Peter's confession and statement it's not just an academic exercise though it has elements of that in it it's not just a theological exercise good though that is it's an exercise in terms of our discipleship and in terms of who Jesus is to us it's an exercise in examining ourselves tonight as to whether we in believing in his name have indeed come into the possession of life eternal life indeed in Jesus Christ that's going back to the invitation in John in Matthew 11 having said something about himself about who he is about his relationship to the father about the immensity of himself as a person then he says now you come to me all you who are laden and heavy laden and I will give you rest where are you going to find your rest we looked last time at Peter saying to

Jesus to whom else shall we go you have the words of eternal life yes but who are you you come to rest and you find rest truly only in this great person in this immense divine as well as human Jesus

come to me he says and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you in other words become my disciple take my yoke of teaching upon you give your heart to me obey me for my yoke is easy my burden is light it doesn't mean that we will not find the way challenging but it does mean however challenging it will be we have someone who undergirds our life who will never forsake us whose greatness is the greatness of deity as well as his human understanding now then who do you say that he is let's pray gracious lord we give thanks that this gospel is your gospel that it is your good news to us that you express yourself through it right through to our present day that you will continue to express yourself and reveal yourself through this word right through to the end of time oh lord we thank you tonight that you have dressed ourselves that you have brought us to consider our relationship to you as the christ the son of the living god lord we pray that as we know these truths sinking into our hearts we pray that you would claim our hearts for yourself lord may our disciples should be very real very internal as well as outward and may indeed be what we are outwardly be a reflection of what we are in our hearts that we are yours that you are ours that we delight to be your people accept our worship now we pray for jesus sake amen our final psalm in conclusion tonight is psalm 89 again in the scottish psalter page 345 psalm 89 these well known words speak about the privilege and the blessing of being a people who know this joyful sound who are the people of god oh greatly blessed the people are the joyful sound that know in brightness of thy face oh lord they ever on shall go psalm 89 on page 345 singing 15 to 18 on the tune this covenanter so greatly blessed the people are oh greatly bless the people and the joyful sound that know in brightness of thy face oh lord they ever on shall go they ever on shall go they ever on shall go in brightness of thy face oh lord they ever on shall go in thy name shall all the day rejoice exceedingly and in thy righteousness shall they exalted be on high exalted be on high exalted be on high how did my righteousness shall live exalted be on high because the glory of their strength the throne we stand in thee how in thy favor shall are warm and exalted be and power exalted be and power exalted be and in thy favor shall are warm and power exalted be for [ 39 : 58 ] God is our defense and he to us of safety bring the holy one of Israel is our almighty king is our almighty king king the holy one of Israel is our almighty king because I didn't see those of you who were upstairs this morning I will go again to the main door this evening now may the grace of the lord jesus christ the love of god the father and the communion of the holy spirit be with you now and ever more amen