

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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## Who is this Jesus?: The Son of God

This is the second in a series of talks entitled "Who is this Jesus?" Last week we looked at Jesus as "The Son". We saw then that this emphasises the closeness of relationship with His Father and the special place which He occupies as the Son of His Father's love (Colossians 1:13). Our subject today is "The Son of God". We will see that this emphasises His unique deity. Next week's talk will look at "The Son of man" which emphasises both His humanity as the One who came to die for mankind and His future glory. Finally we will look at "The Son of David" with its emphasis on Him as the One who came to fulfil all the promises of God, particularly in relation to the nation of Israel.

An old rhyme runs like this,

*What think ye of Christ is the test  
To try both your state and your scheme.  
You cannot be right in the rest  
Unless you think rightly of Him.*

(John Newton 1725-1807)

This is especially true of our subject today. Recognition of Jesus as the Son of God is absolutely fundamental to the Christian faith. Two facts from the Gospels will help confirm this. Although Mark wrote his Gospel particularly to present Jesus as the lowly Servant, he nevertheless begins his Gospel with the statement, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). Mark might present Jesus as the Servant, but he wants his readers to be absolutely sure that Jesus is none other than the Son of God Himself. At the end of his Gospel, John writes, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31). John's whole purpose in writing his Gospel was so that his readers might come to recognise Jesus as the Son of God.

The Gospel writers describe a very significant visit of Jesus and His disciples to Caesarea Philippi, a town on the extreme northern edge of Israel. It is so important that the three evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, each record it. We'll read Matthew's account: "When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' And Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.'" (Matthew 16:13-18).

In an age when the people at large were comparing Jesus with Old Testament worthies, Peter makes this unique confession of Him as the Son of God. It is on the basis of this confession that Jesus promises to build His church. And so today, membership of the Church of Christ is still dependent on this vital confession.

Acknowledgement of Jesus as the Son of God is so important that it is emphasised in the Gospels at all the significant stages of the Lord's life: His birth, His baptism, His ministry, His death and His resurrection. It will be instructive to look at each of these in turn.

### His birth

We'll read from Luke's Gospel: "Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.' Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I do not know a man?' And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God'" (Luke 1:30-35).

Mary was left in no doubt whatever that the child she would bear would be none other than the Son of God Himself.

That is also implicit in Isaiah's prophecy, written some 600 years before Jesus was born (Isaiah 7:14). Interestingly, that prophecy is quoted by Matthew after describing the angel's visit to Joseph: "Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us'" (Matthew 1:22-23).

### **His baptism**

John the Baptist was sent by God to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus. "In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:1-2). The people went out to John to be baptised by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. Jesus also went to be baptised (Matthew 3:13). Understandably John was reluctant to do this since he recognised that Jesus was without sin (Matthew 3:14), but did so at Jesus' insistence (Matthew 3:15). God, however, would have the people know that this baptism was different and so we read: "And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). God the Father would jealously guard the absolute perfection and total innocence of His Son! The Lord Jesus did not enter those waters of baptism because He had sins of His own to confess. Rather He took that place to show to penitent Israel the place which they ought to take. It is interesting that the Father expressed that same delight in His Son when the three disciples, Peter, James and John were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1-8).

### **His life**

We'll read firstly from Matthew 14:23-33: "And when [Jesus] had sent the multitudes away, He went up on a mountain by Himself to pray. And when evening had come, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.' And Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.' So He said, 'Come.' And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!' And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.'"

The divine power of the Lord Jesus as the Son of God was demonstrated in at least two ways. Firstly, not only was He able to walk on the sea, but He was able to empower Peter to do the same. No human being has ever accomplished that! Secondly, as soon as Jesus and Peter returned to the boat, the storm ceased. Little wonder, then, that the disciples had to confess, "Truly You are the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33).

The Lord Jesus plainly presented Himself as the Son of God to the man born blind to whom He had given sight. John tells us, "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of God?' He answered and said, 'Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?' And Jesus said to him, 'You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.' Then he said, 'Lord, I believe!' And he worshipped Him" (John 9:35-38).

But even the enemies of Jesus had to acknowledge that He was the Son of God. We'll read from John 18:1-13: "When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples. Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, 'Whom are you seeking?' They answered Him, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus said to them, 'I am.' And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. Then - when He said to them, 'I am,' - they drew back and fell to the ground. So He asked them again, 'Whom are you seeking?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus answered, 'I have told you that I am. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way' ... Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him. And they led Him away..."

The enemies of Jesus would never have admitted that He was the Son of God but when the Lord Jesus addressed them using that name of deity, they could not but admit the power of that name and fell to the ground. You may recall that when Moses, some 1,300 years earlier had asked God what was His name, God had replied, "I AM WHO I AM." God then went on to tell Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (see Exodus 3:1-14). From that time onwards, the Jews had acknowledged that name as the covenant name of Jehovah of Israel -

the ever existing God, without beginning and without end, the God who always keeps His promises. From that time onwards, the Jews had always had a special reverence for that name of God. In the garden, Jesus claims that name for Himself and His enemies fall to the ground under the power of it. It is especially significant to notice that, despite the powerlessness of His enemies, Jesus calmly waits until they recover. He then allows them to take Him prisoner.

### His death

At His crucifixion, the enemies of Jesus taunted Him. Matthew tells us, "And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.' Likewise the chief priests, also mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, "I am the Son of God."'" (Matthew 27:39-43). Those taunts are surely the cruellest to be found in Scripture. Had Jesus responded to them and come down from the cross, His enemies would have felt the full force of His name, but in judgment! But He had not come to be Judge, rather to be the Saviour (see John 12:47). The hymn writer, Albert Midlane, puts it beautifully,

*"Himself He could not save,  
Love's stream too deeply flowed;  
In love Himself He gave  
To pay the debt we owed.  
Obedience to the Father's will,  
And love to Him did all fulfil."*

However, despite all the taunts of Jesus' enemies, the centurion in charge of the crucifixion, after it was all over, had to acknowledge, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54). He had listened to the oaths and curses of the thieves who were crucified alongside the Lord Jesus. In marked contrast, he had heard Jesus pray for forgiveness for His enemies and lovingly commits His mother, Mary, to the care of His disciple, John. He knew that here was no ordinary man!

### His resurrection

The Gospels do not record any direct testimony to the Lord Jesus as the Son of God after His resurrection. Thomas' confession, after he had had his doubts banished, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28) comes nearest to it. There is, however, a very striking statement made by the Apostle Paul in Romans 1: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:1-4).

That resurrection power of the Lord Jesus was demonstrated during His lifetime on no fewer than three occasions.

- He brought back to life the twelve year old daughter of Jairus who had just died (Mark 5:22-43).
- He restored to life the adult son of a widow of Nain who was on his way to be buried, probably within a day of his death (Luke 7:11-17).
- Finally, at Jesus' command, Lazarus, who had been dead for four days, was brought back to life (see John 11:1-44).

But that resurrection power was abundantly demonstrated in that, on that first Easter day, the Lord Jesus Himself rose triumphantly from the dead. It is surely noteworthy that in the apostolic preaching of the Gospel (as we find it in the Acts of the Apostles), the death of Jesus and His resurrection are proclaimed side by side.

We need now to look at the reaction of the Jewish leaders to the claims of the Lord Jesus to be the Son of God. They reacted with hatred and anger at such claims and were determined to be rid of Him (see John 19:7; Matthew 26:62-68). Their reaction is understandable in so far as they had been brought up from the Old Testament to believe that the LORD their God was one God. It was inconceivable to them that there would be a plurality of Gods. Yet that idea is implicit in the opening chapter of the Bible. There in the account of creation, God says, "Let **Us** make man in **Our** image" (Genesis 1:26).

In his temptation of the Lord Jesus in the wilderness, Satan himself seems to admit that Jesus was the Son of God (see Matthew 4:1-11). Certainly those unclean spirits who were under Satan's control were ready to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God. Mark tells us, "And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, 'You are the Son of God'" (Mark 3:11).

It is so vitally important that each one of us recognises the Lord Jesus as the Son of God. We can make only one of two choices as to who Jesus is. Either we accept Him as the Son of God as He claimed to be or we have to say He was at best deluded, or at worst a madman. To try to limit Him to just a good Man, as some wish to do, is not an option. Good men, if that is all they are, simply do not go around saying that they are the Son of God. We come back to the reason why John wrote his Gospel as we considered at the beginning of our talk, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

My prayer this morning is that each one of us knows that blessing of eternal life in His name.

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