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12/13 Following the Messiah Episode 5 (8:19-19:47) Who Is Jesus?

Opening:

1. You have viewed the video "Following the Messiah Episode 5" at www.appianmedia.org and have worked through the study guides (**Lessons 12 and 13**) available at www.appianmedia.org/free-download.
2. **Please note that we are doing two lessons in one in this study!!**
3. This study continues are examination of the question of "Who Is Jesus?" We will be considering both the stilling of the storm on the Sea of Galilee and the events of the Caesarea Philippi episode when Jesus asked the disciples who He was.

Into the Text:

1. First, let's read the account of Jesus' stilling the storm. It is recorded in Matt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:35-41; Lk. 8:22-25. I will be reading from Mk. 4:35-41.
2. This is the third event that highlights the identity of Jesus. Previously we have considered the Simeon and Anna events at the temple and the events in Nazareth where Jesus read from Isaiah and said today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.
3. Jesus has been performing various miracles of healing. He has been teaching about the Kingdom of God. Many of these events have occurred by the Sea of Galilee, significant events, powerful events, but the disciples seem to be particularly impressed with the fact that the wind and the water obey Him.

The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by hills. It is about 700 feet below sea level. The hills rise over 1500 feet above the surface of the water. Winds from the northwest can rush down the hills and create rough water in a very short time. Surely the disciples, some of whom are fishermen on this sea, had seen this happen before. Jesus was asleep when a fierce gale descended on the lake. They are beginning to be swamped and to be in danger. In both Matthew and Mark's accounts they describe themselves as "perishing" (Matt. 8:25; Mk. 4:38). When Jesus is awakened He rebukes the wind and the waves and it became calm. He questioned their faith. They questioned who He was that the winds and the water obey Him.

This may not be so much a question of His identity as it is an exclamation regarding His authority. He told them to not be afraid (Matt. 8:26). However, their terror of the storm has been transformed into breath taking awe before Him who commands wind and waves. Yes, it is about who He is! But when we come face to face with the demonstration of such awesomeness we cannot help but exclaim, "Who then is this!"

4. Move with me now 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, near the city of Dan and the headwaters of the Jordan River. You have risen nearly 1,700 feet in elevation. The landscape has changed from the lake in the bowl of Galilee to a rocky mountainous region. Your worksheet from Appian Media says, “The city of Caesarea Philippi was extremely pagan, and had recently been renamed. It was known for its pagan rituals offered to the Greek god Pan, the deity of wild, desolate places. Pan was believed to live in a cave in the west side of the cliff, which had a spring gushing from it in Jesus’ day. The locals would throw animal sacrifices into the spring, and if they were “rejected” they believed that Pan was angry and the people would eventually offer a child to the water to appease him. In the vicinity of Pan’s grotto and the adjoining courtyard filled with niches in the wall for statues of Pan and his nymphs, Herod the Great also built a temple to Caesar Augustus. As you approached the impressive cliff and spring, you would see the temples, courtyards and lifeless statues of the pagan deities and emperor” (p. 78).



Photo W. Galloway

5. Read with me from Matt. 16:13-19.

6. In this rocky place with its niches for the placement of statues of various pagan deities Jesus asked, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” The answer: “Some say John the Baptist, others say, Elijah, others say Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” When considering what people say the answers are varied on almost any subject and they are varied here. Such answers reveal a level of uncertainty and confusion. Here at this place the confusion about the divine is in evidence. Peter’s response to

Jesus clearly is spoken from a Jewish perspective. John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets all reveal this perspective. The Greeks had Pan and their other deities. The Romans had their temple to Caesar Augustus.

Jesus asked, "But who do you say that I am?" Now that's a personal question, one that all of us need to face. "Who do you say that Jesus is?"

Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." I wonder if he meant to imply that all these gods here at Caesarea Philippi were not living. Or maybe he just meant to imply that they were not gods at all. One thing is for certain, Peter, was not unsure about who Jesus was. His understanding was based on the revelation of God and spoken from a somewhat Jewish perspective. Like the Jews he believed what the O.T. Scriptures said, but he had a different understanding than many of the Jewish faith. Jesus was not John the Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah or one of the prophets and he certainly was not associated with any of the pagan religions.

7. Where did Peter get this unique idea about the identity of Jesus? Jesus said, "Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." Notice that both Jesus and Peter recognize that "the Father who is in heaven" reveals things to men. Well did God somehow miraculously put this information in Peter's head? I do not think so. He had gathered information from at least two sources, from what the Scriptures said about the Christ and from what He had actually experienced with Jesus. Where do you get your information about who Jesus is? Do you get it from the Father who is in heaven or from what people say?

8. In this rocky place Jesus says, "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades (death) will not overpower it." There has been some confusion over whether this means that Peter is the rock upon which the church is built or the confession itself is the rock upon which the church is built. I am not going to enter that debate. It is pretty evident, as important as Peter is, that the church is not built on Peter but upon the revelation of the Father that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God. It is this belief that brings people together into the "ekklesia" (the assembly of God's people), further described here as the "kingdom of heaven." Acknowledgement of Jesus as the Christ the Son of God brings people together under the authority of His rule and the rule of heaven. Whatever the Father has bound in heaven is binding in this kingdom.

In a previous study we have observed this "Son of Man" designation is used in Dan. 7:13-14 of one who came up to the Ancient of Days and received "dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him." From religious diversity, unity; from confusion, clarity; from many kingdoms, one kingdom, all because we recognize who Jesus is, the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Application:

1. If you ask people today who Jesus is what are some of the responses?
2. Where are you in the evaluative process? Just thinking about it. Confused. Pretty sure, but not ready to make Him King of my life. What do you need to do to be as confident as Peter?
3. Thinking back to the stilling of the storm . . . what impresses you most about this account? Why? What do you suppose your response would have been to the wind and the waves obeying Him? Has the Lord stilled some storms in your life? Tell about your experience.
4. Are these studies helping you in your evaluation of the identity of Jesus? How? To accept Him as “the Christ, the Son of the living God” is a big commitment. In what way is it a challenging commitment for you?