

## Matthew 16: 13 -20 "The son of the Living God"

### Matthew 16: 13-20

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<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

<sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is 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 hell

<sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed

<sup>20</sup> Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

### Introduction

Recently, we have been studying the bible on the topic of "Who is Jesus?". In other words, we're looking at the identity of Jesus. We have seen that Jesus is both a king and a servant. Even though He is special, who was resurrected from the dead, He is our friend. He is the teacher of the Bible and our life, and the shepherd who guides us.

- When we understand the personality and character of people around us, our attitude and behavior toward them change. We trust honest and kind people. We keep distance from those who are self-centered. We trust those who are sincere and always behave in righteousness. We may become hostile to aggressive people. We feel grateful towards people with selfless love.
- So what kind of person Jesus to you? Today we are going to look at how the disciples spoke of Jesus. Isn't it important to hear the testimonies of the people who were closest to Him?  
[Matthew 16: 13-20]
- From today's scripture, I would like to discuss what kind of person Jesus is from three points. First, what do we see Jesus as? It is a general view of Jesus. Second, let's make clear what the Bible says of Jesus's identity and what does "the Son of the living God" mean.
- Third, let's discuss how we can approach the truth of Jesus, the son of God. First, who is Jesus? Second, "the Son of the living God". Third, knowing about Jesus.

### 1. Who is Jesus?

- Jesus first asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?". In other words, Jesus was asking what do the people around the disciples say about Jesus. It seemed that Jesus asked this question after a lot of consideration.
- Soon after Jesus listened to the reply about how the people said about Him, He asked the disciples, "But who do you say that I am?". In this way, the disciples could think deeply and He gave them time to think about how they should answer.
- Many people at that time regarded Jesus as a prophet. Verse 14.  
16: 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."
- A prophet is one sent by God. A prophet had a special role to take the words of God and conveyed the message of God to people. John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah. Many agreed that Jesus was special, like a prophet, sent by God.

- But everyone seemed to listen only to the messages they wanted to hear. Regardless of who Jesus really is, everyone seemed to imagine a hero who could help him/her to achieve what he/she wanted.
- In the early days of the church plantation of Grace City, we conducted some interviews on streets asking people what they thought about Jesus. We showed pictures of Jesus (pictures seemed to be Jesus) and asked "Who is he?" to people who were walking at Chuo-dori in Ginza for shopping or dating.
- About half of the people recognized the picture was Jesus, but some others answered that a musician, an actor or the character in "Passion" (a movie). Then we asked the next question, "What image do you have of Jesus?" Some answered that He is the founder of Christianity, while others answered that He is a person who died on a cross. There were also answers like "I learned about Jesus in social studies class." or just "He is a good person".
- It is true that even in the modern age of the 21st century, though there is not enough knowledge and faith about Jesus, His influence is enormous. The influence of the Bible and Jesus is wide and deep among society. But some people regard Jesus as a teacher of morals. Some people think of Him as a role model of leadership that they can apply in their companies or professional careers. Some people may think of Him as a counselor.
- We would all agree that Jesus is special and influential. However, aren't we all thinking of Jesus as a teacher, a leader or a counselor at our convenience to get our agendas done? How about you? Jesus directly asked his disciples "But who do you say that I am?". This is a question that Jesus is asking you today.

## 2. The son of the Living God"

- So how did the disciples answer? Peter, representing other disciples like a spokesman, answered "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Verse 16) In response to this answer, Jesus accepted it positively and said that "Blessed are you" (Verse 17).  
16:17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.
- In today's scripture, we should pay the most attention to the fact that Jesus is "the son of the living God". The son of God is an identity far beyond and superior to a prophet. A son has the same character and the same DNA as his parents. A son of a frog is a frog, a son of a crow is a crow and a son of a human is a human.
- When Peter answered "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.", Jesus called him "Simon Bar-Jonah". Bar-Jonah means the son of Jonah. Jesus answered by contrasting the son of God with the son of Jonah (a human being). That is, the son of God is God, and the son of Jonah is a human being.
- Thus Jesus, the son of God, has the characters of God, and is God Himself. His disciples called Him the son of God when they witnessed Jesus walking on the lake and saving Peter from a terrifying storm. Matthew 14:32-33.  
14: 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."
- In other words, Jesus is the son of God, who has the authority of God and also controls nature. Not only that, but also Jesus healed the sick and surprised people. He did exactly what was predicted in the Old Testament.  
Matthew 15: 31 so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

- But what about Jesus' own self-awareness? It is important to know how He considered Himself. If He had no awareness of being the son of God while the people around Him worshiped Him as the son of God, there would be no greater contradiction than this, and it would be a tragedy or a comedy.
- Jesus always called God "Father" when He prayed to God. This kinship was so strong that Jesus used "Aba", the word little children called their father in the then Palestinian region. And He prayed,  
Matthew 11: 25 ..."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;  
26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.  
27 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 him.
- Jesus mentioned himself as "the Son of Man". He asked, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Verse 13). "the Son of Man" is also a way of mentioning human beings in general. However, all the 81 uses, except for one exception, of "the Son of Man" in the New Testament were used to mention Jesus Himself with special meanings.
- In other words, He called Himself the Son of Man to emphasize that He is the Savior who brings the cross and the resurrection as the authority of God. Moreover, He reveals Himself as a judge who will judge everyone with glory when it comes to an end (reflecting what was described in Daniel 7).
- Please also pay attention to the fact that there was God's approval. When Jesus was baptized by John, and when He was transfigured before His three disciples after leading them up a high mountain, a voice from the cloud said,  
Matthew 17: 5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."
- And Jesus made clear the awareness of the son of God, and showed grace and love in the sufferings of the cross. In Gethsemane, He prayed , "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" and accepted the death on the cross.
- When Jewish leaders interrogated Him to put Him on the cross, they were most angry at the fact He called Himself "the Christ, the son of God". Had he denied, He could have avoided the cross. But Jesus confirmed this.  
Matthew 26: 63 ...And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."  
64 Jesus said to him, "You have said so. ...
- And to the soldiers who crucified Him, He said "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23: 34) And when He breathed His last, He said "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"(Luke 23: 46). The special kinship with God has never changed.

### **3. Accepting the Son of God**

- The Bible has consistently presented Jesus to us as "the son of God". But isn't it the most difficult fact to accept? Many people today find it difficult to believe Jesus as the son of God in modern atheism and polytheism culture.
- However, even in a monotheism society, it is very difficult to believe Jesus as God because of the belief in only one God. Why does Judaism not accept Jesus? Why does Islam keep Jesus as one of the prophets? Even though both religions regard the Bible as their canon..
- It is worth mentioning that today's episode took place in Gentiles' land named Caesarea Philippi.

Many Jews (monotheists) accepted Jesus as one of the prophets, but not as the son of God. And this region which was located in the north of Galilee, was one of the Meccas of polytheism, with huge temples of the Gods of Prosperity (Baal, in Old Testament) called Pan.

- A man who became a Christian recently had been taken by his girlfriend to church to attend the service and to the community groups. However, he had no chance to believe in God from his heart and to be honest he wasn't really interested in the Bible or Christianity. One day, he joined a community group and during the meal, he said he had no chance to believe in God from the heart. People in the community group suggested he pray to God for giving him the chance. It was an advice to pray to God for showing it if God does exist. So he prayed without paying much attention. This is a dangerous prayer!
- A few weeks later, he argued with his girlfriend because he didn't want to come to church but he had no choice but to attend the service. He prayed in a careless manner that if God does exist, please give him a chance to believe. He was neither able to sing hymns, nor understood the sermon very well. But after the sermon, standing without being able to sing the hymns, God touched his heart. At that moment he realized that there is a God, and he accepted God with tears. He experienced it for the first time in his life and he came to believe that God exists and God is alive, that Jesus is true.
- Jesus is said to be the son of "the living God". Even if you don't know enough about Jesus right now, He is alive and dynamic, so He will touch your heart and your life. Our stubbornness, our faith have to be changed dramatically. Jesus said, "For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven." (Verse 17)
- When Jesus sacrificed on the cross, to humans eyes, it was the most wretched figure of being the son of God. The centurions of the Roman army had crucified dozens of criminals on the cross, yet there was no one like Jesus. He prayed for forgiveness of people in the sufferings, commit everything into God the Father, and sacrificed his life for people.  
Matthew 27: 54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"
- Let's glorify and thank Christ, the Son of the Living God. Your worries, anxieties, and even the present terrible situations are in the hand of the Son of God. He, the Son of the living God is our hope.

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