

Who do You Say that I Am?

Part I: The Divine Jesus

Mark 8:27-34

Sermon

*Hobart, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013*

*Devonport, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013*

*Launceston, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013*

**Mark 8:27-34 NLT <sup>1</sup>**

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28 "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say you are one of the other prophets."

29 Then he asked them, "But who do you say I am?"

Peter replied, "You are the Messiah."

30 But Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

*Jesus Predicts His Death*

31 Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man\* must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead. 32 As he talked about this openly with his disciples, Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things.\*

33 Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. "Get away from me, Satan!" he said. "You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's."

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<sup>1</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Mk 8:27-33). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

## INTRODUCTION:

### I. ONE OF THE MOST PROFOUND QUESTIONS WE HAVE LEARNED TO ASK RECENTLY

#### A. IS WHO IS GOD?

1. There are so many issues, questions, and concerns that confront us in our Christian walk;
  - a) Questions about various aspects of human life and behavior and societal issues
2. Questions and problems that arise from our study of Scripture
  - a) Questions about law and covenants
  - b) Questions about creation and science, and the “who’s”, “when’s” and “where’s” of history
  - c) Questions about violence and other unjust and immoral actions and inactions
  - d) Questions about prophecy and the future
3. Christians have been battling to sort out such issues and many more down through the centuries
4. But when our main focus gets caught up in such things, we can easily become myopic
  - a) Not seeing the woods for the trees
  - b) We make conclusions based on the way we see the world from our own experience, through the eyes of our own personality and thinking and what we have been taught by our culture

#### B. SO ONE OF THE THINGS TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY HAS HELPED US WITH

1. Is to start at the very beginning
  - a) To not jump to conclusions prematurely
  - b) But to seek God’s help in revealing his nature, his mind and heart

2. This means meekly and humbly surrendering our preconceived ideas and views
  - a) Being prepared to start afresh with God
  - b) To go back to scratch, and let him have the first and last word on any and every topic, attitude and activity
3. This is precisely what repentance is all about
  - a) Turning around and seeing and accepting God as he really is, and living our lives in the light of him

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## S.P.S:

### II. LIKE MOST PEOPLE, THE DISCIPLES WANTED TO KNOW WHAT GOD WAS LIKE

#### John 14:9-11

1. When Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father he boldly replied;

<sup>9</sup> Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? <sup>10</sup> Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. <sup>11</sup> Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.

2. John 1, and Hebrews 1 make it clear that Jesus was the Son of God, the exact representation of God the Father

#### John 1:18

18 No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who himself God,\* is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

#### Hebrews 1:1-3

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\* Some manuscripts read *But the one and only Son.*

1 Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. <sup>2</sup> And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. <sup>3</sup> The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command.

**B. THE WAY WE LEARN ABOUT WHO GOD IS, IS THROUGH JESUS CHRIST**

- a) The One who was God, and came to show God to us
- 2. Earlier in his ministry, it was Jesus asking a question of his disciples

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**C. THE DISCIPLES OFTEN HAD A WRONG PICTURE OF JESUS**

- 1. Peter wasn't about to let go of the picture he had of Jesus without a huge struggle

2. Like Peter, we need to see Jesus from God's point of view

**D. SO OVER A NUMBER OF SERMONS.**

1. We are going to look at some aspects of who Jesus is, and who he isn't

a) And hopefully sharpen our view of him, and thus our view of God and the life we are called to understand, live and share as his people

**E. PRAYER**

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**BODY:**

**A. THEOLOGIAN, DOUGLAS HALL**

1. Wrote a book called "We Would See Jesus" in which he talks about the role and importance of having clear and accurate images (or pictures) of Jesus in our minds

a) Hall writes;

If Jesus is to be anything more than another name, another historical mythic figure for us; if he is to become in any sense "Christ," "Saviour," "Lord"; if his name and his story are to arouse in us anything like "faith," then we shall have to encounter him and not merely some ideas about him.<sup>2</sup>

2. We need more than just a set of theories or statements in order to meet the real Jesus, we need a clear image of who he is, a three dimensional picture of his true nature, reality and being

a) We need to have a view of who Jesus is as a real, living person--in order to make sense of him, and his role in our lives and the world around us

b) But that view or image needs to be true and accurate, not a distortion,

c) Not a Jesus we make in our image, based on human ideas

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<sup>2</sup> Douglas John Hall, We Would See Jesus, The Living Pulpit, Inc., 2000

**B. SO, HOW DO YOU AND I SEE JESUS?**

1. I am sure we all see him slightly differently

**C. THE PICTURE OF JESUS WE CARRY IN OUR MINDS**

1. profoundly effects how we relate to God, in prayer, worship, and the way we live our lives
2. So it is important to think about the image of God, the image of Jesus that we carry in our hearts and minds

**D. HALL POINTS OUT HOW SUCH VIEWS, OR “IMAGES” WE HOLD OF JESUS WILL AFFECT OUR WITNESS OF HIM TO THE WORLD;**

As we picture the Christ, the central figure of our faith, so we shall conduct ourselves as Christians in the world. The world will be the recipient of our imaging of Jesus--the good or ill.<sup>3</sup>

1. So if we have a distorted view of Jesus, our faith and lives will reflect it.
  - a) As the proverbial saying from the IT world puts it, GIGO; garbage in, garbage out.
  - b) What a tragedy it is when too often the most memorable and lasting images of Jesus the world sees are distorted and off putting ones
2. Conversely, the more clearly we know who Jesus really is, the better we know God
  - a) the more like him we become
  - b) and the more of a faithful witness our lives will be to him

**E. HALL LISTS FIVE COMMONLY ACCEPTED VIEWS, OR IMAGES, PEOPLE TODAY HAVE OF JESUS;**

1. “The Divine Jesus”
2. “The Conquering Jesus”
3. “The Judging Jesus”
4. “The Accepting Jesus”
5. “The Transforming Christ”.

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<sup>3</sup> Douglas John Hall, We Would See Jesus, The Living Pulpit, Inc., 2000

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**F. WHICH OF THESE WOULD MOST CLOSELY FIT YOUR PICTURE OF JESUS?**

1. Hall sees four of these images as having serious flaws<sup>4</sup>
  - a) And one which is more helpful and complete than the others

**G. SO, OVER TIME WE WILL TAKE A LOOK AT EACH OF THESE**

1. And see what aspects of each image are accurate and helpful, and what are distorting and misleading
2. Hopefully, doing this will help us re-examine and adjust the image we have of Jesus Christ in our hearts and minds
3. And help us know a bit better, who Jesus really is
4. And thus know who God more clearly as well

**H. THE "IMAGE" WE WILL LOOK AT TODAY IS "THE DIVINE JESUS**

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**III. THE DIVINE JESUS**

**A. THIS IS MAIN PICTURE MANY CHRISTIANS HAVE OF JESUS**

1. Hall points out that;

Many of our fellow-citizens emphasize Jesus' divinity.

Do you believe in the divinity of Christ?" they demand; and they will admit to the true fold only those who provide an unqualified yes to the question.

**B. JESUS IS CLEARLY AND TRULY DIVINE**

1. John makes clear that he was the Word, and the Word was God
  - a) Paul talks about how Jesus was equal to God

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<sup>4</sup> Douglas John Hall, We Would See Jesus, The Living Pulpit, Inc., 2000, "There are four images of the Christ at work in the North American context which seem to me not to benefit God's beloved world, or at least detract from the good that might accrue to creation from this Source."



2. But the scriptures also emphasise that he condescended to stoop down into our world and become human

**C. SO THOUGH IT IS TRUE TO PICTURE JESUS AS DIVINE; IT IS NOT A FULL, COMPLETE AND ACCURATE IMAGE**

1. It leaves out his humanity, without which we would know so much less of God, and so much less of his will to be involved with us here and now in our lives on earth

**D. PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11**

<sup>6</sup> Though he was God,\*  
he did not think of equality with God  
as something to cling to.

<sup>7</sup> Instead, he gave up his divine privileges\*;  
he took the humble position of a slave\*  
and was born as a human being.  
When he appeared in human form,\*

<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself in obedience to God  
and died a criminal's death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor  
and gave him the name above all other names,

<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.<sup>5</sup>

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\* Or *Being in the form of God.*

\* Greek *he emptied himself.*

\* Or *the form of a slave.*

\* Some English translations put this phrase in verse 8.

<sup>5</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Php 2:6-11). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

## **E. THE INCARNATION**

1. The early church stood firmly against those who saw Jesus as only divine and not fully human as well.
2. Hall mentions some of the heresies that were based on this image of "Jesus as divine", including

Monarchianism, Docetism, Adoptionism and Monophysitism which were designated [heresies] precisely because of that kind of bald assertion of the divine principle.

3. He continues;

For this mentality, the primary feature of the Christ is his absolute distinction from us: We are finite; Jesus is infinite ("Before Abraham was, I am."--John 8:58). We are sinful; Jesus was sinless (Heb. 4:15). We are mortal; Jesus, though he assumed mortality, was really immortal--the divine Logos who "was with God in the beginning" (John 1:2).

4. Those heresies in one way or another denied Jesus' humanity, and made him out to have only appeared human, or to have been an angel or an apparition etc.
  - a) So the Nicene Creed was written to make clear that Jesus was both Son of God and fully human;

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, light from light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly human.

5. The heresies pictured Jesus, as Hall puts it;

as one who delivers us from our sinful estate--in reality, from our humanity: The divine Christ, stooping momentarily to our human condition, takes us up into his divinity.

The final assumption of the redeemed into fellowship with the divine Christ requires the ultimate sloughing off of the creaturely condition.

6. Hall points out that the result of such a view is that;

The goal towards which the whole gospel presses, thus conceived, is "heaven."

#### **F. WHAT ARE THE RAMIFICATIONS FOR OUR LIVES IN THE HERE AND NOW ON EARTH?**

1. If we see Jesus only as Divine and only coming to earth in order to rid us of our humanness, and our earthly connections all together and permanently?

a) Hall tells us;

This way of "seeing Jesus" may do wonders for individual "souls," and especially those who feel burdened by their creaturehood; but it does little for the life of the world--apart from adding to the already negative assessments of it coming from other quarters--yet another reason why we should abandon hope for the future of the earth. One does not have to deny Christ's divinity, as the radical liberals did; but when it is not held in tension with his real, recognizable humanity it only performs the function that "religion" usually performs: that of a rescue operation; getting a few more of us out of this world.

2. He is pointing out that most religions emphasise some future place completely removed from our present world

a) Most religions make out this world and its physical existence, physical sensations things like taste and touch, and the pleasures of physical experiences and accomplishments to be tainted, unclean and contaminating.

b) They focus on the other worldly, and a future devoid of any type of physicality

- c) Religion's role is thus seen as helping us get as far away from the physical in our lives today, to withdraw from the world and become inwardly focused on the spiritual inner life
3. In the past we had monks living up trees, in logs or remote monasteries
- a) Christians avoiding colourful clothing, denying themselves the physical comforts of comfortable beds, or warm rooms
  - b) Avoiding music, dancing and drinking and fine food and art
  - c) Whipping themselves in order to despise their physical bodies, and punish themselves for being physically focused
  - d) We still see this approach in some extreme groups today

#### **G. DUALISM**

1. This approach is termed dualism
- a) It pits spiritual against physical
  - b) It paints all things of the spirit as good, and all things of the earth as evil
  - c) It sees the spirit, heaven, God, and Jesus as pure and free of physical, earthly contamination
  - d) The goal of God and righteousness is seen as getting us free of our physical bodies and removing us from the physical realm
2. But this leads to a big problem;
3. Johnny Cash wrote that this attitude leads us; "to being so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good".

Come heed me, my brothers, come heed, one and all  
Don't brag about standing or you'll surely fall  
You're shining your light and shine it you should  
But you're so heavenly minded, you're no earthly good

If you're holding heaven, then spread it around  
There's hungry hands reaching up here from the ground  
Move over and share the high ground where you stood  
So heavenly minded, you're no earthly good

The gospel ain't gospel until it is spread  
But how can you share it where you've got your head  
There's hands that reach out for a hand if you would  
So heavenly minded, you're no earthly good

If you're holding heaven, then spread it around  
There's hungry hands reaching up here from the ground  
Move over and share the high ground where you stood  
So heavenly minded, you're no earthly good<sup>6</sup>

#### **H. JESUS CAME FROM HEAVEN TO BE THE ULTIMATE EARTHLY GOOD**

1. To share, to reach out, to feed the hungry, to heal the sick here on earth
2. To set the physical realm right, to restore it to be "good" as God created it in the beginning

#### **I. DUALISM COME FROM GREEK PHILOSOPHY**

1. It believes there is a disconnection between God and the world
2. Dualism gained strength in the middle ages based on a Newtonian cosmology, yielding a deistic view of God.
  - a) During the enlightenment and modern period of the 1700's to the early 1900's, God became seen as an impersonal deity, like a clock maker who sits remotely from the world just mechanistically keeping things running, but emotionally disconnected.
3. The well-known song from about God who is "watching us from a distance" shows that this is a common view today as well.
  - a) Many believe that there is some sort of God, but that he is not personally involved in human life.
4. Thomas Torrance spoke against Dualism and pointed out the damage it has done to our thinking

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<sup>6</sup> Johnny Cash; No Earthly Good, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/no-earthly-good-lyrics-johnny-cash.html>

- a) He demonstrated that it is guilty of separating things that ought to belong together
- b) In particular God and his creation.<sup>7</sup>
- c) He made clear that God is directly and personally involved with his creation.

5. Going back to our main point about the picture many have of Jesus as Divine

## **J. WHAT IF JESUS WAS FULLY DIVINE AND NOT ALSO FULLY HUMAN?**

1. Then we would not have a connection to God

- a) We would be on our own
- b) We would still not have a second Adam to stand in our place and be our righteousness, and our representative before God
- c) He would not be our Saviour

1. God is Emanuel (God- with-us).

- a) He is not "watching from a distance."
- b) God is directly and personally involved with his creation, that he said was "good"

2. Ted Johnston;

In the light of the person and work of Christ, these dualisms are exposed as nothing more than mythologies arising from the darkness of our fallen imaginations. The reality--the truth--is that in Christ, God is seen for who he *really* is; and we are seen for who we *really* are.

To know Christ is to know that humanity has been reconciled to God--included in his triune love and life. In and through Jesus, God is with us, for us and knowable by us. Any theology that posits otherwise is false--it has lost sight of the reality of Jesus Christ.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey C. Waddington, *Inhabiting Reality: Thomas F. Torrance's Criticisms of Dualism*, <http://reformedforum.org/inhabiting-reality/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/2013/06/torrance-on-problem-of-dualism.html>

3. How can we really understand our God given possibilities and potentials as humans, if Jesus' was divine, but not human?
  - a) We would have no example of what our hope in God is
  - b) No idea, no demonstration of what a perfect, faithful human life is like
4. And more tragically, we would not have Jesus' sharing of our human burdens as one of us
  - a) There would still be a gap between us and God, with no one to represent us to God as one of us
  - b) And God would not have stooped down to be truly with us where we are

#### **K. COLOSSIANS**

3:1 If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

1. This sounds as if dualism is right. That we shouldn't be focused on the life here on earth.
  - a) The Jesus pictured here looks at a glance to be the "Divine Jesus" and not a human one at all.
2. We do need to "set our minds on the things above, not on the things that are on earth".
  - a) That is the object of seeking to get our minds accurately focused on who Jesus really is
3. But that heavenly truth, is that Jesus is fully human, as well as fully divine
  - a) The Jesus sitting at the right hand of God is fully human, glorified human.
  - b) He is also the eternal Son of God.

3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

c) It is only through Jesus dying as one of us, fully human, and fully divine, that our life can be hidden with him in God

d) It is only as fully one of us that he is our life, our life with God and the source of our future glory.

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## CONCLUSION:

### **L. GOD IS NOT REMOTE AND DISTANT FROM US**

1. Jesus did not come down to us temporarily in order to remove us from physical life on earth,
2. He became one of us to enable us to participate in his heavenly life, right here on earth.

### **M. THE PURPOSE OF GOD IS FOR US TO LIVE IN COMMUNION AND PARTNERSHIP WITH HIM FOREVER**

1. And that will take place not in a non-material, human free environment
2. God is going to make his home with us, in the new heavens and the new earth, that will all be one, not separated
3. And then all will be one; the material, created world and the creator
4. And that is all made possible for each of us, and all creation, through Jesus not being just “divine” but also being fully human, fully part of the creation which he transforms and glorifies from within
  - a) Rather than remotely, and disconnectedly from without
5. So when we picture Jesus, let us not see him as just the “Divine Jesus”,
  - a) But see the full picture of the one who was fully God and remains fully (glorified) man



6. The one in whom God and man are brought together  
and united as one

7. The one in whom heaven and earth are made one

**N. PRAYER**

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