

THE IDENTITY OF JESUS

John 6:14-15 / Matthew 14:22-36 / Mark

6:45-52

“Yeshua” §§75-77

02/16/20

Properly identifying Jesus is the most important task any person can seek to complete. Very few people deny the historicity of Jesus, but there are countless answers to the question of who he actually was. Was he a prophet? A sage? A religious teacher? A social revolutionary? The Messiah? God incarnate? An angel? The list

goes on and on. Not surprisingly, as people engage with the bible and/or other historical sources, their answer to this question often begins to change. I would imagine all of our views regarding Jesus' identity have changed, some by slight degrees and some by radical ones.

We will see in our study today, three different groups of people with three very different views regarding the identity of Jesus. None of them are totally wrong, but some are certainly more accurate. The three groups we will see are: The people from our last study who experienced the “feeding” miracle; the disciples; and the people of Gennesaret. Though these groups had varied identifications for Jesus at this point, they did all share in one very important truth. The religious Jewish community was unwaveringly **monotheistic**. At least twice a day, every Jewish man, woman, and child would recite the “Shema” which began by affirming that the Lord is the one God. It is translated “Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one.” This was ingrained into the hearts and minds of the Jewish people for thousands of years by the time Jesus is on the scene.

The idea that Jesus was God would have been nearly impossible for any Jewish person to receive. There simply was not a category for it. How could God be both in heaven and on earth, and still there be only one God? People's hearts were hardened to this idea. So it seems that Jesus is doing miraculous works (particularly the calming of the storm and feeding the 10000+) to soften the hearts of the Jewish people, particularly his disciples, so that their hearts will be able to receive that Jesus is more than a prophet, more than a king, and more than a healer. Jesus is God. We have the gospels and the rest of the New Testament to help us understand how there is indeed one God in three persons, but for the Jew's of Jesus' time, there was no place in their worldview for Jesus to be God. However, what we will see today, is that at least Peter's heart had begun to soften to the possibility of Jesus being more than a man, and for Peter, and the other disciples, it would take quite a while for the truth about the divinity of Jesus to find fertile and soft soil.

Part 1.	The Coming of the King
Part 2.	The Authentication of the King
Part 3.	The Controversy over the King
Part 4.	The Training of the Twelve by the King
→	The Identity Of Jesus
Part 5.	The Opposition to the King:
Part 6.	The Preparation of the Disciples by the King
Part 7.	The Official Presentation of the King
Part 8.	The Preparation for the Death of the King
Part 9.	The Trial of the King
Part 10.	The Death of the King
Part 11.	The Resurrection and the Ascension of the King

IS HE THE PROPHET-KING? (JOHN 6:14-15)

The crowds have been miraculously fed and so they draw their own conclusions regarding Jesus. They identify him as “the Prophet” (see Deut. 18:18; John 1:21, 25; 7:40) and set a plan to enthrone Jesus as their king right then and there. They are ready for the overthrow of Rome and the establishment of the kingdom of Israel. We can understand why they would feel this way about Jesus, after all, Jesus is performing miracles, and has a large following. But Jesus is not who they think he is. He is not going to be their king in this way. So he sends the disciples back across the sea in the boat while he stays behind to dismiss the crowds and spend some time by himself in prayer. We can certainly understand that this is a discouraging time for Jesus in his ministry. Not only are the crowds misunderstanding who he is, but even his disciples are failing to integrate his true identity.

IS HE THE SON OF GOD? (MATTHEW 14:22-33)

Here we have a very odd exchange. The disciples have been out trying to cross the lake but another strong wind has come up and they are struggling to make any headway. They have been traveling for somewhere between 9-12 hours, and have traveled about 3-4 miles. Not exactly full steam ahead! So Jesus decides to go out and help them. But he does so in an unusual way. Mark informs us that he meant to walk near them, but not directly to them, to “pass them by”. It would seem as though this is another test for the disciples. He intends to help them, but he wants them to see him miraculously walking on the water, and, it would seem he wants them to call out to him. He is looking for them to express their recognition of his ability to help them. To see if their hearts of softening to the truth of his divinity.

Their initial repose is no surprise, as they cry out in fear thinking it is some spirit or ghost! But Jesus calms them down by identifying himself to them. Here it would seem we see the first indication of a heart that is softening in Peter. He tells Jesus that if he commands him to come out of the boat, he will walk on the water to Jesus. Talk about an awesome moment! We can only imagine how pleased Jesus is with Peter’s response as he calls out to Peter, “Come”. The miracle of Peter walking on water doesn’t last for long, as doubt comes into Peter’s mind and he starts to sink into the water. Though Jesus chides Peter for his doubt, there is no doubt that Peter at least, and possibly the other disciples, are beginning to soften to the truth of Jesus’ divinity. Once Jesus has helped Peter, and gotten back into the boat (causing the winds to stop and immediately they are safe on shore) the disciples worship Jesus saying “Truly you are the Son of God.” This is an echo of God’s identification of Jesus in Matthew 3:17, but it is not yet fully an identification of Jesus as God. We will see the disciples struggle with this idea for the rest of Jesus’ life and ministry. It isn’t until after his resurrection that the disciples will begin to integrate Jesus divinity into their worldview.

IS HE A HEALER? (MATTHEW 14:34-36)

Here we see the people of Gennesaret coming to Jesus to be healed from their various illnesses. In fact, it would seem word had spread about the woman who was

healed simply by touching the tassels of Jesus' cloak, and the people are calling out for the chance to simply do the same.

This crowd wasn't looking for teaching, but were there for the healing, and we have no indication that Jesus was put off by this or resistant to it. In fact, it reflects the heart of Jesus, that even though these people seem to have a very shallow understanding of who he is, he is more than willing to minister to them right where they are at. He doesn't want them to stay where they are in their understanding, but he is patient and knows it will be a process to soften their hearts to the fact that he is God.

