



Lesson 6

JESUS VIOLENCE AND POWER

Have you ever been on a field trip? Jesus took His disciples on many field trips as a means of teaching them. He always found the perfect place for them to learn.

On one occasion He led them on a 25 mile trek north from their base in Galilee to a city called Caesarea Philippi, a regional centre of the Roman Empire. When the Romans replaced the Greeks, Herod Philip took over control and renamed it Caesarea Philippi – honouring Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor.

Imagine what it would have been like to walk with Jesus into this Roman ruled city. Today we might imagine a Jewish leader bringing his followers to Auschwitz, a Japanese leader to Hiroshima, a Native American leader to Wounded Knee or a Palestinian leader to the wall of separation.

And then Jesus asks them: who do people say the Son of Man is?

There may have been an awkward silence as the disciples may have been worried that other people may hear their responses. But they soon answer.

Read: Matthew 16:13-28

And then Jesus sharpens His question: what about you, who do you say I am.

What was Peter's response to this?

What is your response to this question?

Peter's response was not only a theological statement but also a political one. **Christ** is the Greek translation for the Hebrew term **Messiah** which means “the one anointed as liberating king.”

To say “liberating king” anywhere in the Roman empire was dangerous and more so in a city bearing Caesar’s name.

By saying **Christ** Peter was saying – You are the liberator promised by God long ago, the one for whom we have long waited. You are King Jesus who will liberate us from King Caesar.

Son of the Living God asserts that the Roman’s false, idolatrous claim of being “sons of the gods” is now trumped by Jesus’ true identify as one with authority from the true and living God.

Now the disciples may have been thinking that now was the time that Jesus would take over, but He soon brings them back down to earth when He tells them He will travel south to Jerusalem.

And He shares what He will face when He arrives there – He will be captured, imprisoned, tortured and killed by the religious and political establishment of their nation, after which, **He will be raised.**

For those who challenge the Divinity of Jesus – Here it is in black and white – the reason Jesus came.

Of course we read that Peter rejected this. Very normal for a disciple who loved Jesus to reject this journey He was about to take.

You may ask – how can Jesus be a liberating King if He is defeated – He must conquer and capture. Peter was very adamant – Stop talking this nonsense. This could never happen.

Then what does Jesus say – get behind me Satan.

Peter knows with unquestioned certainty that God will send a Messiah to lead an armed uprising to defeat and expel the occupying Roman regime but the way that Peter thought it would happen – was thinking as a human – the opposite of God's plan.

Violence cannot defeat violence; Hate cannot defeat hate; Fear cannot defeat fear; Domination cannot defeat domination.

God's way is different – God must achieve victory through defeat, glory through shame, strength through weakness, leadership through servanthood and life through death.

Read Matthew 17:1-9

Jesus takes His disciples on another field trip. This time to a Mountain top where they have a vision of Jesus, shining in glory, talking to two of the greatest leaders in Jewish history – The great liberator Moses and the great prophet Elijah. This time God's own voice rebuked Peter as if to say – Moses and Elijah were fine in their time but my beloved Son Jesus is on another level entirely, revealing my true heart in a unique and unprecedented way. Listen to Him!

In many ways we are all like Peter – we speak with great insight one minute and then make complete fools of ourselves the next. We don't know how little we know and we have no idea how many of our ideas are wrong.

Like Peter, we may use the right words to describe Jesus – **Christ, son of the living God.**

But we don't understand His heart, His wisdom, His way.

But that's okay – we are still learning.

After all life with Jesus is one big field trip that we are taking together. So let's keep walking.

Engage:

What one thought or idea from today's lesson intrigued, provoked, disturbed or challenged you?

Think of a time when you were completely certain about something and then you realised you were completed (or at least partially) wrong.

How do you respond to this interpretation of the Caesar-ville field trip?

Activate:

Look for situations this week when your initial reaction would benefit from being questioned – especially in relation to power dynamics.

Meditate:

Imagine you are Peter after he hears the words – Get behind me Satan.

In silence, listen for ways your thinking is out of sync with God's ways.

Imagine what you would want to say to Jesus in reply.