

MARK — Jesus Messiah

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What comes to mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you. — A.W. Tozer

Our whole lives are shaped by who we think God is, our values, decisions, how we treat people different than us and those with whom we disagree. That is all shaped by the idea of “god” in your head.

The Christian claim is that we are God’s image bearers to the world — we get to show the world who God is and what he is like. “You are the light of the world.”



How would your life be different if you viewed yourself as God’s light, being sent into spaces where God’s identity is contested and confused, and you’re the one sent there to bring clarity? This is your privilege and calling as a child of God. You have the incredible opportunity to bring light where there is darkness.

Mark 8:27-30

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?”

They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”

“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

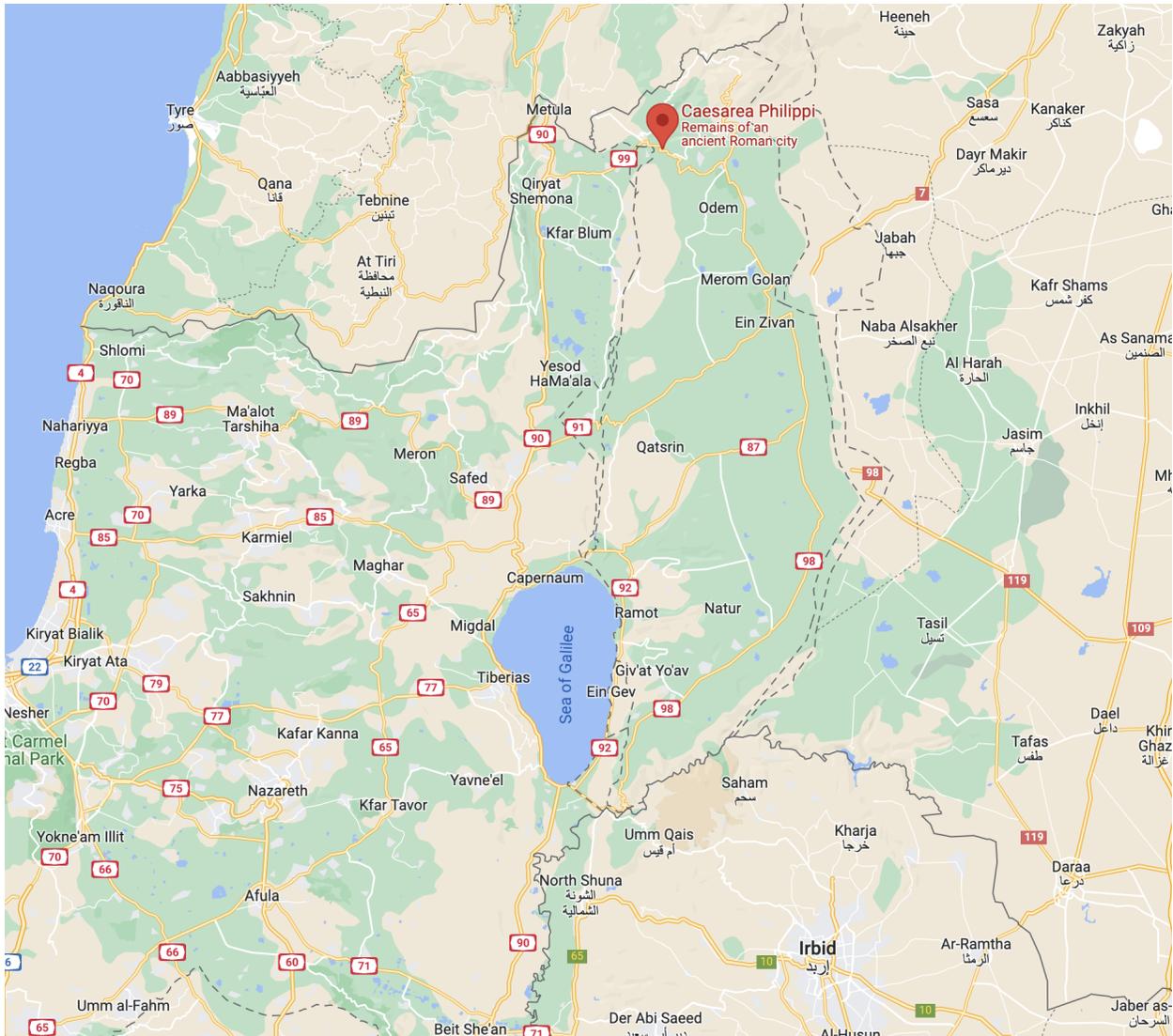
Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”

Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mk 8:27–30.

The Place

Whenever a place that Jesus went is recorded, it is an important detail that should be noticed. Geography matters.



Caesarea Philippi is about 25 miles north of Galilee. This is not a place that a good Jew would go to. It's the heart of pagan worship and is at the foot of Mt. Hermon.

This place is the source of life for the Jordan valley.

They set up temples to Baal and other gods, notably Pan, and worshipped them at the foot of this mountain in order to perpetuate the spring of life there. Due to all the gods they worshipped, they named this place, "The Gates of Hades."

For centuries, pilgrims came from all over to worship here and perpetuated a fear of death and Hades; they were afraid that a lack of worship would lead to a lack of life.

This region was also where King Jeroboam set up their own temples and their own golden calves to maintain political power in Northern Israel.



It is here that Jesus travels to make his own statement at the entrance to the gates of Hades. It's in those spaces that God wants his identity to be clarified.

But What About You?

Today, we witness this confusion in the form of people questioning whether Jesus ever lived. But Jesus always turns the question to the person. We see that precedent in his disciples and Peter.

Peter answers: "You are the Messiah."

Peter gets that he is the anointed one to bring freedom and deliverance to Israel.

Why does Jesus want people to stay quiet? So that the news doesn't spread too quickly and jeopardize his ministry and get crushed by Rome too quickly. He had work to be done before his approach to the cross. It is a strategic patience.

Jesus' Identity

Do you have the identity of God right?

The parallel passage in Matthew is meant to give you confidence in Jesus' identity:

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mt 16:16–18.

In this passage...

- Jesus doesn't correct Peter's assertion of Jesus' identity, but blesses him.
- Jesus affirms that this is his identity revealed by God to Peter.
- This revelation is foundational to the identity of God. This flies in the face of and contradicts other religious systems.
- Jesus' church still stands. The church is not a building, but Jesus' people.

The church will outlast politics and social upheaval. Do not hang your hopes on politics or social causes or education to save us. The church will outlast all of that.



How are you joining Jesus in building what Jesus is building? Are you building something different from Jesus?

What would it look like for you to join Jesus in making his identity more clearly known in places where it is contested and confusing?

