

Message #28

Mark 8:27-33

Our entire life is lived by answering questions. Every day of our lives we answer questions. Now some of the questions are just routine and don't amount to much: 1) What shall I wear?; 2) What shall I eat today?; 3) What shall I do today?; 4) Where shall I get gas?; 5) Where shall I go today?

Other questions are a little more serious: 1) Where shall I work? 2) Where shall I worship? 3) Whom shall I marry? 4) For whom shall I vote? 5) Where shall I live?

But there is one question that is the question of all questions. The correct answer to this one question can take you all the way to heaven but the wrong answer will send you to hell. The question is "Who do you believe Jesus Christ is to you?" You do not want to take this question lightly and you do not want to get it wrong. Each person must answer that question.

To this point, Jesus has been traveling around Galilee for about two years proclaiming that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and that He is the God/Savior/Messiah/King. To prove this, He has been performing some amazing miracles for many people in many places.

Now as Jesus was doing those miracles, He had been traveling with His own hand-picked disciples who still do not have a true grasp of who He is.

The problem now is that Jesus' time on this earth is running out. These disciples of His had better figure this out and figure this out quick because He is months away from dying on a cross.

In fact, this is a major turning point in the book of Mark because everything from this moment on moves toward Jerusalem. Jesus is headed to the cross and it was time that these disciples really come to terms with whom they were traveling. So at this point Jesus forces His men to face the biggest key truth about Him:

IT IS TIME FOR HIS DISCIPLES TO IDENTIFY JESUS CHRIST AS THE GOD/MAN/MESSIAH/SAVIOR BECAUSE HE WILL SOON BE KILLED BY RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND WILL RISE AGAIN PROVING WHO HE IS.

Now even though this text is aimed at His twelve disciples, the fact is we had better understand the same key points they needed to understand. They needed to know the identity of Jesus Christ; they needed to know about the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ and they needed to know about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. These are still critical theological matters to grasp.

According to **verse 27**, Jesus took His disciples about 25 miles north of Bethsaida, where the blind man had been healed (v. 22) to an area known as Caesarea Philippi. This land was located right on the border between the Promised Land and Gentile Land. It was an area and it was a city. It is like Kalamazoo. It is a county and it is a city.

This was a city that was located in the southwestern foothills of Mount Hermon. It was a pagan area filled with pagan religion. So this event takes place in a heathen area.

The city was expanded by Philip and it was named in honor of Caesar Augustus, thus the name “Caesarea Philippi.” This is not the same city known as Philippi to which Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians.

Now **verse 27** says that Jesus was traveling with His disciples in various cities in the region. This is one of the last trips Jesus makes before He turns for Jerusalem. It may have been a final get away for Christ and His men. But it was time for Jesus to force these guys to figure out His identity. So Jesus is going to make them face it here and now. He asks two questions:

QUESTION #1 – Who do people say that I am? 8:27

Actually the Greek text reads “who do the men say that I am?” The verb saying is present tense, so the question is this: who do the people continually say that I am? What are they saying?

Now we already know what the leaders are saying:

- 1) The Pharisees were saying He had a devil and was insane (John 10:20).
- 2) The Scribes were saying He was demon-possessed (Mark 3:22).
- 3) The Sanhedrin would say He was a Blasphemer (Matt. 26:65-68).
- 4) His own family said He has lost His mind (Mark 3:21).

That is what those people thought. Today if you ask that question of the religious world they’ll give you their perspective:

- 1) The Hindus will tell you Jesus was one of a million deities.
- 2) The Mormons will tell you He is the brother of Satan.
- 3) The Jehovah’s Witness will tell you He is an archangel.
- 4) The Muslims will tell you He was a great prophet second only to Muhammad.
- 5) The Jews will tell you He was a great teacher and prophet.
- 6) The Atheists will tell you Jesus did not exist.
- 7) The Agnostics will tell you they don’t know who He is.

What is so sad is that Jesus certainly did not have to ask this question to the demons; He has to ask this question to humans. The demons knew who Jesus was.

The demons knew that Jesus of Nazareth was the Holy One of God (Mark 1:24). They knew He was the Son of God (Mark 3:11) and they also knew Jesus was the Son of the Most High God and God (Mark 5:6-7). They also know He has the power to destroy them. The problem of Christ’s identity is not a problem for demons, but humans.

So Jesus asks His disciples what are you hearing on the streets, who do people continually say I am?

In **verse 28**, the disciples told Jesus there are about three different opinions about your identity with the people on the streets:

Opinion #1 - Some are saying you are John the Baptist. **8:28a**

Some were saying that Jesus was John, the guy who was baptizing people in the Jordan. That had been Herod's view. We know Herod was telling people that he was afraid that John the Baptist had somehow come back to life and apparently some of the people believed his illogical nonsense (Mark 6:17-29). Jesus and John were contemporaries and the people knew it so they could not be one and the same person.

Opinion #2 - Some are saying you are Elijah. **8:28b**

The people knew the O.T. story of Elijah. Elijah, like Enoch, had never died but was taken up bodily into heaven by a whirlwind (II Kings 2:11). It is anticipated that before God establishes Israel's kingdom on earth, Elijah would return to start some national revival before "the great and terrible day of the LORD" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Opinion #3 - Some are saying you are a prophet. **8:28c**

Many were saying He was like one of the prophets of old. Some were saying that Jesus was one of the prophets, like a Moses or an Isaiah or a Jeremiah.

What this tells us is that the average person thought Jesus was a great religious man. They were very impressed with Him. But here is the problem; they are all creating their own ideas about Jesus. They are inventing their own take on who Jesus is.

Now, for the most part, these are all positive and flattering speculations. For any normal human, this would be a real upgrade. However, for Jesus Christ this is demeaning. This all falls short of who He actually is. He is far above and beyond any of these responses.

A few weeks ago there was a caucus held in Iowa and at that caucus one candidate said that another candidate had withdrawn from the race, which was not true. The candidate said this is wrong because I have been robbed of votes.

Well that candidate is part of a religious system that actually robs Jesus Christ. He is part of a religion that says Jesus Christ's work on the cross is really not enough; you must keep the O.T. law. I thought how apropos. Your religion publicly robs Jesus Christ of His glory and you get politically robbed of votes.

These people had a high view of Jesus Christ, but they robbed Him of His true identity.

QUESTION #2 – Jesus asks, who do you say that I am? **8:29**

In Greek the pronoun “you” is plural and emphatic. Jesus is emphatically aiming this question at His own disciples. It is time for His disciples to come to terms with His identity.

Now there may have been somewhat of a pause, but Peter spoke for all of them and said, “You are the Christ.” This is a significant moment in their faith development. This is a real theological breakthrough.

Now the noun “Christ” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word meaning “masiah” or kingly anointed one. In fact, in John’s gospel we read, “We have found the Messiah (which translated means Christ)” John 1:41.

So the disciples have come to know that this is the Davidic King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This was the One that Israel had been waiting for since the time of David. This was the supernatural Divine King who would one day stamp out Israel’s enemies and would give her the kingdom and her land.

Kent Hughes said Jesus had waited a long time to hear this from these guys. This was a “tremendous affirmation” (*Mark*, p. 196).

We learn from Matthew’s account that Jesus was so excited that they finally figured this out and He said to Peter, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah.” Probably the reason why Mark does not record this is that Peter is telling him this and he does not want to draw attention to himself.

Now in **verse 30**, Jesus warned them strongly not to tell people this. Jesus wanted this to be kept a “messianic secret.” He is intentionally suppressing the truth about Himself. Why? It is because He needed to go to the cross and had they started to announce who He was, the people were ready to make Him king by force. He could have orchestrated a political revolution. **At this point had the Messianic truth been promoted, the crowds would have prevented Jesus from going to that cross.**

Now the next bit of information given in **verses 31-33** connects to this. After they identified Him as being the Messiah, Jesus began to teach them critical things about Himself and the program of God, specifically that He must suffer and die and be raised again.

Verse 32 says He taught these things to them very “plainly.” He will teach them what has been called his “passion predictions” here and then in two more places (Mark 9:31; 10:33-34).

Teaching #1 - He was the Messiah, and He was the Son of Man. **8:31a**

This means He was truly the God/Savior/Messiah- King of Kings. He was the Daniel-predicted theanthropic person.

Teaching #2 - He must suffer many things. **8:31b**

Notice carefully the word “must.” This is salvific suffering and it is a necessity for our salvation. The prophet Isaiah clearly foretold of this suffering (Isaiah 52:13-53:12).

Teaching #3 - He must be rejected by the religious leaders. **8:31c**

Now there are three groups Jesus mentions who were the religious leaders of His day. In fact, these three groups made up the Sanhedrin, who would later examine Him and reject Him. It was critical that He be rejected by them and not accepted because He needed to die on that cross.

(Group #1) - The Elders rejected Him—the Jewish religious leaders who were non-professional.

(Group #2) - The chief priests rejected Him—the influential leaders of temple activities. This was part of the priestly lineage. Well-respected and honored.

(Group #3) - The Scribes rejected Him—the professional scholars in regard to O.T. law and traditions. These were the highly educated religious leaders of the world.

All of the major religious leaders and experts are against Jesus Christ and they are responsible for what happens to Him.

Teaching #4 - He must be killed. **8:31d**

Teaching #5 - He will rise again three days later. **8:31e**

Now Jesus is teaching them critical doctrine concerning the salvific plan of God and when He did, according to **verse 32**, Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him. Peter was not about to let Jesus suffer and die and they were prepared to fight for Him.

But remember they have just identified Him as being the Messiah, so as the Messiah, they should realize that He is sovereign over everything that will happen, including His own death.

But when he did that, Jesus rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s” (v. 33).

Satan wanted to prevent Jesus Christ from going to that cross. Don’t miss this. He did not want Jesus to die on that cross because he realized the theological ramifications of this.

I am certain we all have been guilty of this a time or two. We have all been guilty of giving in to the lure of Satan and setting our minds on what interests man, not what pleases God.

Now why did Jesus have to die? Well Paul specifically answers that question in I Corinthians 15:3. He says that “Christ died for our sins.”

So here is the most important question of your entire life—Who do you say Jesus Christ is to you?
Is He your Savior? Believe on Him and you will be saved right here and right now.