

A MATTER OF IDENTITY Sunday School- February 6, 2011

Unifying Topic: JESUS IS THE MESSIAH

Lesson Text

I. Who Is Jesus? (Mark 8:27-30)

II. The Lord's Announcement (Mark 8:31-33)

III. The Cost Of Discipleship (Mark 8:34-9:1)

The Main Thought: And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. (Mark 8:29,KJV).

Unifying Principle: People may not understand their leader's identity and mission. How can people know the truth of their leader's mission and goals? For people of faith, Jesus' words contain truth about His identity and mission to bring in the kingdom and about what He requires of His followers.

Lesson Aim: To help students understand who Christ is and the sacrifice He made for us.

Life Aim: To teach Christians to appreciate who Christ is, to understand the meaning of His suffering and death, and to understand the cost of following Him, realizing that He promises us fulfillment in His kingdom.

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- 8:27 And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?
- 8:28 And they answered, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.
- 8:29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.
- 8:30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.
- 8:31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.
- 8:32 But he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.
- 8:33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.
- 8:34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
- 8:35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.
- 8:36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?
- 8:37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
- 8:38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.
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- 9:1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

HISTORY:

In **Chapter 8** of Mark **verses 22-26** is a story of the blind man and is told in Mark alone. Jesus is in Bethsaida and the man's friends bring a blind man to Him to be touched, healed, and set free. ¹It is also the only miracle in the life of Christ that is not immediate, for it takes two attempts in order to bring the man perfect sight. What can be the meaning of this? We know that Christ cannot fail, for He does all things well. For an answer, we can look to the context. Just before they meet this blind man, the disciples had misunderstood a reference by Christ to the leaven of the Pharisees. They thought that Jesus was referring to their lack of bread. Jesus, however, was speaking of spiritual truths and He scolded the disciples for their lack of spiritual understanding. Why? - "*having ears, hear ye not*" (verse 18).

The blind man becomes an object lesson for the disciples. His healing was not for the multitudes because Jesus performed the miracle away from the view of the crowds and sent the man directly home. Jesus demonstrated how the initial healing of salvation does not always mean perfect vision. This comes from further growth and further touches of God.

This is a strong lesson on intercession. We are to care enough to bring people to Christ and pray for Christ to heal them. Jesus cares deeply for friends who care and He cares enough to receive and listen and act in their behalf. "*He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town.*" Why? - The people were thronging Jesus with noise that comes from a massive crowd. The man was excited, nervous, and somewhat bewildered; and his concentration

¹ <http://www.learnthebible.org/blind-man-of-bethsaida.html>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

was weakened by it all. Jesus knew what was within the man. People of that day believed spittle or saliva had some healing power. One of the first things usually done when a man burns or cuts his finger is that he puts his finger into his mouth. The saliva seems to ease the pain. Note what Jesus did: He placed saliva on the man's eyes and put his hands upon the man. Jesus focused the man's attention upon the healing power of both the saliva and His hands. The point is: Jesus cared for the man's belief in the healing power of saliva. Jesus began where he was in **his** beliefs, and led him on into the essential belief that healing comes through the Lord Himself, through His touch.

Jesus had asked the man if he saw anything. The man's sight was not completely healed because he only saw men as trees walking; he only saw faintly and dimly. Jesus again puts His hands upon the man's eyes and made him look up. The man was restored and could see clearly. Why did Jesus do this man's healing in stages? – Apparently, the man's faith was weak and needed to be strengthened step by step. His friends were the ones who asked, not him. Also we can observe the point to show the disciples that some healing would be gradual rather than instantaneous or to demonstrate that spiritual truth is not always perceived clearly at first. The point is: a person grows by stages; a person is not always led to Christ immediately. The crucial point for believers and churches can be simply stated: we must care enough to keep after the person's need. We must care enough to keep •witnessing •ministering •teaching and instructing •visiting •feeding and clothing •and loving them.

Finally, Jesus sent the man to his house rather than back into town. Why? – The sensitivity to a person's family is essential to Jesus. We see in this passage 1) the blindness of the lost; 2) the partial, but improving, sight of the saved; and 3) the perfect sight of the saints in glory.

LESSON:

Mark 8:27-30 Who Is Jesus?

Jesus moves from Bethsaida into the towns of Caesarea Philippi with His disciples. Jesus was facing the end very, very soon and there was still much to teach the disciples. **V27** As He was travelling along some road between the towns, and Jesus brings up a direct question; the supreme question of life to His disciples: **Whom do men say I am?** It was time for them to learn that He was building a church—*an assembly of people who would be confessing Him to be the Messiah*. He had to make sure they understood God's way of salvation and His ideal place— that God was after victory over death and a life that lasted eternally, not just seventy or so years. God's Messiah and salvation was not man's way of power and pleasure; God was not leaving the future to take care of itself. You see the town they were entering proclaimed far and wide the worship of Caesar and of the gods of one's choice, that is, the worship of all except the One true and living God. It was against this dramatic yet terrible background that Jesus asked the pointed question, "*But who do you say that I am?*" **V28** Hold up, I'm getting ahead of myself. To answer that first question, **And they answered:**

- Some say thou are **John the Baptist**
 - Herod and others thought this. The common people saw some similarity between John and Jesus: both were doing a unique and great work for God; both were divinely chosen and gifted by God; both proclaimed the Kingdom of God and prepared men for it. Therefore, when they looked at Jesus and His ministry, they thought Jesus was not the Messiah Himself, but the promised forerunner of the Messiah (Mal.4:5).
- **Some say Elias**
 - Elijah was considered to be the greatest prophet and teacher of all time, and was predicted to be the forerunner of the coming Messiah (Mal. 4:5-6). Even today the Jews expect Elijah to return before the Messiah. In the celebration of the Passover they always leave a chair vacant for him to occupy. Elijah had also been used by God to miraculously feed a widow woman and her son; therefore, the people connected Elijah's miracle and Jesus' feeding of the multitude.
- **Or one of the prophets.**
 - They professed Jesus to be a great prophet sent for their day and time. He was thought to be one of the great prophets brought back to life or one in whom the spirit of a great prophet dwelt.

The same false confessions about Christ exist in every generation. This question is also asked in Matt.16:13-20; Lk.9:18-21.

8:29 Now, we really get down to those that follow Christ, **But whom say ye that I am?** It is not enough to know what others say about Jesus; you must know, understand and accept for yourself that He is the Messiah. You must move from curiosity to commitment, from admiration to adoration and say that the King of kings has come down from His throne to live in my life. He **is** a Person who houses His Spirit in me! Well **Peter** speaks out and **answers** Jesus' question: **Thou art the Christ**. The Greek *Christos* comes from the word which means "*to anoint*", "*the Anointed One*" being the Messiah (*Heb. Mashiah*). Matthew adds to this title "*the Son of the living God*" (Matt.16:16).

Peter actually said "*You are the Messiah*", because that's what the Word "*Christ*" actually means. And Peter gave the Great Confession!

8:30 The disciples had a great need to learn about God's Messiah, however, Jesus instructed them not to share their confession with anyone else—not now. Why? – Because they were just beginning to learn what God's idea of the Messiah really meant. They had to know the truth and be accurate in their preaching of the truth before they began to share. They could do irreparable harm by spreading a false concept of the Messiah. Jesus had to protect them against this error. Our confession is just the beginning of our spiritual journey. There is much to study and learn about Christ after coming to know him personally.

1. We must be accurate in what we study.
2. We must be accurate in what we share.

Mark 8:31-33 The Lord's Announcement

8:31 God's Messiah and man's Messiah differ. The disciples and Peter had just made these confessions, but one was very profound—**Jesus was the Christ**, the Messiah. At this point Jesus launched a new stage. He began to indoctrinate them into the way of God's Messiah, for as I said, God's Messiah was not man's Messiah. The phrase, **He began to teach them** of His suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection (after three days rise again). The point is: the Son of the Living God was going to be killed and raised again from the dead. *First* the idea of a suffering Messiah differed radically from their own idea of the Messiah. And *second*, the revelation had been hidden in pictures and symbols ("*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*" Jh.2:19)? The difference now was that Jesus no longer spoke in pictures and symbols. His announcement to them was told in simple and direct words. Therefore, God's plan for saving the world was to take place through a Suffering Messiah, not a conquering Messiah.

The words **must** (*dei*) was strong. "Must" is an utter necessity; must provide salvation in such a way that justice will be done; must die for man so that His "*Ideal Death*" can stand for and cover all men. The words **suffer many things** include much more than just the sufferings surrounding His death. Hebrew 5:8 makes this clear: "*Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.*"

Jesus is the Son of God who left that very presence. He left heaven with all the majesty and splendor, glory and worship, praise and honor due Him. He is the Son of Heaven, but He became the son of a woman. He belonged in heaven, but He was present on earth. He had ruled in the perfect, incorruptible world, but He was now a servant in this imperfect and corruptible world. Every sight, sound, touch, taste—every experience and awareness was a world of distance from what He had known. He suffered through every moment and through every experience. Every experience drained virtue out of Him, for He always had before His face—the truth and glory of heaven—and the sin and corruption of earth.

The word **rejected** means that the religious leaders of Israel put Jesus to the test. However, Jesus did not meet their specifications; He was not the kind of Messiah the Jews wanted. They wanted a military leader who would liberate them from the yoke of Rome, not a Saviour who would free them from their bondage of sin.

Jesus' prediction **to be killed** and be resurrected **after three days rise again** is clear to us because we can look back upon it. But it was never clear to His disciples. Why? Very simply, it was a new experience. No one had ever risen from the dead, no a person who was never again to die. Yes, if you look at Lazarus, he was raised by Jesus from the dead, but he had to die again. Therefore, for them, to think of an immediate resurrection seemed unimaginable.

8:32 Jesus' announcement was made **openly** (*parresia*) meaning plainly, unmistakably frankly, without hesitation. He talked about it so much that it shook the disciples, so much they had Peter to confront Jesus. Peter rebukes Him! Can you imagine that? The impulsive apostle cringed in unbelief at what he heard, and quickly let it be known that he was unwilling to accept it. Three points I want you to look at:

1. The Natural man rejects God's Messiah. He rebels at the idea of the cross. He wants another way other than the cross. This is what Peter was doing: rebelling against the idea that God's Son was to die. Mind you, he had just made the greatest confession of all. However, we can quickly revert to our natural selves.
 - a. **Peter took Him**. The Greek is strong (*proslabomenos*) which means "*caught hold*." Peter took hold and grabbed Jesus. Peter bodily took Jesus aside for a conference.
 - b. Peter **began to rebuke** (*epitiman*) Him. This again is strong, when interpreted it is a forcible attempt to stop the idea of the Suffering Savior. Peter was urging Jesus to follow His own human schemes instead of God's Way, and by such, he was tempting Jesus with the very same compromises that Satan used to tempt Jesus in the wilderness (power, fame, and sensation). He just did not understand.

2. **8:33** The Natural man is of Satan. Jesus did not at all take lightly what Peter had said; and now, He made <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

sure that His disciples understood. **He turned and looked on His disciples and rebuked Peter.** The harsh statement, **Get thee behind me Satan** arose because the attempt to sway Jesus from God's plan of salvation made him a tempter of the worst sort. The literal meaning of the name Satan is "*Adversary.*" Calling Peter, Satan, was stern, yet such sternness was necessary. And this time the temptation was coming from one of His own disciples. When a man refuses to accept God's plan for life, he becomes an adversary to God. He opposes God's Will. In essence the man says that he knows what is best; he is wiser than God; the cross is not necessary! Jesus' death to save the world is a useless plan—it's not needed. This is sad. This is what Peter was doing. He was opposing God's plan for life—salvation of the world! Therefore, Jesus abruptly turned to Peter before Peter could say anything else and stopped him in his tracks. He charged Peter with being Satan, with being under the authority of Satan, with speaking for Satan.

3. The Natural man sets his mind on material things, not on the things of God. Now He only speaks to Peter. The words **thou savorest not** (*ouphroneis*) mean to think or to mind, **that be of God.** Peter did not have his mind, his thinking in line with God's mind and thoughts. Peter's thoughts and tastes were worldly, self-pleasing, on **the things of men**, not spiritual and not pleasing to God. He was using human reasoning not God's reasoning. The death of Jesus reveals man's true nature, a nature that uses natural and carnal reasoning instead of spiritual reasoning.

Mark 8:34-9:1 The Cost Of Discipleship

8:34 Jesus begins to speak to all, both **the people and to His disciples.** What He now said was a warning to the whole crowd, to the whole world—"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." A person would have to make a choice between:

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| • Loving comfort and ease | or | commitment and discipline |
| • Loving wealth and property | or | work and compassion |
| • Loving recognition and fame | or | humility and sacrifice |
| • Loving position and power | or | service and ministry |
| • Loving pleasure and feeling | or | righteousness and self-control |

The question is: How does a person go about making the right choice? Jesus said four things.

1. A man must: **will come after Him.**
2. A man must: **deny himself.**
3. A man must: **take up his cross.**
4. A man must: **follow Christ.**

There is a cost of discipleship and to make the right choice is to do the four things stated above. This cost will be worth it for your life; for your salvation. Will you come, deny, take up, and follow?

TERMS:

Will (*thele*): to desire, wish, purpose, resolve, determine. It is a deliberate willing, a deliberate choice, a determined resolve to follow Christ. Note the choice is voluntary. It is not forced upon the person.

Deny (*aparneomai*): to disown, disregard, forsake, renounce, reject, refuse, restrain, disclaim, and do without. Very simply: to just say no to some behavior or thing. Denying self is much more than just being negative, it means that we are to act positively to say yes to Christ and no to self; let Christ rule and reign in one's heart and life; let Christ have His way completely.

Take up the cross: Carrying one's cross meant walking to one's death. Jesus did not call His disciples, including us, to do anything He Himself did not do. No matter what suffering we endure because of our faith, Jesus is there with us.

Follow (*akolootheo*): to be a follower or companion, to be a disciple. It has the idea of seeking to be in union with and in the likeness of. This is an active commitment and walk; an energy and effort; an action and work. It is going after Christ with zeal and energy, struggling and seeking to follow in His footsteps no matter the cost. Note that His steps lead to death before they lead to glory.

8:35 There is this issue of life: saving life vs. losing life. Jesus made a very surprising statement again. If a man wished to save his life, he must lose it. What did He mean? The key is found in two phrases:

1. The first phrase is: **for my sake – whosoever shall lose his life for my sake...the same shall save it.** The person who abandons this life, who sacrifices, and gives all that he is and has for Christ, shall save his life. But the person who keeps his life, that is, what he has, and seeks more and more of this life shall lose his life completely and eternally. The person who keeps his life is the one who:

- a. Seeks to avoid aging, decaying, and death and avoids Christ shall lose his life eternally.
- b. Seeks to make his life more and more comfortable and secure beyond what is necessary and neglects Christ shall lose his life eternally.
- c. Seeks to gain wealth, power, and fame, and who compromises Christ shall lose his life eternally.
- d. Seeks the thrills, excitement, and stimulation of this world and ignores Christ shall lose his life eternally.

As said above, the person who loses his life for Christ, who sacrifices and gives all for Christ, saves his life. What you're really saying is, *'I don't know what's best for my life, therefore the entirety of my life is in God's hands, which is the way of the cross—and I'm saved because I made a choice to throw away and lay down my self-centeredness and give all to Christ!'*

2. The second phrase is: and the gospel's sake – **whosoever shall lose his life for... the gospel's sake, the same shall save it**. The person who abandons this life, who sacrifices, and gives all that he is and has for the gospel, shall save his life. But the person who keeps his life and all that he has, and tries to keep

Keeps his life...shall lose his life	Gives his life...shall save his life
One who lies around in the comforts of the home.	One who become an explorer and pioneer for the gospel.
One who spends all he has on Himself and his family.	One who sacrifices and gives all he is and has to the gospel.
One who takes all his time for His own affairs and desires.	One who gives of his time for the gospel (visiting, teaching, sharing, witnessing, and ministering).

himself and his family free from the suffering and needs of this world, that person shall lose his life. Whatever we do, it has to be for "My sake" (God) and the gospel (Good News). In doing so you will save your life.

8: **36-37** There is the issue of gaining the world vs. losing the soul. **For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?** Many people spend their lives seeking pleasure. Jesus is saying the world of pleasure centered on possessions, position, or power is ultimately worthless. Whatever we have on earth is only temporary. It cannot be exchanged for our souls. The meaning of "*soul*" is the same Greek word translated as "*life*." Jesus used the word life in two senses. There are two stages, two beings, two existences to the same life:

1. The life that exists on the earth.
2. The life that shall exist beyond this earth.

Once a person (their life) is born into this world, he will exist forever. It's just a matter of where he goes after the life of this world: to be with God or to be apart from God. No man can gain the whole world. But what if he could? All the pleasure and wealth and power and fame are nothing compared to his soul. There are four primary reasons why the soul is far superior to the things of this earth.

1. *Everything fades* and passes away (money, property, position, power, etc. are all for a short time).
2. *Everything cannot be used* all at once (clothes, car, power, popularity, etc. either it sits and is unused most of the time).
3. *The human soul is eternal*. It never dies; never ceases to exist; shall live forever, with God or to be apart from God.
4. *The human soul is of more value* than the whole world.

Therefore, it cannot be exchanged for anything, and nothing that the world has to offer that man can give in exchange for his soul. Can you really say something else is worth more than your soul? It is far superior because God's breath is eternal.

8: **38** There is the issue of the Messiah: being ashamed of Christ vs. confessing Christ. At least five things are said in this verse: **Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his father with the holy angels.**

1. Christ is the true Messiah. He and His Words determine a man's destiny. Note the words, "*Me and my Words*."
2. A man can be ashamed of Christ, and some men are ashamed of Him now. Some fear what others will say. They fear being ridiculed by peers: talked about, questioned, avoided, sneered at, abused, persecuted. Therefore, they deny Christ. They deny by word, act, and silence.
3. The world makes it difficult to confess Christ. Why? – The world is an adulterous and sinful place and every generation passes down its adulterous and sinful behavior. They want to keep some control over their lives.
4. The day of the Messiah's glory is coming, a day when His glory shall be revealed to all.
5. The Day of Judgment—of shame and of being ashamed—is coming. Then the person will hear those fateful and terrifying words, "*I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*" (Matt.7:23).

A man may speak boldly and candidly among friends, but the test of character for a Christian comes when he must <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

stand for Christ in the midst of an adulterous and sinful men. At that time it pertained to the character of Israel and now it is to every generation which has followed. As man is ashamed of Christ so shall His attitude be reciprocated in like manner. Now that Jesus has explained the fearful cost of following Jesus and then being ashamed to own Him, He immediately shows the spectacular glory. This is not a secret coming. He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels, hinting at why those who lose their lives for Jesus will save themselves.

Chapter 9:1

There is the issue of death: tasting death vs. seeing God's kingdom. This verse belongs at the end of Chapter 8; it is the final statement in Christ's lecture about self-denial. Although He had just emphasized the spiritual over the physical, men seek and need physical evidence. Thus, it is promised: **some of them that stand here...shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power**. This is not a reference to the Lord's Second Coming. The disciples did not die before Jesus' return (resurrection). In Scripture, the word **taste** is a synonym for "*experience*." Thus this refers to some will see, experience God's kingdom in its glory. Peter, James, and John witnessed Jesus' Transfiguration on a mountaintop. It does not mean that they would not ultimately die, but that before they died they would see beyond the veil into the kingdom. The Lord's victory over death and hell which took place upon the cross and in the resurrection made it possible for the rule and reign of God's kingdom that takes place within the heart of the believer, and to the rule and reign of the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit comes to take residence within the believer. His Death and Resurrection; and at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came are also examples of His power. The Kingdom of God is where He rules and reigns and it's always with power. He allowed some to see His power in His death, in His resurrection and in His glory at the Transfiguration.

SUMMARY:

²Our lessons have really been focusing on "Who Jesus Is." This is a "Matter Of Identity!" We must know who we're following and be able to explain it. These extraordinary verses of Scripture go to the heart of the Gospel of Mark. Although the different paragraphs (8:27-30; 8:31-33; 8:34-9:1) could each be studied independently, each of them is important. If we are to understand what Mark wanted to say in his Gospel and the issues at stake for Jesus at this point in His ministry, then we must read the passage as a whole.

The event at Caesarea Philippi was crucial to God's work through Jesus, and after it because Jesus' relationship with the disciples could never be the same. First, Jesus asked them who other people said He was, and then He asked them what they thought themselves (8:27-30). However, when Peter declared "*You are the Messiah*" (8:29), people would not have expected Jesus to ask for the matter to be kept quiet! (8:30). Neither, would they have expected Jesus to say that He was going to suffer by being rejected, die, and then be resurrected! (8:31). Peter spoke for everyone around him when he told Jesus, that what He said was not acceptable! (8:32), but Jesus' strong rebuke forced all those who were present to think again. There could be no mistake; if Jesus was to complete His work as the Messiah, there was only one way it could be done (8:34f.).

Now, they learn that there is a cost to be Jesus' disciple. The requirements was to deny himself, take up his cross, and then follow Him, because if you try to save your life, you'll lose it; but if you lose your life for His sake and the Gospel, you'll save it. Profiting what's on earth, you'll lose your soul. There is nothing that you can exchange for your soul because it's just that precious. In the end, don't be ashamed of Jesus nor His Word because He'll be ashamed of you when He comes back in all of His glory. He allowed some to see His kingdom come in power.

God's path of salvation begins with us identifying who He is! No one has to prompt us; there has to be matter of clarity. The matter of it all pertains to the issue. The issue pertains to the identity. The identity pertains to the Messiah! The Messiah is the Christ, the Son of the Living God! God's Messiah as foretold by the prophets was the "*Suffering Servant*" prophesied by Isaiah (see Isaiah 53) and He is still misunderstood. The matter of His identity was already foretold and has come to us to be revealed in our hearts. Will you accept Him?

APPLICATION:

The challenge of this lesson is for you to really get to know Who Jesus Is. Is He your Messiah! Keep reading through this passage several times and dwelling on each stage of what is said. Then follow Jesus and you will know what it means to really live in this life and to have life eternal as well when he returns.

² http://www.prayerandbiblestudy.com/Alt1-Mark_8_27-38.pdf
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>