

## The Gospel According to Mark

### Who Do You Say That I Am?

Mark 8:27-30

Sunday, November 15, 2020

#### Introduction

So much of the Christian life is devoted, not to learning new things, but to remembering things that we've already come to know and believe. And as we come together week after week, much of our time is given to reminding one another what is true and encouraging one another to keep believing.

Mark begins his Gospel by announcing that he is writing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In the very first verse He makes some bold claims: That Jesus is the promised, anointed One of God and that Jesus is in fact, God in flesh. Mark makes this declaration and then he writes the Gospel to show the evidence of this claim. It's true: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Through the first eight chapters of the Gospel, Mark records miracle after miracle and proof after proof that Jesus is no ordinary man, but that He is in fact the Son of God. And while many come to Jesus and even say positive things about Him, no one up to this point has confessed Jesus as the Christ.

In Mark 8:27-30 we come to a significant transition as Peter makes this great confession of faith: *You are the Christ*.

#### Jesus Opens Blind Eyes

The disciples' dullness of faith and slowness to believe has been well documented throughout the Gospel, but it becomes particularly evident in chapter 8. In 8:17-21 Jesus rebukes the disciples for their blindness and deafness. After this rebuke and before Peter's confession Mark records that Jesus heals a blind man. Jesus came to open blind eyes and to enable us to see Him for who He really is and this is what happens with the disciples: their eyes are opened.

#### The First Question – A General Assessment (8:27)

- **Questions on the way** – As Jesus and His disciples travel from Bethsaida to Caesarea Philippi (about 25 miles) Jesus takes an opportunity to ask the disciples some questions. It's important to remember that these questions come right on the heels of 8:17-21. Jesus has rebuked them for their dullness of heart and now He inquires about the nature of their faith.
- **A broader question** – Before asking the more personal question Jesus asks a general question: *Who do people say that I am?* This isn't really an attempt by Jesus to gain information; instead Jesus is helping His disciples to consider the majority opinions about who He is.

#### The Response: An Insufficient Assessment (8:28)

The disciples share with Jesus that many people think positively of Him. They consider Him to be like one of the great prophets of the Old Testament or perhaps He's continuing the ministry of John the Baptist – who was also well respected. Jesus impressed the crowds but in the end their assessment of who He is proves woefully insufficient. He is far more than a prophet.

#### The Second Question – A Personal Inquiry (8:29a)

After beginning with the more general question Jesus moves to the personal. It's no longer a question about the views of others or of public consensus. Jesus is asking them what they believe: Who do *you* say that I am?

#### An Unprecedented Confession (8:29)

After all we've read about the disciples dullness of faith we may suspect that they will adopt one of the same positions as the crowds, but their response reveals that a change has occurred. Peter, on behalf of the others, makes this declaration: that Jesus is the Christ – the promised and anointed One of God.

**The gift of sight** – How do the disciples go from lacking understanding to this bold confession of faith? As we consider the testimony of the blind man who was healed we are reminded that God opens blind eyes. In Matthew's account Jesus tells Peter that the truth has been revealed to him by God (Mt. 16:15-16).

#### A Strict Warning (8:30)

Until the work of Jesus on the cross is completed Jesus continues to command silence from those who believe. It's not until after the cross that people will be able to understand the work of the Messiah fully.

#### Observations to Consider

- **The necessity of a right confession** – The crowds thought well of Jesus, but good thoughts of Jesus are not enough. It's not enough to acknowledge Jesus as a good teacher or leader. Only those who see Jesus as the Christ and trust in His sacrifice on their behalf will be saved.
- **Confession as a starting point** – While a right confession of Christ is essential it is only the starting point in the journey of faith. Peter's confession wasn't an end, but a beginning. We must be a people of ongoing and unswerving allegiance to Christ.
- **A confession that costs everything** – As we make claims that differ from public consensus we will face opposition. Jesus makes it clear that following Him is costly (Mark 8:34-38) – but this is the way of faith.
- **A confession that gains you everything** – While there may be much sacrifice in following Christ, the gain far outweighs the loss. In Christ we have rest, hope, joy and peace both for today and for eternity.