

# The Gospel According To Mark

## Part Thirteen

**Mark 8:27-30** [New King James] *“Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, ‘Who do men say that I am?’ So they answered, ‘John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered and said to Him, ‘You are the Christ.’ Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him.”*

Caesarea Philippi was outside of Galilee, it was in the territory of Philip not Herod.

In oldest days it was called Balinas, for it had once been the centre of the worship of Baal. It had also been called Panias because it was the supposed birthplace of Greek god Pan, the god of nature.

The gleaming temple of white marble was central to the area, built by Philip to the godhead of Caesar, the Roman Emperor, the ruler of the world, who was regarded as a god.

In this background of religion and human history Jesus Christ asked a question which had been half-put and half-answered more than once before, but now had to be answered in full if the gospel message was to be fully understood.

First Jesus asked what were the popular rumours and reports as to who He was.

**It is not enough only to know what other people think about Jesus Christ. We must know, understand and accept personally who Jesus Christ is.**

So Jesus Christ then made the question personal for His disciples.

Peter, so often the spokesman of the group, realised that deep down in his heart he had always realised that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, the longed-for Messiah.

Why then did Jesus Christ tell His disciples **not** to tell people what had been revealed to them?

**Because, first and foremost, Jesus had to teach Peter and the others what Messiahship really meant, which was not the Messianic ideas of the time of Jesus Christ, held by the Jews.**

Throughout all their existence the Jews never forgot that they were in a special sense God’s chosen people.

Because of this, they very naturally looked to a very special place in the world.

In the early days they looked forward to achieving this position in the world by human beings, and regarded their greatest days when King David was their ruler.

The Jews dreamed of a day when there would arise another king of David’s line, a king who would make them great in righteousness and in power, [Isaiah 9:7; Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 22:4; Jeremiah 23:5; Jeremiah 30:9].

But as time went on it became clear that this dream of greatness would never be achieved by human means.

Far from being in a position of greatness, for centuries the Jews never knew what it was like to be free and independent, in Jesus Christ’s day they were under the dominion of Rome.

**So the idea of a great king of David's line was linked with the intervention of God to achieve their dream supernaturally.**

**It is against their dreams, visions and hopes that we must set the words of Jesus Christ, and the true meaning of the Messiah's coming.**

**Mark 8:31-33** [New King James] *“And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’”*

**What Jesus Christ clearly stated came as a great shock to the disciples because all their lives they had thought of the Messiah in terms of irresistible conquest.**

**Hence Peter's violent protest. To him the whole thing was impossible.**

Why did Jesus Christ so sternly rebuke Peter?

Because Peter was putting into words the very temptations which were assailing Jesus Christ as a physical human being at that moment.

**Jesus Christ, the physical human being, did not want to die in the horrific pain and humiliation of a crucifixion.**

At that moment Jesus Christ was re-fighting the battle of the temptations in the wilderness with Satan, [Matthew 4:8-10]. **Satan was using Peter as his instrument; to stop Jesus Christ from fulfilling the very reason for Him coming to the earth as a human being.**

Satan can make a very powerful attack on us through the voice of one who loves us, and who believes they seek only our good.

Yet not even the pleasing voice of love must silence the voice of God calling us to obey and serve Him.

**Mark 8:34-35** [New King James] *“When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, ‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.’”*

A person who was to be crucified had to carry his cross to the place of execution.

**Jesus Christ was using the illustration carrying our cross and the ultimate submission required by His followers to God's will.**

We should be willing to lose our will in life and be submissive to the will of our Creator God.

Always remember we received life from the Creator God, [John 1:3-4], He sustains our life, [Colossians 1:17] and our human spirit will return to Him at our physical death, [Ecclesiastes 12:7].

**Two things stand out very clearly in these words of Jesus Christ.**

The most startling honesty of Jesus Christ, no-one can say that they follow Jesus Christ under false pretences.

Jesus Christ never tried to bribe people by offering them an easy way of life.

Jesus Christ never called anyone to do or face anything which He was not prepared to do and face Himself. Such an attitude is characteristic of a leader whom people will follow.

**Romans 12:1** [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

Those who first heard these words of Paul would be thinking of the loving example of their Saviour, who offered His body as a substitute sacrifice for their own deserved death and Who was now a living resurrected Saviour and High Priest.

The Greek word translated “*bodies*” is “*soma*” meaning the whole life, physical body, mind and human spirit, [**Job 32:8**; **1 Corinthians 2:11**; **Proverbs 20:27**].

**Mark 8:36-37** [New King James] *“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

**Many people spend all their energy seeking pleasure.**

**The world’s pleasure is centred on possessions, position and power, all of which are ultimately worthless.** Whatever we have on earth in our physical life is only temporary, it cannot be exchanged for our life beyond the grave.

We have to ask the question, *“Am I willing to make the pursuit of the character of the Creator God more important than the selfish pursuit of worldly pleasures?”*

Seek the very character of Jesus Christ, as depicted in the “*fruits*” of the Holy Spirit, [**Galatians 5:22-25**] and we will then receive the gift of eternal life, [**Romans 6:23**] in the presence of the Eternal God, [**John 17:3**].

**Mark 8:38** [New King James] *“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”*

**Jesus Christ again turns the world’s perspective upside down with the talk of first and last, saving and losing.**

**Here we are given a choice that will affect our eternal life.**

We can reject Jesus Christ now and be rejected by Him at His Second Coming, or we can accept Him now as our Saviour and Lord and then be accepted by Him at His Second Coming, this time as our Judge.