

最重要的问题——马可福音 8:27-30

The Most Important Question—Mark 8:27-30

Introduction & Outline

- Scripture reading: Mark 8:27-30
27 Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, “Who do people say that I am?” 28 They told Him, saying, “John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets.” 29 And He continued by questioning them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.” 30 And He warned them to tell no one about Him.
- What is the most important question in life? The answer you give in a job interview will determine whether you get hired; likewise, your answer to this question will determine where you spend eternity. This is the question Jesus asks, “Who do you say that I am?”
- This is not the first time the disciples rightly confessed Jesus’ identity (cf. John 1:41, 45, 49; 6:67, Matt. 14:33), but it indicates a growth in the strength of their faith. *“That which began as a hope-filled expectation had become a heart-fixed certainty.”*
- Starting from here, Jesus would go south all the way to Jerusalem to be crucified to accomplish the work of salvation. At this crucial moment, Jesus wants the disciples to confirm their faith, for they’ll be facing temptations like they’ve not had before. The initial hope-filled expectation isn’t going to be enough; they need to be fully convinced of who Jesus is. Therefore, Jesus led them away from the crowd.....
- Outline:
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The Background of the Question(vv.27-28)

Idols All Around

- “villages of Caesarea Philippi”: A place where idols abound, located at the northern tip of Israel, far away from their religious center. Historically, this place is filled with idol-worship. Not a trace of Yahweh-worship can be found here.
 【Examples】 The neighboring city Dan (Judg. 18; 1 Kgs. 12:29), the cave of the Greek god Pan, the temple of Zeus, the temple of Augustus the emperor.....
 【Significance】 Jesus brought His disciples here for two reasons: 1. to get away from the Pharisees so as to train them privately, 2. to examine their faith in an environment full of idols, so they may tell Him who they really think Jesus is.

Ideas All Around

- “Who do people say that I am?”: An observation question, like a survey. This is to set up for the next question which is far more important.
 “... others say... but others...” Ideas abound. Everyone has a personal view on who Jesus is.
 【Analogy】 The same is true today. People have all kinds of views on who Jesus is. If someone tells you he knows Jesus, you can ask him, “which version?” The fairytale character created by human imagination who doesn’t really exist? The annoying killjoy who only wants people to follow his religious rules. Or the liberation reformer who knows only love and love without principle and has no requirement for people? Who do people say Jesus is?
- “John the Baptist... Elijah... one of the prophets”: One thing in common — people all recognized Jesus as a prophet, someone who is from God and speaks the word of God. All three answers are high views, but not high enough, so they’re all wrong. They did not see the real height of Jesus, so they all belittled Jesus in their heart.
 【Analogy】 Today, some say Jesus is a great teacher, a role model, who leads by example to be a good person; others say Jesus is a social reformer who wants to liberate all the oppressed, and so the Christians’ responsibility is simply to reform the society; still others say Jesus is some kind of psychologist whose main goal is to give you comfort and hope and peace and joy. They all seem to have a certain respect for Jesus, but in reality, they all belittled Jesus’ true value.
- “John the Baptist”: 1. Both Jesus and John preached the same message of repentance. 2. John was killed, but his message didn’t die off, and now there’s even miracle-working power with it. That’s why some say Jesus must be John resurrected. (cf. 6:14).
- “Elijah”: 1. Elijah never died but was taken up to heaven by God. (2 Kings 2:1-18) 2. The Old Testament does say that Elijah will return (Mal. 4:5-6). So it’s a very good guess, but it didn’t see Jesus as God, so it also belittled Him.

- “One of the prophets”: Moses did speak of a future prophet like himself (Deut. 18:18; cf. Acts 3:22), but they meant, more likely, Jeremiah (Matt. 16:12), which was based on a story in the Jewish Apocrypha, a mere superstition with no biblical basis.

【Insight】 Different people may have seen different characteristics in Jesus. Some saw John the Baptist from the message He preached about repentance; some saw Elijah in Jesus from the miracles He performed; some saw the Moses-like leadership in Jesus; some saw His sorrow and anger toward sin just like Jeremiah, as well as His mercy to sinners. In fact, Jesus is all of that! The glory of Christ is exceedingly rich, and all the prophets reflect only part of His nature, but Jesus is greater than all of them combined.

The Crux of the Question(v.29a)

- “But who do you say that I am?” This is the most important question in everyone’s life. It determines how you treat your spouse, your children, your job, and everyone around you; it determines what you say and what you don’t say to others; it determines how you face all the difficulties in life, the unaffordable bills, the fateful diagnosis, and all the attacks of the enemies; and, most importantly, it determines where you’ll spend eternity.

Personal Responsibility

- “You say”: The emphasis is on the subject “You”- I want your own answer, not others’.

【Principle】 Everyone is responsible for his own answer, not others’ answers. Jesus asks you to tell Him who you say He is. Not your parents, not your friends, not your colleagues, not your pastor, not your president; but you, who do you say Jesus is?

Jesus’ Identity

- “who... I am”: Correctly answering this question would make the disciples out of place with the society and become an unpopular group of people.

【Principle】 In a world where idols are all around and ideas are all around, the correct view of Jesus would make Christians unpopular.

The Only Right Answer: You Are the Christ (v.29b)

- “You are the Christ”: This is the simplest answer. Longer versions are “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16) or “The Christ of God” (Luke 9:20). Everyone who truly believes Jesus is the Christ has received revelation from the Father Himself (Matt. 16:17; 1 Cor.12:3).

【Theology】 The word “Christ” is from the Greek *Christos*, meaning the anointed one. The equivalent Hebrew term is *Mashiach*, from which we get Messiah. It is used in the Old Testament many times, often translated as the anointed one, that is, anointed by God. In the Old

Testament, God often anoints important figures through prophets, such as certain prophets, priests, and kings, symbolizing divine choosing and appointment for a special mission. Although there are many such anointed figures, the prophets use this word to denote a unique Anointed One, a Savior figure, who came to be known as the Messiah, the Savior that people are eagerly waiting for.

Isaiah 61 :1 “ The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the Lord has anointed me, To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners;”

【Ponder】 When Peter said this, how much did he really know about this “Christ”? It’s hard for us to know exactly. If he knew Christ rightly, he wouldn’t have stopped Jesus from doing what Christ must do (vv. 31-33). If they understood their Old Testament, they would’ve known that Jesus must die and be resurrected (cf. Luke 24:45; 1 Cor.15:3-4). But they did not understand their Bible, and they were deeply influenced by the Jewish culture where a very different Christ was taught. The Christ according to the Pharisees was just a military and political leader who has nothing to do with the redemption from sin.

【Key Point】 Although the disciples did not know Christ fully, they had one fundamental difference with the Pharisees. They believed that Jesus is the Christ, but the Pharisees rejected Jesus completely. By the work of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were convinced of Jesus’ identity and value, so they had become followers of Jesus, even though there was much they didn’t yet understand. Even though they’d still fall many times after this, they’d pick up from where they fall and continue to follow Jesus through repentance and faith. This is because they are convinced from the heart that Jesus is the Christ.

The Meaning of the Answer: To Be Continued (v.30)

- “And He warned them to tell no one about Him.”: That’s because their understanding of the Christ was far from complete. They were not yet ready to proclaim the important truth that “Jesus is the Christ”. The next thing we know, Peter was trying to spare Jesus from dying. If Jesus didn't die, how could He be the Christ? How could the righteous wrath of God be satisfied? How could sinners ever enter the holy kingdom of God?

Application:

How does your life show that Jesus is the Christ? How do you manage your time? How do you spend your money? Do they reflect the fact that Jesus is the Christ?