

## “CONFESSING AND FOLLOWING JESUS THE KING”

Mark 8:27–9:1

Mark 8:29

“‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ.’”

Thank God that at this conference we have learned so much about Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. But we really need to learn more. Mark chapter 8 is a life-giving message if we listen carefully to what Jesus is trying to teach us. In this passage Jesus teaches his disciples three main points: first that he is the Christ; second, what the mission of the Christ is; and third what anyone must do to follow Jesus the Christ. Today, let’s carefully listen to Jesus’ words and learn what it means to confess and follow Jesus the King.

### Part I - Confessing Jesus is the Christ (8:27–30)

Look at verse 27a. Jesus took his disciples far to the north into a Roman-pagan area. This was no sightseeing tour. Jesus wanted to teach his disciples something very important. What was it? Let’s read verse 27b. “On the way he asked them, ‘Who do people say I am?’” Why did Jesus ask such a question? Actually this is a very important question, and it prepared the way for the next question he would ask his disciples. First, “Who do people say I am?” is an objective question regarding people’s general opinion of Jesus. At that time, what did people think about Jesus?

Let’s see the disciples’ response. Some who had heard Jesus’ powerful message thought surely this is John the Baptist. Others who had witnessed Jesus’ passionate prayer and sincere love of God thought that Jesus was surely Elijah the prophet. Still others said that Jesus was one of the prophets (28). In those days a prophet of God was one of the most honored and respected people in the nation. This is amazing! The viewpoint of the people in Jesus’ time wasn’t bad at all. The people of Jesus’ time recognized that he had come from God and was here to serve God’s purpose. In general, most people throughout the generations have respected Jesus as a great teacher or a noble humanitarian--even a great saint. Even in our generation, most religions accredit Jesus with deep respect. And even secular people say that Jesus was a great social reformer. Sadly, even some Christians see Jesus this way. They want to learn how to prosper from Jesus, but are ignorant of who he really is.

So, then, who is Jesus, really? It’s hard to explain in a few words, because Jesus is so great in so many ways. He is the great poet, great educator, the great doctor and such. He is the great activist, the great thinker, the great philosopher. These are all true but they insufficient. They failed to grasp the essence of who Jesus is. Jesus expected something more from his disciples.

Let's read verse 29a. "But what about you?' he asked, 'Who do you say I am?'" In other words, and regardless of the world's opinion, Jesus wanted to know what the disciples' answer would be. In fact, Jesus had wanted to ask this question from the beginning of his ministry. But it wouldn't have been easy to answer this question. Why? A question like this requires a very personal relationship with Jesus. It also requires sincere love for Jesus. An answer also must be based on faith in Jesus.

The disciples had lived with Jesus for the last three years. They had eaten together with him. They had slept and awoken with him. For three years they had heard the beautiful words of Jesus—words of life—and they had watched the most beautiful life ever lived. They had witnessed all the miracles of Jesus. They had witnessed the blind see and the lame walk. They had even seen the dead rise at the command of Jesus. They not only had lived with Jesus but also had participated in Jesus' life. Based on this intimate life with him, Jesus asked them, "Who do you say I am?"

How did Peter answer Jesus' critical question? Let's read verse 29b. "Peter answered, 'You are the Christ.'" This confession has been the foremost and most powerful confession of all time. Many Christians have been willing to sacrifice their own lives to make this confession for the last 2,000 years.

What then does "You are the Christ" mean? "Christ" is the Greek form of "Messiah." The entire Old Testament, or God's history, had focused on "the coming Messiah." The "Christ" or "Messiah" literally means "the Anointed One." In God's history only three kinds of people were qualified to be anointed by God. These were prophets, priest and kings. On these, the Spirit of God rested in order to fulfill the will of God in their life and ministry. When Peter confessed, "You are the Christ," he meant, "You are the Anointed One—you are the Prophet, Priest and King promised by God. You are the promised One all history points to." Indeed, Jesus is the Prophet because he brought the message of God to all people as a representative of God. Indeed, Jesus is the Priest because he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn1:29). Indeed, Jesus is the King of kings because he died and rose again to rule the heavens and the earth. When Peter confessed, "You are the Christ," he meant, "You are the One we have all been waiting for." In Matthew's Gospel the phrase is added, "*You are the Son of the Living God.*" Jesus is in very nature God.

Peter's confession was inspired by the Holy Spirit (Mt16:17). It was Biblical and prophetic. It was also a very personal confession from Peter's heart. It was both a confession of faith in who Jesus is, and, a confession of sincere love for Jesus. When Jesus first called him, Peter was a fisherman, a good husband, a good father, and a good citizen. However, he was living under the power of sin and death. One morning, after a night of failed fishing, Jesus asked him to put out into deep water. When Peter obeyed, he caught so many fish that the net was bursting. At that moment, Peter's life flashed before him, and he realized that Jesus was no ordinary man. Peter realized that Jesus was the living God who commands the heavens and the earth. Peter also realized that he was a sinful man. He had been living a self-centered life without

mission. At that moment, Peter was deeply convicted of his great sins against God. He fell down on his knees before Jesus and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” (Lk5:8) Peter felt all the condemnation of his sinful life weighing upon his soul. But Jesus did not condemn him. Jesus accepted his words as his repentance and faith and blessed him, saying, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men” (Lk6:10). Peter received God’s forgiveness and the love of Jesus in his heart and soul. When he followed him, he saw Jesus touch a leprous man and cleanse him by his word: “I am willing. Be clean!” And immediately the man was cleansed (Mk1:41–42). Peter witnessed Jesus say to an adulterous woman, “Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin” (Jn8:11). No one had ever said and done what Jesus did. As Peter witnessed this, he was convinced that Jesus is the Christ of God, the Anointed One, the Savior of the world, and Peter’s Savior. When Peter confessed, “You are the Christ,” he was saying, “Lord Jesus, I love you. I commit my life to you.” How beautiful was this confession! Down through the generations, those who have made this confession received eternal salvation. Romans 10:9 says, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

“Who do you say I am?” This is Jesus’ question to all of us. In our generation we witness all kinds of ideas and philosophies about who Jesus is. People compare Jesus to Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, or Socrates. But none of those men could give us life. On the other hand, Jesus is not an ordinary man. He is not just a great prophet. Jesus is the Christ of God, the Savior of the world, your Savior and mine. May God enable us all to make a confession of faith in Jesus, “You are the Christ.”

## Part II – The Mission of the Christ (8:31–33)

Right after Peter’s confession, Jesus went on to teach his disciples what the mission of the Christ was—what he would do to save us from our sins. Let’s read verse 31. “He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.” It was the most straightforward teaching that explained his mission as the Son of Man—the Christ. What, then, is the Christ’s mission?

**First**, the Christ must suffer many things and die on the cross. Look at verse 31 again. The disciples never expected this teaching. To them, “You are the Christ,” embodied all the glory and power of God upon Jesus. Never did they imagine that the Christ would suffer and die. We can imagine how much Jesus struggled to plant this teaching in their hearts. They really didn’t want to accept it. But it was imperative to teach them about the Christ’s suffering and death on the cross. Why? It is because without it, our most fundamental problem—our sin problem—could never be solved.

Most people don’t think sin is the fundamental problem. They think that unemployment, poor health care, the BP oil spill, credit card debt, or the trade deficit is our fundamental problem. But the Bible says sin is our fundamental problem. Romans 3:23 says, “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” We all have this problem from birth. King David said it best when he confessed, “Surely I was sinful at

birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Ps51:5). Many people think that sin is limited to wicked and evil acts, such as murder or robbery. But the problem of sin is much deeper than that. Sin is a spiritual disease that has separated us from God. Because sin lives in our hearts, we do what we don’t want to do, and we don’t do what we should do (Ro7). Because of sin we live as enemies of God. Because of sin we must pay the price with our own life, and then face God’s judgment. Who can save us from our sins? God sent Jesus as the only way of salvation for mankind.

Jesus had to suffer and die in order to solve our sin problem. There was no other way. Isaiah the prophet explains, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isa53:5). The demand of sin was so high that only the death of the holy Son of God was sufficient to pay the price.

**Second**, the Christ would rise from the dead. The end of verse 31 says, “...and after three days rise again.” Why was it necessary for the Christ to rise again? From the beginning of time, death has been our formidable enemy. The power of death enslaved men with fear, it made everyone hopeless and helpless, and it defeated everyone in the end. Even great generals and leaders like Alexander the Great and Aristotle bowed down before the power of death. But Jesus defeated death and rose from the dead. Later, when Peter understood this, he exclaimed in 1 Peter 1:3: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...” Through his suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus solved our sin problem forever.

In verse 31 Jesus said with deep conviction that this was the will of God for his life. But Peter was not ready to accept this life-giving teaching. So he took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him (32). What? Why did Peter rebuke Jesus? Peter rebuked Jesus because his concept of the Christ focused on human glory, authority, and power. Peter thought he had suffered enough in this life. When he followed Jesus, he hoped that all his suffering would end. To Peter the idea of suffering and death was unthinkable. This deeply-rooted idea surfaced when he heard the mission of the Christ.

How did Jesus respond? Look at verse 33. He said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.” Peter had just made the greatest confession of faith of all time. In the next moment, Satan worked through Peter to tempt Jesus. Jesus had in mind the things of God. Jesus was determined to obey the will of God at any cost. But Peter had in mind the things of men, which were ease and glory with no suffering. Jesus rebuked this way of thinking. If Peter was going to follow Jesus, he needed to be changed.

### Part III – Following Jesus the Christ (8:34–9:1)

Up to this time Jesus had been focused on Peter and his disciples. Now Jesus turns his attention to the crowd and to all people. Jesus teaches the universal truths that anyone must accept if he wants to follow Jesus as the Christ. What are they? Let’s read

verse 34. “Jesus called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”

The first condition to following Jesus is to deny one’s self. What? Deny one’s self? We live in a generation that abhors self-denial and sings the praises of such things as self-centeredness and self-promotion. Everyone looks out for himself. Everyone seeks his or her own benefit. Many pastors preach only a gospel of health and wealth, a gospel of self-improvement, a gospel limited to the love of God. The words “self-denial,” “repent,” “cross,” or “sacrifice” never appear in their message. In our generation it is taboo to talk about such things. Then why must we deny ourselves? When people want to follow Jesus, sinful desires creep in and try to drag us away to other things. Peter wanted to follow Jesus, but he also wanted to enjoy ease and glory in the world without suffering. This came from his sinful nature. There are many kinds of sinful desires that try to entice us and keep us from following Jesus. We must say, ‘No!’ to our sinful desires if we want to follow Jesus. Galatians 5:24 says, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.”

Another way we must deny ourselves is to deny our own ideas, which are the things of men. Instead of living by our human reason and thoughts, we must live by the word of God. When his idea was contrary to Jesus’ word, Peter should have denied his own idea and accepted Jesus’ teaching. When we are in conflict between Jesus’ truth and our ideas, we must deny our ideas. Then we can follow Jesus.

Jesus didn’t stop at “deny yourself.” He commands us to take up our cross “daily” (Lk9:23). Indeed, the way of discipleship involves carrying our own cross daily. What does this mean? Some people mistake the cross they have to carry for the necessity of making a living. Others mistake the cross they have to carry for a nagging wife, or a bad neighbor, or a crying baby. Although such things are difficult to bear, they are not the cross Jesus is talking about. Jesus is talking about the cross of mission. One who is not serving this purpose is not carrying his cross—and he cannot follow Jesus. Jesus clearly said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” At this conference let us make a decision to do so.

According to the decision we make, there will be consequences. Look at verses 35, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.” Following Jesus leads us to eternal life in the kingdom of God. Following our own thoughts and sinful desires leads to eternal destruction. The decision we make today is a very important one. Many people think they can cheat God by living selfishly and still go to heaven. No one can deceive God. God will reward or punish based on the decisions we make.

In verses 38 Jesus warns and encourages us. He says, “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.” We are living in a sinful and adulterous generation. It is easy to be ashamed of Jesus. But we

must not be ashamed of Jesus and his words. Instead, we must confess and follow Jesus as the Christ. Then we can receive the kingdom of God as our inheritance.

I would like to share a word of my own testimony. I grew up in DuPage County, 30 miles outside of Chicago, which is home to Wheaton College, one of the leading evangelical colleges in the nation. I had a churchgoing family and a Lutheran background. I thought I was a good person and would most likely end up in heaven. But like Peter, I was living with the things of men in mind. My goals were to enjoy a life of pleasure and ease, seeking the praise of others by forming a rock band and seeking out casual relationships. But just as Jesus interrupted Peter's life, he interrupted my life. In the year 2001 while a student at College of DuPage, I was invited to study the Bible by a short, Korean missionary. I said, "No, thanks," but she only heard, "thanks," and handed me an appointment flyer. God had blessed me in so many ways—with a stable family and home. But through Bible study I began to see that I was living a sinful life of ease and glory seeking with no suffering. Jesus visited me through a Summer Bible Conference in 2002. The conference title was, "You are the Christ." At that conference I met Jesus who forgave my sins and gave me a new life direction to live as his servant. I made a personal confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ. After meeting Jesus personally, I stopped enjoying dark heavy metal music, and instead I began to praise God with music every Sunday. Especially, God blessed me to serve our DuPage High School Fellowship, take care of our Bible Center, and teach the word of God to several College of DuPage students. He even helped me to establish a mission-centered marriage with Missionary Susanna. At the World Mission Report in 2006, I shared my life testimony and made a confession of faith to raise 120 disciples of Jesus and go to the mission field of the Czech Republic in God's time. Over the past four years I tried to take up my cross, but it was not easy. Many students came and went over the years, and slowly I began to forget I even made this confession. I repent that after marrying I began to live a family centered life. But while preparing this message, Jesus spoke to me with his words, "*Jeremy, I am the Lord. Remember the confession you made, deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me!*" The Lord helped me rededicate my life to take up my cross of mission and to follow Jesus as King. Please pray for me to raise 12 Bible teachers co-working with the saints in DuPage ministry this year. I believe the Lord gave me the gift of speech and the opportunity to speak. I pray that the Lord will make me a powerful speaker for the Lord like John Wesley or Billy Graham in this generation. And if God wants, in his right time I pray that he may send my family out as a missionary family.

My friends, many people are seeking an easy life, and they ignore Jesus and his words. But only those who confess Jesus is the Christ and follow him will receive eternal life in the kingdom of God. Let's confess and follow Jesus the Christ, our King.

Let's read the key verse 8:29 all together.