

## **PETER, - COMMENDED AND CHASTENED (Mk. 8:27-33)**

**Mk. 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? **28** And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. **29** And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. **30** And he charged them that they should tell no man of him. **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. **32** And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. **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.

The three Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the ‘Synoptic Gospels’ because they include many of the same stories, often in a similar sequence, and with similar wording ... ‘synoptic’ literally means ‘together-sight’. One such example of their ‘togetherness’ is this passage in Mk. 8:27-33, which is paralleled in Mt. 16:13-22 and Lk. 9:18-27. It highlights how the Lord Jesus commended Peter on his confession of faith, **Mk. 8:29** *And he [Jesus] saith unto them [His disciples], But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ, ...* and it also records how the Lord Jesus chastened Peter, **33** *Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.*

Commentators agree this is the pinnacle, - the high point, - of the entire Gospel of Mark. Everything before leads up to this confession of faith ... and everything afterwards, flows from it. This is the moment when the disciples actually once and for all settle Who Jesus is. If we would try to look to a time when they truly were convinced and converted, then this confession of faith, - that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, - surely indicates that occasion.

However, while they affirmed the Person of Christ, they had severe problems accepting His plan. Yes, Jesus we acknowledge You as the Messiah but when You say You are going to suffer many things, and You are going to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes ... and be killed ... well, that does not tally with what we have been taught and what we have believed concerning the Messiah. ... What You are saying does not suit our hopes and aspirations regarding the One Who will free our nation from the invaders.

Now, to a Jew waiting for the Messiah, realising that Jesus is that Christ is the ultimate revelation ... this was what the prophets prophesied! The specific name of Jesus, of course, was not mentioned in the Old Testament but many aspects of His life were, for example, His birth and where He would be born,

His simple background, His triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, His betrayal, His crucifixion, His resurrection ... Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Ezekiel and every one of the prophets, and many of the ordinary people longed for the day the Messiah would come, as Simeon gratefully acknowledged to the Lord, **Lk. 2:30** *For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* ... And for centuries as a nation, every generation was waiting for the Christ to appear ... and now these twelve disciples realised *He had* ... and they believed in Him!

The next thing, though, was that Jesus shocked them by saying He was going to be killed, - *that* wasn't part of their plan for Him! ... And I wouldn't be surprised if they didn't hear it when He said He would rise from the dead after three days! And then Peter, - who had made such a tremendous affirmation, - spoiled the moment by rebuking Jesus, and telling Him he would never allow any of what the Saviour described to happen!

The background to this was Caesarea Philippi, about twenty-five miles to the north of the town of Bethsaida where Jesus had previously healed the blind man (vv. 22-26). Caesarea Philippi was a Gentile pagan city. It was part of the region given to Herod the Great by Caesar Augustus, and then when he (Herod) died it fell into the hands of one of his four sons called Philip, hence the name of the town was Caesarea Philippi. It was a idolatrous community, hostile to Judaism ... and yet, it was the place Peter confessed concerning Jesus, **Mt. 16:16** *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

... That is what all the evidence pointed to! Given all the information, - all the miracles they witnessed, all the healings, all the sermons and teachings, - ... it was the only conclusion they could come to?! Yes, but at the same time, there were also multitudes who did *not* arrive at that conclusion. The vast majority of the people failed to fully recognise Who Jesus truly was, as Isaiah had prophesied, **Is. 53:1** *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? <sup>2</sup> For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.* ... As far as many were concerned, Jesus was 'a one-day wonder'!

Yes, but we are looking at believers here, i.e. the disciples ... so we expect more from them. These were the twelve disciples ... not pagans and idol-worshippers. These were men who had followed Jesus for almost three years, - they *should* have known to believe and accept what He said, no matter how it

sounded. ... It is like when some people come to the Scriptures, and if it doesn't say what they want it to say, they set about 'tweaking' here and re-inventing there until it says what they want it to say ... instead of taking the Lord's word as it is!

It is a real danger of trying to make the Scriptures say what we want it to say rather than taking and simply believing what it says ... and that is what happened to the disciples. No way could Jesus do all He did and literally *suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed* ... Absolutely no way! It cannot be true, and it cannot be as it sounds! It has got to mean something else!

Let's go back ... Jesus asked them a straightforward question, **Mk. 8:27** *Whom do men say that I am?* Who do the people (οἱ ἄνθρωποι) out there believe Me to be? ... There is no doubt everyone was talking about Him. To some He was a nuisance and an annoyance, to some He was a pretender and a phoney, but to some others they really had placed their hope in Him, **28** *And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.*

So, certain names 'were being bandied about' ... and it was obvious the people, - while they reckoned Jesus to be a prophet, - they did not consider Him to be the Messiah for they had developed their concept of what a Messiah should be, - he had to be a kingly ruler, a political power with military might to support him ... but Jesus did not fit into that category ... so they considered Him to be a prophet.

That is what the vast majority of the people thought ... but what about the disciples? ... **29** *And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?* ... That is the most important question for the wrong answer means Hell, and the right answer means Heaven! ... Who do you believe I am? ... So, how do you arrive at the right answer? You arrive at the right answer through the teaching and directing which comes from God the Holy Spirit, of Whom Jesus had previously said, **Jn. 16:8** *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9* *Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10* *Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11* *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. 12* *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13* *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth*

So Jesus asked them, [whom say ye that I am?](#) No doubt they had all discussed this very same topic when they were on their own, and Peter speaks up with the perfectly correct conclusion they had arrived at, [Thou art the Christ](#), [Σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστός](#). ... They were 100% certain of it!

They had no doubts whatsoever that Jesus was the ‘Anointed One’, - God’s promised Prophet, Priest, and King. In Matthew’s account it is recorded, [Mt. 16:16](#) [And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.](#) And Luke records it similarly, [Lk. 9:20](#) [Peter answering said, The Christ of God.](#) ... Peter and the disciples had gotten it absolutely ‘spot on’, - their reply was impeccable! And that is why they had left everything to follow Jesus. As the time spent with the Saviour continued, they were more and more convinced He was the Messiah, the Son of God.

What an encouragement these accounts of Peter’s affirmation would have been in the churches where the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were read! ... Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah!

... But you and I know what it is like to have a faith, and to rest on that faith. At this point, the disciples were fluctuating between fear and doubt. Now, it’s not the first time, - it is probably the most important, - but it’s not the first time. For example, there was the occasion when they did not know where they were going to get the food to feed the multitudes ... there was another occasion when they were in the boat on the Sea of Galilee, and the storm came ... On both occasions fear and doubt precipitated their conclusions. ... So, it is one thing to say you believe ... but you must be able to be confident in what you believe!

There is no point in saying, Yes, I believe in God, and I believe Jesus has saved me and He’s keeping me so that one day I shall go to be with Him forever ... There is no point in saying that if you are not prepared to trust Him in the here and now. Eternity is something, - until we enter it, - we cannot understand, and yet we are trusting in Christ to keep us throughout it. *Now*, on the other hand, - this present moment is what we *do* understand. We understand its difficulties and trials, its ‘ups’ and its ‘downs’ ... and we also understand how God has carried us when we have not had the strength to walk ... for we know His strength is made perfect in weakness, and therefore, His grace is sufficient for us (II Cor. 12:9).

And here were these disciples who were convinced Jesus was the Messiah and yet, they did not take full advantage of that knowledge because the situation did not look the way they thought it should have looked.

You see, Jesus was the Son of man, and He was also the Son of God, - by human nature, man ... and by divine nature, God. And how did Peter reach the conclusion, *Thou art the Christ?* Well, Matthew explains how he reached it, **Mt. 16:17** *And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

Knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour does not come because we think we are clever. Neither does it come through a method of elimination ... that is, I have tried the rest, now I'll try Jesus. You don't 'try' Jesus to become a Christian ... You *try* a fish and chip shop, or you *try* a new pair of shoes ... but you don't *try* Jesus! ... Instead, you *believe* in Jesus, and that is something completely different. You believe in Jesus, even when the clouds descend all around you ... You believe in Jesus, even when a darkness seems to overcome you ... for you believe in Jesus because He promises you He will neither leave you nor forsake you. ... You don't *try* Him ... you *believe* in Him! And the Holy Spirit gives you the ability to believe in Him.

Where the disciples were failing was that *they* were 'trying to connect the dots', but human faith is not sufficient to believe in Jesus for His thoughts are not always our thoughts, and neither are His ways always the ways we would choose ... and yet, wrote Paul, **II Tim. 1:12** *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. ... That is not 'trying', that is believing! ... Try Jesus? ... No, believe in Jesus! ... I Cor. 2:11 ... even so the things of God knoweth no man, but [by] the Spirit of God.*

So, the disciples knew Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus did not fit into the people's perception of what constituted the Messiah, but the disciples realised His life, witness, and testimony fully endorsed all that was said of Him by the prophets. ... And then Jesus gave the by-now familiar instruction, **30** *And he charged them that they should tell no man of him. ... Why did He not allow them to say He was the Messiah? Well, the simple reason is that to say He is the Messiah was not the full message as to why He was born in Bethlehem and grew up in Nazareth for in His first coming His priority was to be the Saviour.*

This point is followed up at the start of v. 31, *And he began to teach them ...* and the ‘lessons’ He gave them was that He was going to offer His life as a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45). And He emphasises it, *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 ... must (δεῖ)*, in other words, it is absolutely necessary. ... Why did Jesus die on the cross? ... He *must*. ... Why was He to be rejected and murdered? ... He *must*. ... Yes, but also note He *must* also after three days rise again. ... On a previous occasion He had explained, *Jn. 6:38* For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. ... And that is the reason He 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.

So, the bad news is really good news. ... If Peter had kept quiet and listened until Jesus had finished he would not have made a fool out of himself. He only listened to the first part of what Jesus said ... but he had not listened sufficiently to hear the second part, where Jesus spoke of how He would rise from the dead.

Yes, Jesus was to die ... but He was also to rise from the dead! Jesus was punished by His Father for our sins, because He took them upon His own body on the cross of Calvary ... Jesus *died* for us ... Yes, and the Gospel required Him to die for us ... but the Gospel also required Him to rise from the tomb! He is the living Saviour!

But Peter took Him to the one side and rebuked Him (v.32). ‘Rebuke’, - that is a very strong word! It (ἐπιτιμάω) means to reprove, admonish, to speak harshly to ... and that is how Peter addressed the Lord! Peter did not ask the Lord to explain Himself ... Peter just simply and rudely castigated the words of the Saviour!

But notice how Mark says Peter *began* (v.32) to rebuke Jesus. He did not get to say much for Jesus stopped him! Jesus was not going to allow Peter ‘free rein’, so He stopped him ... and no less strong, Jesus had the last word for He said to Peter, *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. ... Get thee behind me ... Get out of My sight! ... That is what Jesus told Peter ... that is how He spoke to him in front of the other disciples. Peter was ‘playing God’ because he reckoned he*

knew better than Jesus ... and God will not allow it! ... We are the disciples, but He is the Master! ... Because he had made such a fantastic statement, - referring to Jesus, **Thou art the Christ**, - Peter now reckoned *he* was fit enough and elevated enough and knowledgeable enough to be on an equal level with the Lord and ‘tell’ the Lord, but the Lord put him in his place!

Previously, Peter and James and John had asked to receive important seats when Jesus would establish His Kingdom ... and that shows how Peter did not want a cross, but he wanted a crown. No, Matthew records how Jesus knew what was going on because He said to Peter, **Mt. 16:23** *thou art an offence [σκάνδαλον] unto me* ... You are a trap that Satan is trying to use against Me ... a ‘stumbling-block’ to try and keep Me from going to the cross. Get out of My sight!

Indeed, it was *hard* for Peter ... but it was through his own doing. Peter made a few mistakes by things he said but he *did* eventually learn for, - after Jesus had returned to Glory, - he wrote to other believers, **1 Peter 2:21** *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: 24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. 25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. ... He had learned!*

Sometimes it takes the Lord to deal with us in a very straightforward and abrupt manner, otherwise we might not learn. ... But we have to learn, and we learn from the Master. His Word teaches us to follow His example. Sometimes we have to ‘work at it’, but He has a purpose in saving us and, therefore, the effort is always worthwhile.

Peter made the mistake of rejecting the bad news that Jesus had to die ... as if God did not know what He was doing ... and he did not pay particular attention to listen and learn Jesus was going to rise from the dead ... and that is the Gospel story that Jesus died and rose again for the salvation of His people. Peter thought he could make a better job of compiling the Gospel than God did ... but anything else, - and anything less, - is not the Gospel, **Rom. 5:6** *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ... 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ*

died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. <sup>10</sup> For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. ... <sup>6:9</sup> Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. ... <sup>22</sup> But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

The Gospel is the most powerful message any man or woman can pass on to another ... that is, the *whole* Gospel of saving grace ... with nothing left out, and nothing else added in. It must have Jesus dying for the sins of His people in the centre ... and it must have His victory over death, sin, the grave, and the devil ... and it must also have the believer's assurance of eternal life. ... The Epistle of Jude is a great letter, and we shall conclude our study with the words of the final verse, **Jude 24** Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, <sup>25</sup> To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.