

This Changes Everything

Mark begins his Gospel by saying this is “the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” But this is not affirmed or recognized until this pivotal moment when Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?”. Throughout the preceding eight chapters, those who encounter Jesus struggle to understand who he is. The crowds marvel at his miracles and teaching and ask by what Authority does he do this. The Pharisees are scandalized by his association with sinners and can only think of Jesus in terms of the demonic. Even his disciples, when faced with the feeding of the 5,000 and the calming of the storm over the Sea of Galilee, ask each other, “who is this?” Now at this point of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is affirmed as the Messiah and for the rest of Mark he helps his disciples and followers understand what that means.

Mark 8:27-30

²⁷ And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” ²⁸ And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹ And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” ³⁰ And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

I. Who Does the World Say Jesus Is?

When Jesus asks this question the disciples give the popular opinion that has already been given in Mark 6. People wondered whether he was John the Baptist risen from the dead, or Elijah risen from the dead or another prophet. People knew there was something supernatural about Jesus, but they didn’t want to say that he was the Messiah or God. Even today there is a lot of popular opinion surrounding the person of Jesus. Many say that he is a great moral teacher, but not God. In light of the growing pluralism that exists in our time, many others want to say that he is just one of many ways to God. What is fascinating is that Jesus cannot just be ignored. It seems that everyone has to say something about Jesus.

II. Who Do You Say Jesus Is?

By asking the disciples, “who do you say that I am?”, Jesus is calling for a personal confession. It is important to remember here that in the disciples’ minds a confession would carry with it implications for how they would then live. Often in our day and culture we make “confessions” without thinking that we are really responsible for the implications of those beliefs. When Peter answered on behalf of the disciples, “you are the Christ” (which means Messiah or literally ‘anointed one of God’), he knew that this would be life-changing. The implications are the same for us today. If we are confessing that Jesus is the Son of God, then this confession would necessarily change everything for us. Our lives would now need to center on Christ and find our purpose and identity in Christ. There is no way we could simply add him to our lives as our choice of religion. How could we if he is God?

III. Do You Have The Right Jesus?

In verse 30 we have again that interesting and often confusing command of Jesus that his Disciples not tell anyone that he is the Christ. The reason is (as we shall see in the following verses) they did not understand the true mission of the Messiah. They were letting popular religious opinion shape their views. We can be in danger of that as well. Sometimes we rely too much on our own opinion of how Christ should be, rather than understanding him as he is revealed in the Bible. The Word of God clarifies for us who Jesus is and who he is not. We must be students of the Word and make sure we have the right understanding of Jesus and his mission.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the popular opinions concerning Jesus that you often hear in the places where you live and work? How and Why do you think people have come to these conclusions?
2. When you confessed Christ as Savior and Lord, what things changed in your life? What things do you think still need to change?
3. Now that you confess Jesus as the Christ, what does it mean to you to center your life on Christ? What causes you to get off centered?
4. In what ways do you now find your identity in Christ? What are the other things in life in which you are tempted to find your identity? What would you say your life's mission or purpose is? How does this reflect your confession of Jesus as the Christ?
5. Spend some time reading over Colossians 1:15-23. What are the implications of these statements about Christ to the way you think and act every day?