

The Gospel According to Mark - Who Do You Say That I Am?

Who Do You Say That I Am? Mark 8:27-30

"By Your blood I've been adopted, I have taken on Your name!" What does it mean to take on the name of Jesus? What does the name of Jesus mean? What does it stand for? Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Today we're going to dig deep into the awesome subject of who Jesus is and who He is to you! Let's pray and seek the wisdom of God and the inspiration of The Holy Spirit as we study God's Word today! Pray!

We will begin by reading our text which is found in the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 8:27-30...

Mark 8:27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

Mark 8:28 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

Mark 8:29 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ."

Mark 8:30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

The Context

Mark 8:27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi...

Caesarea Philippi – A lush place with streams of water flowing from surrounding bluffs.

The Canaanite god Baal-gad, the god of good fortune, was worshiped here in Old Testament times.

Earlier called Paneas (a place where the pagan god Pan was worshiped)

Jesus Intentionally Picked This Background For His Conversation With The Disciples

Theologian Henry Turlington put it this way...

"The contrast between the heathen cult and the recognition of Jesus as God's Christ is sharp."

The Question

Mark 8:27 ...On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

Jesus is getting ready to take the disciples to another level in their understanding of who He was so this question and their answer was very important. Because of the background, and this question, some scholars believe Jesus and the disciples may have been discussing various religious belief systems of the day. Jesus may have asked the question the way He did in order to get the disciples to reveal where they were in their thinking. Not that Jesus didn't know, but they needed to say it out loud. They needed to deal with their own questions about the identity of Jesus. Here's...

Their Answer

Mark 8:28 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

We will find out a little later on in Mark's Gospel that Elijah had been prophesied in The Old Testament to be the one who would prepare the way for the coming Messiah, and that John the Baptist was the one who would play the role of Elijah in preparing the way for Jesus the Messiah! Of course there were those who just thought that Jesus might have been a great prophet. He obviously was doing some pretty miraculous things and taught as one who had authority, so even people who were not ready to accept Him as the prophesied Messiah, felt like they had no option but to at least give Him prophet status. That's still happening today. There are those who simply cannot dismiss or ignore Jesus and His teachings, so they just place Him in the category of a good teacher, great moral example, a good prophet, but they aren't willing to go to the next level and recognize Jesus as the Messiah! The disciples had had a tough time understanding too, and they were still trying to decide exactly where they were going to stand on the issue,

but Jesus knew the time was drawing near where the disciples could no longer stay on the fence, so Jesus asked them a...

Second Question

Mark 8:29 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Jesus was getting personal now! Nothing like being put on the spot! The disciples were beginning to see where Jesus was going with this, but now they've got a decision to make. But not to worry, Peter, their un-appointed spokes person, steps in to save the day with...

A Breakthrough

Mark 8:29 ...Peter answered, "You are the Christ."

Folks, this is a big deal!! For Peter to use the word "Christ" was monumental! The title Christ was epic! Christ is Aramaic for Messiah, which means "anointed one." Peter is probably thinking of Old Testament prophecies like Isaiah 11...

Isa 11:1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

Isa 11:2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD--

Jesse was King David's father and it was widely known that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David. And then listen to this prophecy, also from Isaiah, back in chapter 9...

Isa 9:1but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan--

Isa 9:2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

Things were now coming into focus and it was time for the disciples to get off the fence! What they were going to face in the coming days would require a decision one way or the other! There was no way they could face the persecution they were going to face if they only believed Jesus to be just another good man, another good prophet! There's no way they would be able to fulfill their responsibility to take the gospel, the good news of Jesus to the world if they only believed Him to be just another good teacher! You appreciate a good teacher, you respect a good teacher, you learn from a good teacher, but you don't give up everything and commit your life to follow someone who is just a good teacher! There should be more, there has to be more. If you're going to dedicate your life to something, especially if it has to do with your spirituality and your eternity, you better make sure it's not just pretty good teaching done by a pretty good teacher! When it comes to choosing what you're going to place your trust in for eternity, it better be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth! Truth matters! It was probably around this same time in Jesus' ministry that some people had decided His teaching was too difficult to swallow, and some who had been following Jesus simply because of the miracles or because of His popularity, they began to leave. Which prompted another question by Jesus and Peter once again jumped in with an answer. We find this in John's Gospel...

John 6:66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

John 6:67 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

John 6:68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

John 6:69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

How powerful is that? Peter gets it right! Jesus knows the Disciples are beginning to understand, but He warns them not to try and explain this to any one else at this time...

Mark 8:30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

They still had much to learn and they were not ready to take on the criticism and persecution they would face. Not yet! Later on Jesus will tell them plainly...

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. . . John 14:6

And then Jesus would tell them plainly...

John 15:20 Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

John 15:21 They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.

And then, as we will see in the coming weeks, Jesus would ultimately be put on trial for being who He was! And who was He? Theologically Speaking, remember, theology is what you think about God, Jesus was and is many things! He is...

The Son of God/The Son of Man/God Incarnate (God in the flesh)

The Messiah/The Christ/The Anointed One/The Savior

The Redeemer/The Suffering Servant/The King of Kings

The Lord of Lords/The Good Shepherd/The Lamb of God

Emmanuel, which means God with us!

But now comes the big question of the day! The question whose answer will have the greatest impact on your life here on earth and in eternity! Are you ready for the question? I believe Jesus is asking each of us this question today. Ready?

One of the Most Important Questions You've Ever Been Asked

Mark 8:29 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

You may acknowledge all the titles that have been given to Jesus in the Bible. You may have all the right theology, you may know all the church answers, the Sunday School answers, or you might just think He was a really good teacher, a good prophet, but who do you say Jesus is when it comes to your personal life? Is He even a part of your life or is He just a famous person in history whom you have never taken the time to get to know personally? I know I'm throwing a bunch of questions at you, but they are so important!

He is the Savior, but is He your Savior?

He is the Lord, but is He your Lord?

He is Good Shepherd, but is He your Good Shepherd?

He is the Redeemer, but have you allowed Him to redeem your life from sin, guilt, emptiness, and hopelessness?

He is a friend to the friendless and a Father to the Fatherless, but He will not force that friendship on anyone. He offers, He ask questions, but He's left it to us to answer the question. He's done all the work for your salvation, your redemption, your forgiveness, your everything, but it's up to you to allow Him to be all those things in your life! The Psalmist put this fact in a song. Listen...

Psa 68:4 Sing to God, sing praise to his name, extol him who rides on the clouds -- his name is the LORD-- and rejoice before him.

Psa 68:5 A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.

Psa 68:6 God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

Did you see that? God meets the needs of those who are willing to be led by Him. But those who choose to be rebellious and reject God's gracious offer are choosing to live in a sun-scorched land, which is symbolic of a life lived without the benefit of God's blessings. Again, God won't force anyone to accept His love! He sent His One and Only Son, Jesus, who wants to be your Savior, and oh so much more! What do you mean by so much more? Let me give you some possible answers to the question Jesus asked. Answers for you to ponder and then to decide whether or not you will allow these answers to become your personal answer to the question...

Mark 8:29 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Besides all of the theological and doctrinal answers, how about this one...

Jesus, You are my Inspiration!

I love the way He lived. He was a man who spoke with wisdom, wit, authority, power and at the same time love and compassion. Everyday was an adventure of ministry to others. We've talked about some of those adventures in this series of messages! Remember when Jesus was in the crowd of people being kind of

pushed here or there and then He asked, "Who touched my clothes?" Most were probably thinking, "Who hasn't, in this thick crowd?" It was a lady who had been struggling for years with a physical issue. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." This inspires me to never just look at a crowd as a crowd, but to know that there are hurting people in any crowd of people and I should always be willing to be touched by that hurt and that pain, and truly care and do something if I can!

And then there was the time in the boat with His disciples and He had fallen asleep. They wake Him and kind of rebuke Him by asking Him if He even cared that they were about to drown. He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. And Jesus didn't get mad at them and yell at them...

Mark 4:40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

And do you remember the question they asked each other?

Mark 4:41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

I just think it's ironic they were asking the same question Jesus has just asked them! "Who do you say that I am?"

How about this answer...

Jesus, You are my Example!

Do you remember some years ago there was a craze with bracelets WWJD, what would Jesus do? In the 1990's a youth group leader named Janie came up with the bracelet idea to help her youth group remember the concept. The concept can be traced all the way back to Thomas a Kempis in a book he wrote in the 1400's called "The Imitation of Christ." In 1891 Charles Spurgeon would use the concept in a sermon he preached, and then in 1896, Charles Sheldon's book "In His Steps" was subtitled "What Would Jesus Do!" Okay, I'm not saying go by bracelets, but I am saying "What Would Jesus Do?" is not a bad concept. I think one of the greatest answers to Jesus' very personal question of who do you say that I am, would be to say: "Jesus, You are my example when it comes to living life!" Remember this example we talked about at the beginning of this series of messages?

Mark 1:40 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

Mark 1:41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"

Mark 1:42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

Once again, the question comes to my mind, am I willing to be inconvenienced by the needs of others and am I willing to take the time to get involved. Like when you know someone at work is having a bad day, and yet you hesitate to say anything, because you know they just might open up and talk with you. Have you ever had this happen? You ask somebody how they are doing and then when they begin to tell you, you're thinking, wow, I didn't really want to know, I was just being nice! Jesus set the example for us when it comes to caring about others! He was always allowing people to interrupt His agenda, because people were His agenda! What a powerful example. There's yet another good answer to Jesus' question, "who do you say that I am!" How about...

Jesus, You are my Teacher!

He teaches about priorities! In Matthew's gospel we hear Jesus teach...

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

And isn't it amazing how Jesus taught about the importance of prayer?

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up! Jesus said, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." Jesus gave them and us a model prayer, but He went further than that! He would often go to a mountainside by himself to pray early in the morning. So He was teaching by example on the importance of prayer. He even gave us an example of the content of His prayer

towards the end of His ministry when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane for His disciples and for those who would believe because of their testimony. That would include you and me!!

He teaches about commitment when He said...

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Could you honestly answer Jesus’ question today, by saying that you’ve allowed Jesus to be your teacher in life? But there’s yet another way we could answer His question “Who do you say that I am?”

Jesus, You Are My Guide!

When you have a decision to make, do you pray about it? Do you ask God for guidance? Do you take the time to consult God’s Word to see if your decision falls within the parameters of God’s principles? It’s so vital that we recognize Jesus’ willingness to be our guide on this journey. But here’s the kicker on this one: you must be willing to relinquish control and allow Jesus to call the shots and when He does, you have to be obedient. Without those two things you can’t honestly answer the question with “Jesus, You are my guide!” And if you are worried you just won’t know what to do when the time comes, don’t worry trust Jesus to guide you by way of His Holy Spirit...

John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

John 16:14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

John 16:15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

And how about this answer to Jesus’ question of who do we say He is? How about...

Jesus, You are my best Friend!

Jesus made this awesome offer to His disciple...

John 15:4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

John 15:15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

There was an old hymn that really captures what it means to call Jesus friend!

What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged—Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful, Who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness; Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden, Cumbered with a load of care?

Precious Savior, still our refuge—Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer!

In His arms He’ll take and shield thee, Thou wilt find a solace there.

Blessed Savior, Thou hast promised Thou wilt all our burdens bear;

May we ever, Lord, be bringing All to Thee in earnest prayer.

Soon in glory bright, unclouded, There will be no need for prayer—

Rapture, praise, and endless worship Will be our sweet portion there.

Okay, one last answer to Jesus' question of "Who do you say that I am?" How about...

Jesus, You are my Hero!

Heb 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

He did that for you and me!! He died to save my life! He really is my hero! And we should never forget the words Jesus had for the very people who nailed Him to the cross as we remember that our sin also helped drive the nails...

"Father forgive them, they don't understand what they are doing!"

Wow, what a hero! What a Savior! What a redeemer! What a friend! What a Lord! What a teacher! What an example! What an inspiration! A man by the name of Maurice Roberts made this statement...

"We are not meant to live without spiritual exhilaration...The believer is in spiritual danger if he allows himself to go for any length of time without tasting the love of Christ...When Christ ceases to fill the heart with satisfaction, our souls will go in silent search of other lovers."

I don't ever want to be unfaithful to my Savior, and my Lord! I want to be reminded of Jesus' question every day and I want my answer to be a quick and passionate, "Why Jesus You are my inspiration, my example, my guide, my teacher, my best friend, my hero! You are my Christ!

Let's pray!