

THE GREAT CONFESSION OF PETER: WHO JESUS IS MARK 08:27–30

DIVISION OVERVIEW: Mark 08:27–9:50 *Jesus Christ, the Saviour, the Messiah*

Most men do not object to the idea of a Messiah, that is, a deliverer, saviour, provider and protector. Most men want a leader who is going to bring about a Utopian society that will provide social justice and plenty for everyone. What men want is a Messiah who fits into the wants and passions and power structures of their world. Men want their bellies full, their bodies clothed and housed, and their urges satisfied. They want the *good things* of this world. If a Messiah can give these, then men are ready and willing to accept the Messiah. Jesus deliberately set out to make sure that the disciples saw Him as God's Messiah and not man's Messiah. He had to make sure they understood God's way of salvation and Utopia, that God was after victory over death and a life that lasted eternally, not just for seventy or so years. God's Messiah and salvation was not man's way of power and pleasure; it was not leaving the future to take care of itself (See *Christ, Messiah*, Mt. 1:18; *Baptism of Jesus and John*, Mt. 3:11).

Introduction: Mark 08:27–30

Jesus was facing the end very, very soon, and there was still much to teach the disciples. It was time for them to learn that He was building a church – an assembly of people who would be confessing Him to be the Messiah. The present passage is one of the most dramatic revelations ever made. It is also one of the most demanding questions ever asked. The answer given determines one's eternal destiny and requires a single answer: "You are the Christ." The importance of the question and its confession is clearly seen by glancing quickly at the points of the passage.

- I. Jesus was in Caesarea Philippi (v. 27).
 - II. The confession of men: He is a great man (v. 28).
 - III. The confession of His disciples: He is the Christ (v. 29).
 - IV. The need: to learn about God's Messiah (v. 30).
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MATHEW 01:18 CHRIST (CHRISTOS)

The words Christ (*christos*) and Messiah are the same word. Messiah is the Hebrew word and Christ is the Greek word. Both words refer to the same person and mean the same thing: the Anointed One. The Messiah is the Anointed One of God. Mathew says Jesus “is called Christ” (Mt. 1:16); that is, He is recognized as the Anointed One of God, the Messiah Himself.

In the day of Jesus Christ, people feverishly panted for the coming of the long-promised Messiah. The weight of life was harsh, hard, and impoverishing. Under the Romans, the people felt that God could not wait much longer to fulfill His promise. Such longings for deliverance left the people gullible. Many arose who claimed to be the Messiah and led the trusting followers into rebellion against the Roman State. The insurrectionist Barabbas, who was set free in the place of Jesus at Jesus’ trial, is an example (Mk. 15:60f)

The Messiah was thought to be several things.

1. *Nationally*, He was to be the leader from David’s line who would free the Jewish state as an independent nation and lead it to be the greatest nation the world had ever known.
2. *Militarily*, He was to be a great military leader who would lead Jewish armies victoriously over all the world.
3. *Religiously*, He was to be a supernatural figure straight from God who would bring righteousness over all the earth.
4. *Personally*, He was to be the One who would bring peace to the whole world.

Jesus Christ accepted the title of Messiah on three different occasions (Mt. 16:17; Mk. 14:61; Jn. 4:26). The name “Jesus” shows Him to be man. The name “Christ” shows Him to be God’s Anointed One, God’s very own Son. *Christ* is Jesus’ official title. It identifies Him officially as *Prophet* (Deu. 18:15-19), *Priest* (Psa. 110:4), and *King* (2 Sam. 7:12-13). These three officials were always anointed with oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit who was to perfectly anoint the Christ, the Messiah (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn. 1:32-33). □

MATHEW 03:11 THE BAPTISM OF JESUS AND JOHN

*“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” **Mathew 3:11***

The word baptism (baptizein) means to dip, to immerse, to submerge, to place into. John’s baptism was with water, but Jesus’ baptism was “with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

1. John’s baptism was both a preparation and a symbol of the spiritual baptism that Jesus was to bring. John’s water baptism meant two things.
 - a. It symbolized cleansing from all sin. A person was being prepared for the cleansing that Christ would provide.
 - b. It symbolized separation or dedication. A person was setting his life apart to God in a renewed spirit of dedication. He was committing himself to the Christ about whom John was preaching.

Note: John’s baptism is called “the baptism of repentance”; that is, the person who repented was baptized. There could be no question; it was understood: if a person repented and actually turned to the Lord, he was baptized.

2. Jesus’ spiritual baptism was a double baptism. (Only one preposition is used in the Greek for “the Holy Spirit and with fire,” the preposition “in.”)
 - a. Jesus baptizes the person *in the Spirit*. He dips, immerses, and places the person in the Spirit. Whereas the person was carnal and materialistically minded, he now becomes spiritually minded (Rom. 8:5-7). The Jews had looked and longed for the day when the Spirit would come. The prophets had predicted His coming time and again. Therefore, the people knew exactly what John was predicting. The Spirit was expected to awaken and excite the people to such a degree that they would mobilize behind the Messiah, following Him in the overthrow of all oppressors. The Spirit was to lead the people in freeing Israel and establishing it as one of the greatest nations on earth (see Eze. 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29; Isa. 44:3; Joel 2:28).
 - b. Jesus baptizes the person *in fire*. Fire has several functions that graphically symbolize the work of Christ. It illuminates, warms, melts, burns, and utterly destroys. The difference between baptism with water and fire is the

difference between an outward work and an inward work. Water only cleanses the outside; fire purifies within, that is, the heart. Jesus Christ separates a person from his former life and purifies him within by the fire of His Spirit. It should be noted that in John's mind the "baptism of fire" meant that the Messiah was to destroy the enemies of Israel. It was "the messianic fire of judgment" that was to come from the throne of David. □

I. *Mark 08:27 Response to Jesus Christ*

Jesus left Bethsaida and travelled about the village of Caesarea Philippi (See *Caesarea Philippi*, Mk. 8:27). As He was travelling along some road between the towns, He asked the supreme question of life – the question that determines a man's eternal fate: "Who do people say that I am?"

II. *Mark 08:28 False Profession, a Denial of Jesus Christ*

The confession of men shortchanged Jesus. Most men saw Jesus only as a great man, a man who was highly esteemed and respected. He was considered one of the greatest of men, but note a crucial point: these *professions* were not only untrue, they were dangerous. They contained only half-truths, and people were deceived and misled by them.

1. Some said Jesus was John the Baptist. They professed Jesus to be a great spirit of righteousness, a spirit that was willing to be martyred for its faith. Herod and others thought this (Mt. 14:1-2). Upon hearing of Jesus' miraculous powers, marvellous works, Herod fancied that either John had been revived or else his spirit indwelt the man Jesus.

The common people also saw some similarity between John and Jesus: both were doing a great work for God; both were divinely chosen and gifted by God; and both proclaimed the Kingdom of God and prepared men for it. Therefore, when some looked at Jesus and His ministry, they thought Jesus was not the Messiah Himself, but the promised forerunner of the Messiah (Mal. 4:5).

2. Some said Jesus was Elijah. They professed Jesus to be the greatest prophet and teacher of all time, for Elijah was so considered. Elijah was predicted to be the forerunner of the coming Messiah (Mal. 4:5). Even today the Jews expect Elijah to return before the Messiah. In the celebration of the Passover, they always leave a chair vacant for him to occupy. Elijah had also been used by God to miraculously feed a widow woman and her son (1 Kng. 17:14); therefore, the people connected Elijah's miracle and Jesus' feeding of the multitude.

3. Some said Jesus was one of the prophets. They professed Jesus to be a great prophet sent for their day and time. He was thought to be one of the great prophets brought back to life or one in whom the spirit of a great prophet dwelt (see Deu. 18:15, 18).

Thought 1. The same false confessions about Christ exist in every generation.

- 1) He was only a great man of righteousness who was martyred for His great faith. As such, He leaves us a great example of how to live and stand up for what we believe.
- 2) He was one of the greatest teachers and prophets of all time.
- 3) He was only a great man who revealed some very important things to us about God and religion. As such, He can make a significant contribution to every man in his search for God.
- 4) He was only a great man, a prophet sent to the people (Jews) of His day from whom we can learn by studying His life.

Mark 6:3 *“Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.*

John 1:10-11 *He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*

John 8:19 *Then they asked him, “Where is your father?” “You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”*

III. Mark 08:29 Names and Titles of Jesus Christ

The confession of the disciples was that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. Note three facts that are stressed.

1. The word *asked* (eperotao) means to ask, to question. It is in the imperfect tense which means that Jesus kept on asking them. The question, “Who do you say ye that I am?” was extremely critical. The answer required concentrated thought and correct belief and genuine confession.
2. The question asked is emphatic in the Greek: “But you, who do you say that I am?” The answer to the question is critical; it is all important. It determines a person’s destiny, his eternal destiny.

3. The answer given was immediate and terse: “You are the Christ,” that is, the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God. (Remember Mark was Peter’s disciple, and what Mark is writing shows the humility of Peter. He usually de-emphasizes the facts surrounding Peter.) Mathew’s gospel gives the full confession (Mt. 16:16).

Peter’s confession was a personal trust in Christ.

1. Jesus asked a second critical question, and He asked this question much more emphatically in the Greek: “But you, who do you say that I am?” The answer to this question is critical; it is all-important. It determines a person’s eternal destiny.
2. The true confession declares one’s personal trust in Christ. Note Peter’s words, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” – a simple and yet momentous confession arising from a personal conviction. It is the confession that saves the soul and the confession that lays the foundation for the church. The very life and survival of a man’s soul and of the church as a whole rests upon this simple, yet profound conviction.

=> The *Christ*: the Messiah, the anointed One of God.

=> The *Son of God*: of the same being, the same substance; One with the Father (Phil. 2:6).

=> The *Son of the Living God*: the source and being of life; possessing the source, energy, and power of life within Himself (See Jn. 5:26; 1 Th. 1:9.)

Peter probably did not understand all that was involved in Christ’s being the Son of God (the cross and resurrection had not yet taken place). But his confession was made in simple trust arising from a heart that was truly convicted that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. It is simple trust which God desires and longs for – nothing more and nothing less. Peter was simply confessing step by step, “I believe you are...”

- the true Messiah,
- not a mere man,
- but the Son of God,
- sent by God,
- to fulfill all that the prophets foretold.

Thought 1. The question is personal. It is directed to every man: “Who do you say that I am?” Every man has to answer, and his eternal destiny depends upon his answer. But his answer is critical, for it is not a confession *about* Christ that Christ is after. He is after a belief, a confession in His deity, a trusting of His saving grace.

Mat 10:32-33 “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.”

Mark 8:38 “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.”

Luke 12:8 “I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God.

Rom 10:9-10 That 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. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

John 1:41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).

John 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

John 1:49 Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”

John 4:29 “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”

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

John 11:27 “Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”

John 20:28 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

Acts 8:36-37 As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?”

IV. Mark 08:30 Learning about God’s Messiah

The disciples had a great need to learn about *God’s Messiah*. Note: Jesus instructed the disciples not to share their confession with anyone else – not now. Why? Because they were just beginning to learn what God’s idea of the Messiah really

meant. They had to know the truth and be accurate in their preaching of the truth before they began to share. They could do irreparable harm by spreading a false concept of the Messiah. Jesus had to protect them against this error.

Thought 1. Confession is just the beginning of our spiritual journey. There is much to study and learn about Christ after coming to know Him personally. Note two things.

- 1) We must be accurate in what we study. We must make sure we learn the truth and not error (Mk. 8:15).
- 2) We must be accurate in what we share, making certain that we share the truth. This necessitates time to study and grow before we begin sharing.

1 Pet 2:2-3 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. (see Acts 20:32; 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:18)

Acts 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. ■