

PETER'S CONFESSION OF CHRIST

Mark 8:22-38

Key Verse: 8:29

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

Beautiful Galilee! Powerful words of Jesus! Footsteps of Jesus! Through his Galilean ministry, Jesus revealed that he is the Son of God and the Savior of the world by preaching the good news of the kingdom of God and healing the sick. In the course of following him, the disciples learned that Jesus was God himself. Among the disciples, Peter made the confession of faith, "You are the Christ." We must learn the importance of the confession of faith. After this, Jesus taught them why he is the Messiah of the world and what the work of the Messiah is. Jesus also teaches them the way of the cross. This passage starts with Jesus healing a blind man.

I. Jesus opens the eyes of a blind man (22-26)

In this part, we learn that Jesus can open a blind man's eyes because he is God Almighty. Psalm 146:8 says, "The Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous." When Jesus and his disciples came to Bethsaida some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to open his eyes (22). In Hebrew thought, a blind man was known as cursed by God. In history, no one has opened the eyes of a blind man. When the people of Bethsaida brought a blind man to Jesus, people were asking what was literally impossible to do. What did Jesus do for him? Jesus took the blind man by the hand, as a father takes a beloved son's hand, and led him outside the open village in order to show him a beautiful sight of nature after opening his eyes. Jesus spit in the man's eyes and put his hands on him. Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" The blind man said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around" (23-24). That was what Jesus could do best for him. But Jesus did not leave him legally blind. Again Jesus put his hands on him and asked God's mercy. Then his eyes were opened and he could see everything clearly (25).

II. Who Jesus is (27-30)

First, people's general view of Jesus (27-28). Jesus and his disciples traveled through the villages of Caesarea Philippi. On the way, Jesus asked them, "Who do people say I am?" (27). They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets" (28). It was people's general view of Jesus. The prophets were historically known to his people as the holy men of God and messengers of God's word. Among them, Elijah and John the Baptist were most prominent because they had the most powerful Spirit of God in them. Each of them lived in a most difficult time, but they did not yield to the power of evil of the times. Rather, they overcame the world with God's Spirit and delivered God's word to their people. People saw Jesus' poor human situation in many ways--he had no place to stay (Lk 9:58), he could not afford regular meals for his disciples, he was rejected and despised by ungodly people. But people saw the living God in Jesus because he was filled with the mighty Spirit of God. On the other hand, the Pharisees wanted to get people's recognition with their scrupulous knowledge of the law, their bushy beards and long robes. But ordinary people saw them as ignoble hypocrites.

Second, Jesus is the Christ (29-30). After this, Jesus asked his disciples a question. Look at verse 29. "But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Peter answered, 'You are the Christ.'" Usually Peter answered incorrectly. But this time Peter answered very correctly. We call this "Peter's confession." Peter's confession is that Jesus is the Christ.

What does "Christ" mean? "Christ" means "the Anointed One," or "king." In ancient times, only kings or prophets were anointed at the time of their inauguration. Jesus was anointed by God. Therefore he is God's King. God's King is King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16). It is because worldly kings are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field (1Pe 1:24). All kings of the world have tried to live forever in this world. Yet all of them died. But Jesus is the Christ: he is God's King who rules the world forever and ever. Therefore Jesus is the Christ, King of kings, Lord of lords. Jesus is the author of human life. Without him nothing was made that has been made (Jn 1:3-4). Jesus is our Creator and he is our King.

Third, Jesus became the Christ through his resurrection. Jesus became God's anointed King because he came down to this world to obey God's will for world salvation. When Jesus came to the world he gave up the power and glory and honor of the kingdom of God and took a human form. In order to become our eternal and spiritual King, Jesus humbled himself. In order to become our Savior King Jesus died as a ransom sacrifice for our sins. Revelation 5:12 says, "In a loud voice they sang: 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!'"

Most importantly, Jesus became the Christ through his resurrection. Because of Adam's disobedience mankind has been under the power of sin and death. But he rose again on the third day and through his resurrection destroyed the power of sin and death. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords because he destroyed sin and death, the worst enemies of mankind, through his glorious resurrection.

Fourth, the importance of confession. What happens when we make the confession of faith? Romans 10:10 says, "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." When we confess that Jesus is the Christ we are justified. It means that we are unforgiveable sinners but God justifies us as his precious children through Jesus Christ. And at the same time he takes away the guilty consciences from our hearts. When we confess that Jesus is the Christ, God takes away all our burden of sin, the torment of the devil, and the power of sin and death. In addition, God gives us eternal life together with the joy of life. When Peter made this confession of faith, God could build his church and pass on to his people the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 16:17-19).

Peter's confession, "You are the Christ," was a confession of love. In the past, Peter loved the world and his family. So he worked hard as a fisherman. But since Jesus came into his heart, he gave his heart to Jesus. When Peter said, "You are the Christ," it meant, "You are my God and my King, to whom I give my love, loyalty, faithfulness and obedience." John urges us in 1 John 2:15, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

III. What Jesus did (31-33)

In verses 31-33, Jesus taught his disciples what he would do to become the Messiah. Worldly people rise to power by defeating, crushing and annihilating all their political rivals and opponents. But Jesus is different. Jesus became the Messiah by receiving false accusations, rejections, sufferings and death on the cross. Look at 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." This is the first time that Jesus taught his suffering, death and resurrection.

Why did Jesus have to go through much rejection, suffering, and finally death on the cross? He suffered and died because of our sins. Isaiah prophesied about the suffering servant, Jesus. "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 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" (Isa 53:4,5). This was the will of God. This was the way Jesus became the Messiah. Our Messiah is not a political king; he is the Savior King. He is the spiritual King. He lost his life because of our sins. But he won us over to God. In this way, he became the Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Most importantly, Jesus became the Christ through his resurrection. 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." Especially, look at the last part of this verse: "...after three days rise again." Evil men killed Jesus. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death (Ac 2:24), and made him Christ the Lord. Through his resurrection, he destroyed the power of sin and death. The remaining power of death hovering over the world is nothing but a vestige of wounded Satan. Through his resurrection Jesus gave us a living hope in the kingdom of God.

Why Jesus is the Christ and how he became the Christ is not easy to understand. So 9:31b says, "He said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.'" 10:33,34 reads, "'We are going up to Jerusalem,' he said, 'and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.'"

What was Peter's response to Jesus' teaching about the work of the Messiah? He did not know that Jesus is the spiritual King. His concept of the Messiah was still political. When Peter heard Jesus' words, he took him aside and began to rebuke him. Jesus also rebuked him. Look at verse 33b. "'Get behind me, Satan!' he said. 'You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.'"

IV. Basic principles for the Christian life (34-38)

First, "he must deny himself" (34). Deny oneself! What nonsense even to think about, living in the "I, my, me," generation. However, in order to follow Jesus, we must not drift down the current of the world like dead fish, but swim against the current like living fish. First and last of all, we must deny our giant ego. To deny one's giant ego is not an easy thing to do. It is the most fierce spiritual battle. To deny one's giant ego is like dying on the cross. Galatians 5:24 says, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires." To deny ourselves means to deny our sinful desires and accept the Holy God in our hearts (Gal 2:20).

To deny oneself also means that we must respect God's word more than our own ideas. Generally, people respect God's word, but when they have to practice the word they do not obey the word but they act according to their own ideas. One young man really wants to be a great servant of God. But he doesn't come to church on Sunday. He goes somewhere he can enjoy his sinful pleasure. He does so because he does not know what it means to deny oneself. Still, he wants to be a great servant of God, greater than George Whitefield, the leader of the First Great Awakening.

Yet he is not becoming a great servant of God, but a man in Sesame Street. We see there are only several Christians who deny themselves and accept the word of God 100%. Without denying one's stubborn idea no one can honor God's word absolutely. For example, Jesus said that God is love (1Jn 4:16). But in 1970 there was a terrible typhoon in Bangladesh, in which a million people died. Some drowned. Others were blown by the wind and hung on trees and died tragically. After this tragic event, one student came and asked, "Do you believe that God is love?" He was asking this question because of his doubt about God's love after hearing of the tragic event in Bangladesh. His shepherd answered, "Yes, God loves the world because he says so." We must deny our common sense and believe God's word of promise.

Second, "take up his cross" (34). Here, one's cross is God's mission. God blessed mankind by giving men a mission. When man lives with God's mission, he has the meaning of his existence and he is happy. But when man lives a selfish and easygoing life he is gradually over-burdened by the cross of ego. The cross of ego is the heavy burden of sin. But when we believe in Jesus, we no more work only for bread, but to fulfill God's mission assigned to each of us in our generation. One's mission is one's meaning of life, and the source of happiness.

Third, "if anyone is ashamed of me" (35-38). Jesus continued to speak. Read verses 35-38. Man's true happiness comes when he overcomes his selfishness and lives before the presence of God. To the person who loses his life for Jesus' sake and for the sake of the gospel, Jesus gives eternal life. When Jesus comes in the glory of the Father, he will bless those who have denied themselves and taken up their crosses and followed him. On the other hand, he will be ashamed of those who were ashamed of him before the adulterous and perverse generation. Look at verse 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." May God help us not to be ashamed of our Lord Jesus Christ in this adulterous generation.

Like Peter, may God help us to come to Jesus and learn of him until we come to confess that Jesus is the Christ, the King of kings and Lord of

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lords. We must learn how to deny ourselves and take up our own cross and follow him. Then Jesus will give us joy.