

The Gospel of Mark

Part 28


The Most Important Question Anyone Can Ask

TALKING POINTS WALKING POINTS

Leaders' Guide

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A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- 1 What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- 2 Read Mark 8:27-29. What were the three answers people gave regarding Jesus' identity (v. 28)?
- 3 The Bible teaches that our sin incurs God's wrath, and his wrath must be resolved if we are to be saved. What could Jesus have done for us if he were only John the Baptist, returning from the dead?
...were only Elijah? ...were only one of the prophets?
- 4 **Why** can neither John the Baptist, nor Elijah, nor a prophet resolve God's wrath against our sin?
Muslims consider Muhammad to have been a prophet—can **he** resolve God's wrath against sin?
- 5 Mormons consider Joseph Smith to have been a prophet—can **he** resolve God's wrath against sin?
Buddhists consider Buddha to be *less than* a prophet—can **he** resolve God's wrath against sin?
- 6 In what ways is Jesus superior to **all** other religious leaders?
- 7 Read Mark 8:30-38. Which of the things mentioned in v. 31 also happened to other religious leaders?
- 8 We laugh at the incongruity of Peter's statement in v. 29 and his action in v. 32—but have you ever questioned God's wisdom or resisted his will for you? Tell us about it.
- 9 From what you know about the end of Peter's life, how did he do with Jesus' teachings in v. 34-38?
- 10 How do you think you're presently doing with Jesus' teachings in v. 34-38?
- 11 Tell us about a time when you denied yourself, took up your cross and followed Jesus.
- 12 Tell about a time when you, metaphorically, lost your life for Jesus' sake and the gospel's.
- 13 What changes do you think you must make **now** in order to avoid all shame in **eternity** (v. 38)?

- 1 Standard “starter question”—you know what to do.
- 2 John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets (returning from the dead).
- 3
 - If he were John the Baptist (returning from the dead), he could have pointed to the Messiah, for John was the forerunner who announced the coming Messiah.
 - If he were Elijah (returning from the dead), he could have made prophecies regarding the Messiah (and done some miracles to authenticate his prophecies).
 - If he were an old testament prophet (returning from the dead), Messiah, again, he could have made prophecies regarding the Messiah (although he likely could **not** have any miracles, as few of the OT prophets also did miracles. Elijah and Elisha were exceptional.)
- 4 Because they, like we (and all humanity), are sinners. The Savior had to be sinless.
- 5 **Note:** Handle these individuals **one at a time**. Bue the answer for each is the **same**: **None** of them can resolve God’s wrath, because they (like us) are merely sinful human beings. They can only pay for **their own** sins, eternally in hell. This is the plight of every sinner.
- 6 Only Jesus, the sinless God-man, can pay the penalty for **other people’s** sins (because he has none of his own).
- 7 **Many religious leaders** have [1] suffered many things, [2] been rejected, and [3] been killed. **Only Jesus** has [4] risen from the dead. **This** is why “there is salvation in **no one else**” (Acts 4:12).
- 8 Be prepared with your own answer to this question—but first give others time to think and answer.
- 9 He was bold, and suffered for the gospel (see 1 Peter). Tradition tells us he was crucified upside-down.
- 10 Be prepared with your own answer to this question—but first give others time to think and answer.
- 11 ditto
- 12 ditto
- 13 ditto

Sermon Summary Key Text: Mark 8:27-38

Chapters 1-8 of Mark's Gospel revolve around the question, "Who is this man Jesus?" Towards the end of chapter 8, the disciples begin to get it (8:27-29). He first asked them who others thought he was—and all of their answers were wrong. But Jesus really wanted to know who his disciples thought him to be. Peter answered for them all—and he nailed it (v. 29)! Peter's confession was bold and uncompromising, just as ours should be. Peter's profession reflected both his growing apprehension of Jesus' true identity, as well as his growing leadership role among the disciples. (Up until this point in Mark's gospel, only demons had recognized Jesus correctly!) If the disciples, and we, are to fulfill our God-given role in the Kingdom, we must understand Jesus' true identity and purpose.

To declare Jesus to be "the Christ" (ie, the Anointed One), is to recognize him as the prophesied divine Davidic king who delivers Israel from her enemies and establishes a worldwide kingdom (Psalm 110:1; Daniel 9:25–26). Jesus accepted the title, "Messiah", when others applied it to him (cf. 14:61–62; John 4:25–26), but rarely described himself that way (cf. 9:41; 12:35; 13:21) because of its political connotations. When Peter says, "You are the Christ," he's saying, "You are the King of all kings! You are the true King who's going to put everything right." Jesus' favorite term for describing himself was "the Son of Man"—which is a reference to a divine, heavenly messianic figure who comes with his heavenly hosts to put everything right (Daniel 7:13-14).

Jesus accepted the title of "Messiah"—but then immediately said something absolutely shocking: "Yes," he said, "I'm the King. But I'm not anything like the king you were expecting." He was headed to a cross (v. 31) and so must we, his followers (v. 34). To my knowledge, never before had anyone connected suffering with the Messiah. Yes, Isaiah 43-44 & 53 prophesy of a mysterious Suffering Servant of the Lord. But no one before Jesus had ever tied Daniel 7 and these suffering servant texts from Isaiah together and linked their identity to the coming Messiah. That seemed impossible—and so Peter rebuked Jesus (v. 32)! The disciples were unprepared for a Messiah who would suffer and die. How can a Messiah defeat evil and injustice if he is dead? Peter understood Jesus' words—he just refused to accept them! He could not reconcile this view of the Messiah with the popular one he had grown up with. In spite of their devotion to Jesus, the disciples were still ignorant of the relationship between the cross and the crown—between human suffering and kingdom ruling. Without realizing it, they were following Satan (glory without suffering), rather than God (suffering transformed into glory). Jesus would defeat evil and injustice, not by sitting on a throne, but by dying on a cross. The cross is the opposite of a throne. Jesus would defeat evil and make everything right not by taking power, but by losing it.

1. Jesus' death demonstrated his love. If ever you doubt God's love, look to the cross. See Jesus hanging there bearing the guilt of your sins. If he never did anything else for you, this alone is sufficient to prove his love (John 3:16 & 15:13; Ephesians 5:2; Galatians 2:20).

2. Jesus' death absorbed God's wrath. Our sin rightly arouses the anger of a holy God. There is a holy curse hanging over our sin. Not to punish sin would be unjust, and God is never, ever unjust (Galatians 3:13; 1 John 4:10).

3. Jesus' death cancelled the demands of God's Law. God requires of us that we love him supremely, with all our being, and that we love our neighbor as we love ourselves. To neglect either of these—even just once—makes us Law-breakers (James 2:10). Through the cross Jesus cancelled the Law's demands against us (Colossians 2:13-14).

4. Jesus' death gives us a clear conscience. The problem of a guilty conscience goes all the way back to Adam and Eve (Hebrews 9:14). Now, when Satan accuses, we rest on what Jesus did on the cross. Believers now have the very righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

5. Jesus' death frees us from slavery to sin. Justification (instantaneous deliverance from sin's penalty) declares us "not guilty". It precedes and enables sanctification (progressive growth in Christlikeness). We truly are set free from slavery to sin.

6. Jesus' death creates in us passion for good works (Titus 2:14). Good works are the effect, not the cause, of our acceptance by God (Ephesians 2:8-10).

7. Jesus' death secures our future resurrection. We don't just cease to exist at death; we will see our loved ones who have died in faith (1 Corinthians 15:51-58). For the Christian, death is not the end, it is the beginning of a brand new life!

But Jesus warned that if we follow him, a cross awaits us too (v. 34). Denying self, taking up a cross, and following Jesus involves three things: a new identity, a new agenda, and a new hope (v. 35-38). We must deny our "life" (Greek: psyche)—our identity, personality and self-hood. Our personal identity is not to be built on temporal status or acquisitions. Our new agenda is gospel-centered ministry and our new hope is the glory of Christ's return.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see below) *is useful for studying any topic. Let's use it to explore the importance of getting Christ's identity right...*

Monday— Read John 1:1-5.

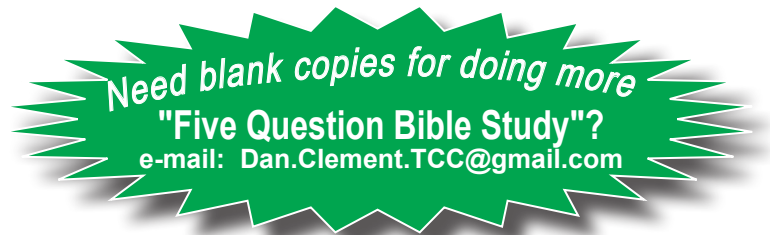
Tuesday— Read John 1:14-18.

Wednesday— Read Hebrews 1:1-3.

Thursday— Read John 1:29-34.

Friday— Read John 8:53-59.

Saturday— Read John 10:24-33.



Five Question Bible Study

Bible Text: _____ Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]