



The Way of the Cross

Mark 8:27–38

Day 1: To What Does It All Point?

The disciples have seen Jesus manifest His authority over nature (stilling the storm, multiplying the loaves), physical affliction (healing), and spiritual forces (driving out demons, forgiving sin); they have seen the signs, but do they understand the greater truth or revelation to which these point? Jesus takes His followers to a site in far northern Israel, a place rife with pagan gods, and asks them a defining question. Read Mark 8:27–38; note that 'Son of Man' has Messianic connotations and is a title Jesus uses for Himself throughout the Gospels (see *Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 24:30; 26:64*). Pray the Spirit will open your heart and mind to see Jesus more clearly.

Day 2: An Easy Question, then a Very Personal One

Jesus knows the cross lies ahead, and the disciples have much which they must yet learn/understand, so Jesus withdraws with them to Caesarea Philippi, where He begins to question them about his identity. Read Mark 8:27–38. First Jesus asks an unthreatening, impersonal question; why? Then Jesus asks a question that demands a verdict; what is it? Ponder Peter's answer. Talk to Jesus about how you would respond.

Day 3: What Does This Mean?

Peter answers Jesus' question about His identity with the bold, faith-filled proclamation, "You are the Messiah" (*Mark 8:29*). Christ is the Greek form of the Hebrew Messiah; Messiah means Anointed One. In Jesus' day, the Jews were awaiting the Messiah, the promised king from the line of David, who would be anointed and empowered by God to redeem/rescue His people and establish God's kingdom on earth. Consider what Messiah means as you read John 1:14,18,32-34; 3:14-18; 4:25-26; 11:4; 17:1-5; 20:30-31; and Hebrews 1:1-3. Pray Ephesians 1:17.

Day 4: Expectations!

Why do you suppose Jesus gave the men the warning He did in Mark 8:30? Consider the expectations that probably arose in the hearts of the disciples when Jesus affirmed Peter's bold proclamation (*Mark 8:29*). Peter understood that Jesus was the promised Messiah, but did he and the others really grasp Jesus' purpose and mission (see *Matthew 16:20-23; John 14:25-26; Acts 1:6-8*)? The transfiguration, with its glimpses of Jesus' glory, was just days away, but the cross also lay ahead. The disciples didn't yet understand that the glorious Messiah king was also the Suffering Servant (*Isaiah 9:6-7; 53:1-12*). Read Luke 24:13-32 and pray for the Spirit's illumination.

Day 5: Who Is Jesus to You?

Read Mark 8:27–38 again and try to imagine yourself standing with the disciples at this scene in Caesarea Philippi. All becomes quiet as Jesus asks a question that the disciples, and each of us, must answer personally. Remember that the area was rife with false gods and people who did not believe in the God of the Hebrew Scriptures, who did not await the Messiah. How would the disciples answer Jesus' question? How do we? How do you? How important is our/your answer

(see John 3:16-18; 11:25-27; 14:6; 17:1-5, 17; 18:33-38a; 20:31)? Do you believe that Jesus speaks truth and is truth? Be honest with Jesus; share your heart with Him. He loves you!

Day 6: What Does This Mean in Your Life?

Ponder Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 2:30-32; 19:10; John 3:16; 13:34-35; 17:18; Acts 1:8; and 1 John 3:23. If we truly believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, how must we respond to Him, to the world that He loves, and to people for whom He died? We are recipients of God's redeeming love; we have life in Jesus' name, and we are to share these with our words and with our lives. Pray about sharing the gift of Jesus.

Day 7: "Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord"

Read Mark 8:27-38; 1 Corinthians 2:9; 13:12; and Revelation 1:12-18; 11:15. Let Paul Baloche's lyrics form your prayer: "Open the eyes of my heart, Lord; open the eyes of my heart; I want to see You; I want to see You: To see You high and lifted up, shining in the light of Your glory; pour out Your power and love as we sing, 'holy, holy, holy'...I want to see You" (*1997 Integrity's Hosanna"! Music*). Sit in silence and reflect on who Jesus is. He deserves our hearts, our lives, our everything! Tell Him how much you love Him and how you long to see Him.