

“Peter’s Confession and Jesus’ Revelation”

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*“The Christ, The Son Of The Living God Must Die If His People Would Live
And This Is The Plan Of God For The Redemption Of Man”*

Read Mark 8:27-9:1; 9:30-32



The events surrounding Caesarea Philippi are pivotal. They form a theological watershed for the Gospel accounts. From this point forward, Jesus begins speaking openly of His impending death, burial, and resurrection. Situated 25 miles north of Bethsaida and at the base of Mt. Hermon (i.e., the Mt. of Transfiguration), Caesarea Philippi is the location of one of the largest springs feeding the Jordan River.

The dialogue that ensues between Jesus and His disciples is most revealing and forms a fundamental moment in His ministry. For close to three years, large crowds saw what He did and heard what He spoke. There was a strong element of anticipation and hope present. Many were looking for and found in Him the One promised and pictured. Yet despite all of this, many still identified Him as a resurrected John the Baptist, or a reincarnate Elijah or, at the least, one of the prophets. Each thought spoke of a belief that God was on the move. They knew that before the Messiah would come, the forerunner and both John and Elijah were placed into that mold. As flattering as all this might appear to be, neither were adequate nor sufficient to fully capture who He is in His person and work. The only correct answer is the one provided for us by Peter. His response reflects the prevailing thinking of the other eleven. Again, Jesus warns them not to make known the idea publicly (Mark 1:44; 3:12; 5:43; 8:26; 7:36; 9:9).

From this point onward Jesus begins to openly speak of His death, burial, and resurrection. Why now and why here? Peter, as unofficial spokesman for the group, finds this thought repulsive. It went completely contrary to his theological presuppositions. He, they, fully expected the Messiah to bring deliverance from all that oppressed. Whoever this deliverer might be and whatever this might look like, it did not include the idea of death and burial. We find fault with Peter’s brashness, but none can fault his sincerity. And even though we speak of Peter, there can be little doubt that his thoughts reflect that of the larger group.

Jesus plainly speaks of how what He spoke is the mind of God and not that of men. What Jesus said is “the Word of the Cross” and such thinking is a “stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:23).” Yet the real “fatal blow” comes to His disciples when He, in essence, says to them, “not only must I go the way of the cross, but you must also if you would be saved.” No one can follow me who does not come the way of the cross. There is no other way for humanity to be saved unless they come the way of the cross. A cross-less Christianity is a Christ-less Christianity. And a Christ-less Christianity is no Christianity at all.

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What Jesus speaks of in His death, burial, and resurrection is the gospel. He is the gospel. There is no good news that does not flow from, through, and to Jesus.

Everything up to this moment in Mark's account points to Him as the fulfillment of God's promise. God determined before fashioning the world and placing within it personable beings that He would send His Son to be the Savior of the world. He wrote this moment into His story. Jesus did not die simply because men refused to accept Him, or because the religious establishment sought His demise or because He posed a threat to the political machinery of His day. Jesus died because God the Father in compliance with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit determined that through this means He would receive glory by the delivering of His people from their sins.

Yet this moment, in the story, marks a "shift from Galilee, where most of Jesus' public ministry reported by Mark took place, to Jerusalem and the closing days of Jesus' life on earth. In this section Jesus defines the true meaning of 'Christ' as the title applies to Him".¹

The die was cast before the foundation of the world, but now it would be fully played out in time (1 Pet. 1:19, 20; Rev. 13:8). The story was written and is now read. May we, like God, place this event as the centerpiece of our thinking and our living.

¹ (*The NIV Study Bible* on Mark 8:31-10:52)

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