

Jesus Teaches His Disciples

Lesson Text: Mark 8:27–38

The term “Christian,” today, is loosely and inaccurately used. It is a word frequently applied to any person or group that simply professes a belief in the person of Christ and acknowledges Him as the Savior. The appellation or title “Christian” is even applied to all people, irrespective of their religious convictions, who are simply born and reared in a “Christian” culture. These usages are far from adequate when we consider the original meaning of the term “Christian,” which describes one who actually follows the life and teachings of Christ in detail. Even a cursory examination of our ostensibly Christian culture in general and the many purportedly Christian groups in particular brings out little dependence on the teachings of Jesus Christ, and even less resemblance to His actual life. The ministry of Jesus was a matter of death and then life for Him. He taught that serving others is of utmost importance.

The People Answer

Read Mark 8:27,28—Caesarea Philippi was a pagan and evil city which worshiped the Greek gods. It was located 30 to 40 miles north of Capernaum. While Capernaum was by the Sea of Galilee and 680 feet below sea level, Caesarea Philippi was in the foot hills of Mount Hermon about 1,150 feet above sea level. At the time of Jesus’ birth, Herod the Great ordered that all male babies in Bethlehem be killed. After the death of Herod, his son Philip was made “tetrarch” over the territory which was named Caesarea (to honor the emperor, Caesar) Philippi (to distinguish it from the Caesarea on the western coast). The twelve disciples began their training before Passover (John 6:4), and it contin-

ued to the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2). Luke 9:18 says that Jesus was alone with His disciples when He asked the question, “Who do you say that I am?” The three answers given were all wrong. This may have been Jesus’ way of emphasizing that Jesus’ mission here on earth was still not clear to those who followed Him.

The Disciples Answer

Read Mark 8:29—Jesus did not care about what the popular opinion was as to His identity. The main point for Him was this: Who did the disciples believe Him to be? Jesus wanted to be sure that they were really clear about who He was. Jesus was speaking to the whole group when He asked this question, but He not only wanted an answer as a group, but also as individuals. Here Jesus is teaching the disciples—and us today—that it is not enough to know what others believe and think about Christ, but more importantly that you understand, accept, and believe that He is the Messiah.

Read Mark 8:30—Why was it important to Jesus that the disciples tell no one what He was about to tell them? Could it be that Jesus, the Messiah, had a broader message than what people’s thoughts and ideas of the Messiah would be? There were some who believed that the Messiah would free the Jews from Roman rule. Jesus had much to teach the disciples about who He was and the work that would be completed through His death and resurrection.

Jesus Begins to Teach

Read Mark 8:31—Jesus begins to teach His unique role of life through death. There are four things Jesus declared to the disciples. They are: (1) “that the Son of man must suf-

fer many things" (read Isaiah 54:4,11), (2) "be rejected of the elders, of the chief priests and scribes," (3) "be killed," and (4) "after three days rise again."

Read Mark 8:32-33—Jesus spoke boldly. He did not use a parable. He spoke plainly so that all the disciples would understand the need for Him to die and be resurrected. While Peter took Jesus aside privately, Jesus rebuked Peter openly. This was not an attack on Peter but merely a reprimand for him and the disciples. Peter was not seeing the plan of God and Jesus' purpose. Peter wanted to receive the glory of walking beside the King, but did not want to suffer the persecution. Peter knew the prophesies of Isaiah 53 which tell of the suffering and rejection of the Servant that ultimately leads to exaltation and glory. Do you remember the story about when Satan tried to tempt Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11)? Satan tried to get Jesus to use His powers to achieve His purpose. Jesus did not succumb to the enticement. When Peter spoke, Jesus saw it for what it was—the sting of enticement. Peter's mind was not on the ways of God, but on the values of men.

Life is for All

Read Mark 8:34—"Whosoever (not just the twelve disciples) will come after Me" Jesus then gives two requirements if you decide to follow Him. (1) "Let him deny himself." This does not mean to die a martyr or deny "things." It does mean that you must deny your own selfish interests. Turn away from idol worship and self-centeredness. Your life is not to be dictated by your own self interest. (2) "Take up his cross." Taking up your cross does not mean to literally go out and get a cross to carry. It does mean to do God's will. You are to show submission publicly by obeying God. Jesus then said, "Follow Me." Just say *no* to your desires and *yes* to God every day of your life. Christianity revolves around clear, demonstrable actions which reveal the intents and beliefs of a person trying to live as Jesus lives. Mere belief in a name or title in and by itself, as James points out, is valueless: "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder" (James 2:19).

Read Mark 8:35—Jesus used a little word game here. If you decide to be a self-centered person, your life on earth and your eternal life will be in ruin. But, if you deny yourself (we remember what denying means) and decide to be loyal to Jesus and

the gospel, your life will be preserved forever. You will be an heir to eternal life forever with God (Romans 8:16,17). Christianity is a way of life. It is more than just believing. It is the attitude of mind which leads an individual to follow God's directives for social conduct and for personal behavior. Indeed, before the name "Christian" took over as common terminology, it was their way of life that set Christians apart as different (Acts 9:1-2; 19:9; 24:14).

Jesus Teaches the Supreme Value of Eternal Life

Read Mark 8:36-37—What is Jesus asking? He is asking this: What does it benefit a person to have all the material wealth and pleasures in this life if he has to lose eternal life to get them? In the end, a person can give nothing that they have gained in the world back to God in order to receive eternal life. As an example, for a bowl of stew, Esau lost his birthright (Genesis 25:29-34). When Esau sought his birthright with tears, he was rejected (Hebrews 12:16,17). Judas Iscariot as well found it impossible to buy back what he sold when he betrayed Jesus (Matthew 27:3-5).

Read Mark 8:38—Jesus is giving us a choice. If in this life you are ashamed of Jesus, you are rejecting Him. If you reject Him now, at His Second Coming He will reject you. The sacrifices of Jesus Christ are clearly the focal point of the salvation process. He was "put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). We "were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Romans 5:10) and are thereby justified through faith in that reality (Romans 5:1). Yet salvation must go beyond justifying the past; it must continue into the future throughout one's life. The true Christian is admonished to "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

Following Jesus' example, having God and His plan primary in one's life in no way denigrates the physical cares and requirements of normal living. Quite the contrary, a Christian should address himself to these things with new understanding of their place in his goal of following God's way in this present physical life, as he strives toward gaining eternal life and entering the God family.

A verse worthy to remember:

"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"
(Mark 8:34).

SKY

Lesson 4

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Questions and Answers

1. In your own words describe what the word *Christian* should mean to us today.

2. Caesarea Philippi was a

- A. A beautiful city
- B. A pagan city
- C. A city by the Sea of Galilee

3. At the time of this story in Mark, the ruler of Caesarea Philippi was

- A. Philip the tetrarch
- B. Herod the Great
- C. John the Baptist

4. If you asked your friends who Jesus was, would the answers be the same as what the disciples received from people?

5. Who is Jesus to you ?

6. There are *four* things Jesus declared to the disciples. What are they?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

7. True or False—Jesus came just to teach the twelve disciples. _____

8. Deny means to

- A. Be a martyr
- B. Never own anything
- C. Not allow your own self interest to rule your life

9. True or False—To take up your cross means to show submission publicly by obeying God. _____

10. True or False—The only way to true happiness is to have a lot of money and power. _____

11. True or False—One way to be a Christian is to think of others and try to serve their needs. _____

12. If you are ashamed of Jesus, what does He promise you? (Read Mark 8:38.)

13. Peter correctly identified Jesus as

- A. The King
- B. The Messiah
- C. The Good Son

14. How did Peter react to what Jesus said in verse 32?

15. Jesus responded to Peter by saying,

Answers

Lesson 4 - Jesus Teaches His Disciples

1. A Christian is one who obeys Christ and lives their life as Jesus wants us to.
2. B
3. A
4. Yes, because neither they (those in Jesus' day) nor people today really understand who Jesus was or why He came.
5. To me, Jesus is my savior. He has shown me, through examples in the Bible, the right way to conduct my life.
6.
 1. That the Son of man must suffer many things.
 2. Be rejected of the elders of the chief priests and scribes.
 3. Be killed.
 4. After three days rise again.
7. F
8. C
9. T
10. F
11. T
12. He promises to reject you when He returns.
13. B
14. He told Jesus that what He said wasn't true. He told Him not to say the four things which He had declared to the disciples. Peter did not understand why Jesus came to earth.
15. He said, "Get behind me Satan." He told him that he didn't understand God's plan.