

# The Gospel of *Mark*

## The Servant Leadership of Jesus

### The Servant's Ministry in and around Galilee (cont) (1:14 – 9:50)

**A Period of Withdrawal: *Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ at Caesarea Philippi* (8:27-30)**

**27-29** Jesus and His disciples left Bethsaida <sup>v.22-26</sup> and headed north to the area of Caesarea Philippi.

While traveling, Jesus asked them: "Who do people say I am?". His disciples responded with the names of prophets: John the Baptist <sup>Luke 3:1-20</sup>, Elijah <sup>Malachi 4:5-6</sup>, Jeremiah <sup>Matthew 16:14</sup> or "one of the prophets" (Moses? <sup>Deuteronomy 18:15-19</sup>). Probably after a bit of a pause, Jesus decided to make the issue personal by asking the apostles who each one of them thought He was. In an inspired response, Peter declared: "You are the Christ." <sup>John 6:68-69</sup> (Greek *christos*, Hebrew: *mâshîyach*).

Caesarea Philippi was about 25 miles north of Bethsaida, on the southern flank of Mt. Hermon. The pagan city was built by Herod's son Philip, who named it for Tiberius Caesar and himself.

Matthew's account of this situation includes Jesus' response to Peter's proclamation:

"Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." <sup>Matthew 16:15b-19</sup>

This declaration by Jesus has been misinterpreted since the first century, and especially by the Catholic Church, who (falsely) uses this text to justify the exalted position of Pope, as well as their assertion that Peter was the first Pope. The following stream of logic will lead to the correct interpretation: (1) The church is the collection of all disciples (true believers) of Jesus Christ (His Church <sup>Ephesians 5:22-32, Hebrews 12:22-23</sup> = His Body <sup>1 Corinthians 12:12,30, Ephesians 4:11-13,25</sup>). (2) Next, the church is built (i.e., grows in numbers) each time a human being responds to the call of God by sincerely repenting of their sins and accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior <sup>Psalms 68:19, Jeremiah 33:16, Luke 2:11, 2 Peter 3:18</sup>. (3) Finally, an analysis is necessary of the exchange between Jesus and Peter in Matthew 16:15b-19. Jesus calls Simon: Peter <sup>v.18</sup>, which is the Greek word (*Petros*) for a small or individual rock or stone. Immediately after

that, Jesus used another Greek word (*petra*) that is translated “rock” to indicate how He will “build [His] church”. This “rock” (*petra*) refers to a large rock formation. Thus, two resulting arguments lead to the correct conclusion that Peter was not the rock Jesus was referring to: (A) if Peter was the rock Jesus referenced, He would have used the same Greek word for “rock” in both instances and (B) the growth (i.e., the building up) of the church is not dependent on any person other than Jesus Christ. However, it is totally dependent on individual people making declarations like the one Simon had made just prior to Jesus changing his name to Peter. Therefore, the statement: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” is what Jesus referred to as the “rock” (*petra*).

Jesus posed the most important question everyone must answer: **Who do YOU say Jesus is?**

**30** When Jesus “warned” (“strictly warned” <sup>Luke 9:21</sup>) His disciples “not to tell anyone that he was the Christ” <sup>Matthew 16:20</sup>, He used the same word (*epitimaō*) as in an earlier rebuke of a demon <sup>Mark 1:25</sup>.

#### **A Period of Withdrawal: *Jesus Predicts His Death* (8:31-33)**

**31-33** Jesus’ teachings intensified: He clearly explained His upcoming suffering, death & resurrection. He also made it clear that the path to His death would result from the hatred of the Jewish leadership (“elders, chief priests and teachers of the law”) <sup>Matthew 27:1-2</sup>. However, Jesus had to rebuke Peter, because he used ‘human wisdom’, instead of ‘heavenly wisdom’ in interpreting the teaching of Jesus.

Jesus presented His suffering <sup>Isaiah 53:3-7</sup>, death <sup>Isaiah 53:8-9, Daniel 9:26a</sup> and resurrection <sup>Isaiah 53:11</sup> (after 3 days <sup>Matthew 12:40</sup>) as fact, because they were divinely ordained <sup>Isaiah 53:10, Acts 2:22-24</sup>.

The disciples could not comprehend a dying Messiah <sup>see later note v.9</sup>, so Peter rejected the idea. (Peter seemed to be the apostles’ spokesman <sup>Matthew 14:28, 15:15, 17:4, 19:27, 26:33, John 6:68, 13:36-37</sup>.)

Peter quickly went from God’s spokesman <sup>Matthew 16:17-19</sup> to Satan’s mouthpiece <sup>Matthew 4:10</sup>. Jesus’ death was God’s plan <sup>Acts 2:23, 4:27-28</sup>, so anyone opposing it was an advocate for Satan.

#### **A Period of Withdrawal: *The Cost of Discipleship* (8:34 - 9:1)**

**34-35** He told the crowd, if they wanted to be His follower, they must be willing to sacrifice their lives.

The cost of discipleship is great <sup>Luke 14:26-33</sup>; it is an all or nothing proposition <sup>Matthew 12:30</sup>.

In life, Jesus proved He was not only willing to veil His Deity, but He gladly faced the cross in order to serve mankind <sup>John 10:14-18</sup>. Anyone desiring to follow Jesus must be willing and prepared to do the same <sup>Matthew 10:38, Galatians 2:20</sup> (daily <sup>1 Corinthians 15:31, Romans 8:36</sup>).

**36-38** Jesus then posed a question about the contrasting importance of worldly wealth and the soul. He continued with a logical, thought-provoking statement: if a person lives their life with no respect for Jesus, they have no right to expect Jesus to show them favor when He returns to earth. <sup>Luke 12:9</sup>

A person cannot literally lose his soul, because the soul is eternal. The issue is whether a person decides to follow God's plan for their soul <sup>1 Timothy 2:3-4</sup> by dedicating their life to the Lord and be saved to spend eternity with Him in heaven or live as an enemy "of the cross of Christ" <sup>Philippians 3:18-19</sup> and "forfeit" their soul by living selfishly, but leading to eternity in hell.

Best example of this lesson <sup>v.36-37</sup>: Solomon's massive riches, but no peace <sup>Ecclesiastes 5:10, 12:8</sup>.

The last statement <sup>v.38</sup> is Mark's first reference to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ <sup>Mark 13:26</sup>.

**1** Jesus confused them again by pronouncing some of them would not die before seeing His Kingdom.

Jesus has two purposes whenever He used the opening phrase: "I tell you the truth...".

(1) It was a sign He was about to say something very important and (2) they better believe it!

The key to understanding this seemingly perplexing verse is the event Mark reports next <sup>v.2-10</sup>.

**A Period of Withdrawal: *The Revealing of the Glory of Jesus (The Transfiguration)*** (9:2-10)

**2-6** Six days later, Jesus led His inner circle (Peter, James & John <sup>see notes on Mark 5:37</sup>) onto a mountain, where He took on a brilliant white appearance <sup>Matthew 28:3</sup>. In addition to the surprising change in how Jesus looked, suddenly Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with Jesus. Being overwhelmed with fear, Peter spoke up, suggesting they make 3 tabernacles <sup>Leviticus 23:34-43</sup>.

Most scholars accept the "high mountain" Jesus led them to was the 9,000 ft peak Mt. Hermon (10,000 ft above the Jordan Valley), which was just north of Caesarea Philippi.

The Greek word "transfigured" (*metamorphoō*) literally means to 'change form', <sup>Romans 12:1-2</sup>.

Peter later admitted being an eyewitness to Jesus revealing His divine glory/majesty <sup>2 Peter 1:16</sup>.

Light is often related with the visible presence of God. <sup>Psalms 104:2, Daniel 7:9-10, Revelation 1:14-16, 21:23</sup>

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Luke's account gives more detail <sup>Luke 9:31-32</sup> about: (1) Jesus, Moses & Elijah had an extensive (according to the Greek grammar) talk about Jesus' upcoming "departure" (death/ascension) and (2) Peter, James & John fell asleep <sup>Luke 14:32-42</sup> and had to wake to see the glorified men.

Moses & Elijah represent the Law & the Prophets (and possibly the 2 witnesses <sup>Revelation 11:3-4</sup>).

In his awe, Peter referred to Jesus for the first time as Rabbi ("my master"). He proposed they make a tent for each of them. Peter may have suggested this as a way to indicate he thought their gathering would last a long time or that the Millennium was beginning <sup>Zechariah 14:16</sup>.

**7-10** A cloud covered Jesus, Moses and Elijah. From within the cloud, God the Father told the disciples to listen to His Son, Jesus. Before they knew it, Moses and Elijah disappeared. As they were leaving, Jesus commanded His inner circle to keep secret what they had seen (until His resurrection).

The cloud was the Shekinah glory, representing the presence of God <sup>Exodus 40:34-35, Numbers 14:14</sup>.

In reaffirming Jesus as His Son <sup>Matthew 3:17</sup>, God the Father commanded the disciples to listen to Him (and obey <sup>Hebrews 1:1-2</sup>), because He is the One the Prophets pointed to <sup>Deuteronomy 18:15</sup>.

Although Andrew proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah when he introduced his brother, Simon Peter, to Jesus <sup>John 1:40-42</sup>, the Messianic mission of Jesus would not be fully understood by the apostles until they observed the cross and the resurrection <sup>Luke 24:5-8, John 2:20-22, 12:12-16</sup>.

Knowing this, Jesus told His disciples to wait to tell others. They discussed it, and did obey.

Most Jews (not Sadducees <sup>Acts 23:8</sup>) believed in resurrection <sup>John 11:24</sup>, but not for the Messiah.

### **A Period of Withdrawal: *Jesus Clarifies the Role of Elijah*** (9:11-13)

**11-13** The disciples asked Jesus about the law teachers who said Elijah must "come first" <sup>Malachi 4:5-6</sup>.

Jesus confirmed what the scribes had said, and He added that "Elijah has [already] come" <sup>Luke 1:17</sup>.

He also said the "Son of Man" <sup>Matthew 8:20</sup> must "suffer much" <sup>Isaiah 53:4-7</sup> and "be rejected" <sup>Luke 23:11</sup>.

The disciples tried to figure out why Elijah had come now, instead of prior to Jesus' birth.

Jesus implied here and stated elsewhere <sup>Matthew 11:14</sup> that John the Baptist had come, fulfilling prophecy, and he was treated <sup>Matthew 6:27</sup> just as Jezebel wanted Elijah to be treated <sup>1 Kings 19:1-2</sup>.