

Who Do You Say I Am?
Mark 8:27-33
ABC 6/11/23

Sometimes asking the right question is crucial for your well-being.

When the temperature soared to 120 degrees, a missionary in South America was tempted to cool off with a swim in the local river but was leery because of the man-eating fish. The locals assured him that piranhas only attack people when the fish are swimming in schools, which they never did in that part of the river. So each afternoon for the rest of the summer, the missionary enjoyed cooling off in the river. Months later he heard reports that a local fisherman had fallen out of his boat & had not been found. Alarmed, he asked if the man had been eaten by piranhas.

Oh, no, he was assured. Only while swimming in schools do piranhas bite people & they never swim in schools around here.

Why not around here? the missionary asked.

The answer he received? *They never swim in schools where there are alligators.*¹

Asking the right questions & answering them correctly can mean the difference between being safe & being an alligator's lunch. The same is true spiritually. Answering the right question correctly can mean the difference between eternal life & eternal condemnation. Today we come to the most important question in life: *Who is Jesus?* How you answer determines your eternal destiny & there is only 1 correct answer. Jesus isn't whoever you want Him to be. Some say, *For me, Jesus is always accepting & loving & never condemning.* But your thoughts & feelings about Jesus doesn't change who He really is. There's a single correct answer to the question that isn't based on personal feelings or opinions, but on objective revealed truth. The Bible teaches that Jesus was far more than a benevolent teacher or inspirational leader. As Mark states at the beginning of his gospel, Jesus is the **Christ, the Son of God** (Mk 1:1). He is the divine Messiah, God incarnate. Repeatedly & clearly, the gospels state that Jesus is both the Messiah & the Son of God. For example, Johns says the reason why he wrote his gospel was **so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God** (Jn 20:31). The question of who Jesus is forms the heart of our text today (8:27–33). At this point in Jesus' ministry, the disciples have been with Him for about 2 years. Their expectation from the beginning was that He was the Messiah & the Son of God. As Andrew told Peter, after 1st meeting Jesus, **We have found the Messiah** (Jn 1:41); Nathanael similarly

¹ *Reader's Digest*, 7/96, p 48

exclaimed, **Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel** (Jn 1:49). The disciples were familiar with the testimony of John the Baptist, who declared Jesus to be the Son of God (Jn 1:34) & the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). Over the course of Jesus' ministry, the disciples had been amazed by His authoritative teaching (Mk 1:22, 27), awestruck by His divine power (Mk 2:12; 4:41), & aware of their own sinfulness in contrast to His perfection (Mk 2:5-7). Some months earlier, after Jesus walked on water & calmed the storm (Mk 6:45-52), they'd responded by worshiping Him & saying, **You are certainly God's Son!** (Mt 14:33). The following day when many of Jesus' followers deserted Him (Jn 6:66), Peter said on behalf of all the disciples, **We have believed & have come to know that You are the Holy One of God** (Jn 6:69). Obviously, our text today wasn't the 1st time the disciples recognized the deity & messiahship of Jesus. But it's the 1st confession of it recorded in Mark's gospel. It's here that the disciples, through Peter, state this truth with greater conviction & confidence than ever before. A very low point immediately follows this high point. Obviously, the disciples don't see everything yet. Remember, Jesus has recently asked them, **Do you not yet see or understand?** (Mk 8:17), & then healed a blind man partially & then fully, seemingly indicating the disciples still had partial insight into who Jesus is. Peter's confession about Jesus is followed by the most stinging rebuke any believer could ever receive. Mark's gospel takes a decisive turn as Jesus defines His messianic role as one of suffering & sacrifice. After healing the man in Bethsaida (22-26), **27-30**.

1. Jesus Asks Jesus & the disciples left Bethsaida & traveled some 25 miles north **to the villages of Caesarea Philippi**. This city, located in the foothills of Mount Hermon near a large spring that fed the Jordan River, was previously called Paneas or Panion, after Pan, the Greek god of nature & the woodlands, ½ goat ½ man famed for his flute playing. Herod Philip expanded the city in 14 AD & named it Caesarea in honor of Caesar Augustus.² It's different than the Roman administrative capital of Judea built by Herod the Great on the Mediterranean coast also named Caesarea. On their way, according to Lk 9:18, Jesus had been praying, & then asks His 1st question: **Who do people say that I am?** (27). If you were to go around asking your friends, *What do people say about*

² Josephus, *Ant.* 18.2.1 §28; *J.W.* 2.9.1 §168

me? or if you constantly *Google* yourself to see what's there, you might have pride problems or be a narcissist. For Jesus, this is a teaching moment so He asks the disciples that question: **who do people say that I am?** The question of His identity has been a central theme of Mark's gospel, from the introduction (1:1), to the Father's declaration at His baptism (1:11), to demonic recognition (1:24, 34; 3:11–12; 5:6–7). The people are amazed at His miraculous power & wonder about it (1:27; 2:12; 6:2, 14–16; 7:37). Herod wonders if Jesus might be John the Baptist risen from the dead (6:14–16). After Jesus calms the storm, the disciples ask, **Who then is this...?** (4:41). Mark has been leading up to this moment. How do the disciples answer? **28**

The disciples report His favorable ratings among the people. The man on the street has a good opinion of Jesus. Their views offset the slander of His opponents, who regard Him as a pawn of Beelzebub; the worries of His family, who think He's out of His mind; & the bias of His fellow citizens in Nazareth, who dismiss Him as just one of them. The disciples answer should sound familiar as it's an abbreviated version of 6:14-16. The disciples give the various popular opinions. Some, like Herod, thought **John the Baptist** had risen from the dead to avenge his murder (6:17–29) & Jesus was him. There was much speculation in Judaism concerning the return of **Elijah** because of what Malachi wrote about him (3:1; 4:5–6) & because of Elijah's unusual departure from the earth (2 Kgs 2:11). The Jewish expectation for the return of Elijah appears several times in the gospels & in Mk 9 Jesus points out that Elijah is coming, but that he's already come in the person of John the Baptist (11–13). The 3rd answer, **one of the prophets** means one of the OT prophets, perhaps with a hint of the *prophet like Moses* of Dt 18:15 or like Jeremiah, whom Jewish tradition held would return with the ark of the covenant at the establishment of Messiah's kingdom. In spite of the many miracles Jesus performed, all of which testified of Him (Jn 5:36; 10:37–38), the people still didn't see Him as the Messiah. They knew He had divine power & considered Him to be a prophet. However, because they expected the Messiah to be a military deliverer who'd overthrow Rome & establish an independent kingdom in Israel (Jn 6:14–15), they were unwilling to embrace Him as the Messiah. Was Jesus a prophet? Yes! In Mk 6:4 Jesus identified Himself as a prophet. As God's spokesperson, Jesus is indeed a Prophet, but He's much more than that. He's also a priest & king,

the anointed One. But the people of Israel don't see it. Jesus now asks His 2nd & more important question. **29a**

The **you** is emphatic in all 3 accounts of this (Mt 16:15; Lk 9:20). Jesus wants to know what His disciples had learned as *insiders* in the kingdom of God (4:11). Nothing was more important than how they answered this question. Like all 1st-century Jews, the disciples had been raised expecting the Messiah to defeat their enemies & establish His kingdom in Jerusalem. When it became clear that the religious leaders had rejected Jesus (Mk 3:6, 22) & that He wouldn't use His miraculous power to overthrow Rome (Jn 6:15), the disciples must have wondered if He really was the Messiah. Even John the Baptist expressed reservations. As Matthew writes, **When John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples, & said to Jesus, 'Are you the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?'** (11:2-3). Jesus responded by pointing to His miracles which clearly established His messianic credentials (4-6). But, as John demonstrates, even the most faithful Jews struggled to overcome their preconceived notions of what the Messiah would be & do.³ Peter responds as representative of the disciples, **You are the Christ, the Messiah**, the anointed One promised in the OT. Significantly, this is only the 2nd time in Mark's gospel that the title **Christ** has been used; the 1st being in the opening vs. Peter's answer stresses Jesus' fundamental identity as God's agent of salvation. He is the Messiah, the promised Savior from the line of David who will accomplish salvation & establish God's eternal kingdom in justice & righteousness (2 Sam 7:11-16; Is 9:1-5; 11:1-10). Peter proclaimed Jesus to be God's supreme *Anointed One*, the Savior of the world. Yet Jesus will define His messiahship on His own terms not on what people, or even the disciples, thought the Messiah would be. How did Peter come to believe Jesus was the Messiah? Matthew says the Father revealed it to Peter (16:17). The disciples could take no credit for this breakthrough of faith. They believed only because the Father had drawn them (Jn 6:44), the Son had revealed Himself to them (Mt 11:27), & the Spirit had opened their eyes to the truth (1 Cor 2:10-14; 2 Cor 3:15-18). With minds full of faith & certainty, the disciples were undoubtedly eager

³ John MacArthur, *Mark 1-8*, pp 415-416

to spread the news about Jesus that Peter had just articulated. After this monumental confession of Jesus' identity what does Jesus say next? **30**

Either Jesus wants Peter to keep a lid on things a while longer so that He can remain incognito or He rebukes Peter to remain silent because his understanding of what *Christ* means is wrong & needs correction. Jesus doesn't want Peter's faulty ideas multiplying among the crowds, whose ability to grasp Jesus' identity is even more limited than the disciples.⁴ The word for **warned** is a strong one. It's used of rebuking demons (1:25), a storm (4:39), & sternly warning others to silence (3:12). In the past, Jesus had silenced the demons (1:25, 34; 3:11–12) & those He'd healed to avoid publicity that could spark a messianic revolt (1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26). He now commands His disciples to keep His identity as Messiah a secret until He's defined its true nature (9:9) & done what He came to do. Jesus knew His work wasn't yet finished & the gospel message was still incomplete (1 Cor 15:1–4). It would be premature for them to go & preach the good news until after His death & resurrection (Mt 28:19–20; Acts 1:8). This becomes clear in the following vss, as Jesus begins to define His role as the suffering Son of Man.⁵ **31-33**

2. Jesus Teaches Jesus **began to teach them** is a key turn in Mark's gospel, as Jesus for the 1st time explicitly predicts His coming suffering in Jerusalem. Matthew also recognizes the significance of this & marks it even more clearly: **From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, & suffer...** (Mt 16:21). The last thing the disciples expected to hear on the heels of this grand moment of revelation & clarity was a death announcement from Jesus. He doesn't explain His mission to His disciples simply to predict future events but to verify for them that what's about to happen fulfills God's plan.⁶ They knew Jesus is the Messiah, but they couldn't fathom the thought that He'd suffer & be killed. Mark notes that Jesus **began to teach them** about His death, indicating that from this point forward His death would be a repeated theme of His instruction to them (Mt 17:9, 12, 22–23; Mk 9:31; 10:33, 45; Jn 12:7). Jesus teaches His disciples the necessity of the suffering of **the Son of Man**. The title **the Son of Man**, a name Jesus applied to Himself more

⁴ David E. Garland, *Mark*, pp 324–325

⁵ Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, pp 362–363

⁶ William Lane, *Mark*, p 296

than 80x in the gospels, designated both His divine messiahship (Dan 7:13; Acts 7:56) & His humanity (Phil 2:6–8; Heb 2:17). It's necessary both because Scripture predicted the Messiah's suffering (Is 52:13–53:12) & because it's been divinely ordained by God.⁷ Jesus will suffer **many things**, meaning all the events of the passion, His arrest & trial, humiliation, beatings, mocking, & the agony of His crucifixion & death. To **be rejected** may allude to Ps 118:22 & the stone the builders **rejected**. As Jesus foretold what would take place, He explained that He **must suffer many things**. By using the word **must**, Jesus indicated that the things He'd endure were an unchangeable part of the Father's purpose for Him. Notice 4 things *MUST* happen. Not *might* happen. Not *could* happen. Not even *will* happen. They *MUST* happen. This is a necessity. These things *must* happen to the Son of Man: He must suffer, be rejected, be killed (not just die, but be killed), & rise again.⁸ Though Peter failed to grasp that truth now (32), he would come to understand & proclaim that Jesus was **delivered over** to be crucified **by the predetermined plan & foreknowledge of God** (Acts 2:23). The cross was no accident. It was God's plan of salvation. As Jesus Himself explained regarding the purpose of His earthly mission: **For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, & to give His life a ransom for many** (Mk 10:45). The 3 groups Jesus mentions made up the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court. The **elders** were the *aristocratic leaders of the Jewish patrician families*.⁹ The **chief priests** were the priestly nobility, made up of leading members of the high priest's family & other influential priests (Acts 4:6). The **scribes** were the experts in the interpretation & application of the Jewish law. These religious leaders would reject their own Messiah, putting Him through a mock trial, delivering Him to the Romans, & unjustly & hatefully orchestrating His execution. It isn't humanity at its worst that will crucify the Son of God but humanity at its absolute *best*. The death of Jesus won't be the result of a momentary lapse or anomaly of human nature, but rather the result of careful deliberations from respected religious leaders who will justify their actions by the highest standards of law & morality, even believing them to render service to God (Jn 16:2).¹⁰ Surprisingly, it seems the disciples didn't hear or

⁷ Robert Stein, *Mark*, 401

⁸ John Piper, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-golden-stitches-of-sovereignty>

⁹ Grant Osborne, "Elders," in *DJG*, p 201

¹⁰ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, p 254

comprehend Jesus' next statement when He says He'll be raised **after 3 days** or **on the third day** (Mt 16:21; Lk 9:22). The disciples are so stunned by His announcement of His suffering, the prediction of His resurrection doesn't seem to have been heard even though Jesus spoke all of this **plainly**. This wasn't a parable or have a hidden meaning. This is what He, the Messiah, must face. This sent the disciples reeling. They were convinced of His divine person but now they struggled with the divine plan. The disciples had no model in which the Messiah, the Anointed One of God who'd bring salvation & blessing to Israel & the world, would be rejected & killed by the very people He came to save (Jn 1:11). Like most of their fellow Jews, they'd inherited misinterpretations of familiar OT passages that predicted that the Messiah must suffer (Ps 16:10; 22; 69:21; Is 50:6; Zech 11:12–13). Isaiah prophesied 700 years earlier regarding the Messiah that He would suffer & die (Is 53). There's no doubt about Jesus' meaning & it produces an immediate response from Peter. Peter went from being a spokesman for God (Mt 16:17) to being a mouthpiece of Satan. He won't stand for this kind of talk from Jesus & so he pulls Him aside & begins **to rebuke Him**. Interestingly, each time Jesus instructs the disciples about His coming suffering & resurrection in Mark, they show their complete lack of understanding. In the 1st instance, Peter openly rebukes Jesus for thinking that He must suffer (8:32–33). In the 2nd, all the disciples begin to bicker privately about who's the greatest (9:33–34). In the last, James & John jockey for places of power & glory in the kingdom, which irritates the others. They resent this bid to gain a competitive edge, because they want to be the ones who rule the roost (10:35–41). The disciples' tenacious thick-headedness gives Jesus an opening in each instance to make a statement about the true nature of discipleship (8:34–38; 9:35–37; 10:42–45). Peter didn't like what Jesus said & he *rebuked* Jesus. He accused Him of saying something wrong. Something worthy of a *rebuke*. Peter responds, *Jesus, with all due respect, Your suffering & rejection & getting killed doesn't have to happen. You shouldn't talk like that. I rebuke you.* Why? Because Peter, & all the disciples, expected a Messiah who'd defeat the Romans & reestablish an independent kingdom of Israel. Though Peter has shown insight by acknowledging Jesus' messiahship, he can't comprehend the Messiah's suffering role & had the nerve to contradict the Creator Himself. Rather than submitting to his sovereign Lord, Peter

confronted Him with an abrasive retort, **God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You** (Mt 16:22). **Rebuke** is the same word Mark used earlier to speak of Jesus' *warning* to the disciples (30). It implies a level of judgment from a superior to someone under his command or oversight. Not only had Peter presumptuously elevated his own authority above Jesus, he directly contradicted the redemptive purposes of God. What Jesus said must happen, Peter insisted would **never happen**. By doing so he reveals his ignorance about the nature of Jesus' messiahship & his deep offense at Jesus' teaching. Paul said that the cross was foolishness to Greeks & a stumbling block to Jews (1 Cor 1:23), & Peter is the 1st to stumble over the offense of a suffering Messiah. Like the blind man from Bethsaida, the scales have only partially fallen from his eyes. Preconceived notions about the Messiah blur his vision & he only sees things from a human perspective. He's begun to understand that Jesus is the Messiah but he doesn't have any understanding how Jesus' suffering plays an integral part. Peter's concept of the *Christ* is too narrow, too laden with selfish, human fantasies. He thinks the Christ will establish a reign of peace & righteousness by overthrowing the powers who hold God's people in a vise of oppression. Anyone with Jesus' amazing powers, Peter thinks, is headed for glory & universal honor. Anyone who has heavenly authority to forgive sins on earth (2:10) & to determine what's permissible on the Sabbath (2:28) shouldn't have to suffer on earth. How can the Messiah be rejected & become a victim of violence? For Peter, a suffering Messiah is impossible. The Messiah will come as a triumphant hero, dishing out punishment to those who oppose Him. By rebuking Jesus, Peter, forgetting his place, put his own selfish desires above the plans & purposes of God. He was shortsighted, still partially blind, & needed to be reminded that God's plans transcend human reasoning (1 Cor 1:18–31). The disciples didn't yet understand God's plan, but Jesus was operating in perfect accordance with the Father's will (Mk 14:36; Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). **33**

Peter's rebuke can't go unanswered & Mark uses the same strong term of **rebuke** for Jesus' reply. That Jesus turned & looked at all the disciples suggests Peter's comment reflected their view as well & Jesus' responds to them all. **Get behind Me, Satan**. The severity of Jesus' response is shocking, identifying Peter with Satan, the archenemy of God. Satan has been repeatedly identified

as the personal opponent of Jesus (1:13; 3:23, 26; 4:15), who snatches the seed of the word away (4:15) & tests & tempts Jesus to depart from God's purpose (1:13). To avoid the cross would be diabolical. Peter's challenge to Jesus may be compared to the temptation account in Matthew & Luke where Satan offers Jesus the kingdoms of the world in exchange for His worship, without the need to walk His suffering path (Mt 4:8–10; Lk 4:5–8). **Get behind Me** may mean either *fall back in line*, calling Peter to renounce his insubordination & fall in line or, more likely, *Get away from me!* similar to Jesus' words in Mt 4:10 where He tells Satan to **go**. Mt 16:23 notes that Jesus also added, **You are a stumbling block to Me**. Peter wasn't setting his mind on God's interests but on his own. By opposing the plans of God & demanding Jesus avoid the cross, Peter became a spokesman for Satan. Jesus knew the plan of redemption & the path to glory required His suffering & death (Phil 2:8–11; Heb 12:2). Therefore, He wouldn't yield to any temptation that promised a kingdom without the cross (Mt 4:8–9). Though the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Mk 1:13), Satan's attacks didn't end there. According to Lk 4:13, after the 40 days ended, Satan **left Him until an opportune time**, meaning he was continually looking for ways to tempt Jesus (Heb 2:18; 4:15). Peter now provided that opportunity. Knowing that the cross would spell his downfall & defeat (Gen 3:15; Jn 12:31; Col 2:14–15; Heb 2:14), Satan tried to derail God's plan of redemption. Jesus & Peter, God & humanity, *are at 'cross' purposes, since at the heart of the discussion is the cross. For Peter, the indication that the Son of man will die is unthinkable. For Jesus, it is inevitable.*¹¹ Peter blundered greatly but he'd soon come to understand & cherish the cross deeply. Around a year later, on the day of Pentecost, he'd boldly stand in Jerusalem with the other apostles & proclaim the gospel of a crucified & resurrected Messiah (Acts 2:22–24). Near the end of his life, Peter explained the glorious significance of the crucifixion: **For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit** (1 Pt 3:18). What the disciples considered to be the ultimate bad news on that day near Caesarea Philippi was, in reality, the best news the world has ever received. It's the very heart of the gospel. By dying & rising again, Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, paid the

¹¹ Ralph Martin, *Where the Action Is*, p 72

penalty for sin & conquered death, so that all who believe in Him might have eternal life (Jn 3:16; 6:40; Rom 10:9–10; 2 Cor 5:20–21; 1 Tim 1:15). Jesus must resist the pressure to conform to the expectations of His opponents, who challenge Him to prove His claims with a decisive messianic sign. He must fend off the wishful thinking of His disciples, who are influenced by popular expectations of what the Messiah is supposed to do. They expected one who will be Solomon-like in wisdom, Moses-like in providing bread in the desert, Joshua-like in leading a conquest that will recapture the Promised Land from the pagans, & David-like in establishing a triumphant kingdom with all Israel's enemies serving as footstools. The temptation for Jesus to meet the expectations of His disciples must have been enormous. But Jesus pledges to do only God's will, what He **must** suffer.

The question of Jesus' identity & mission have been at the forefront of Mark's gospel since the opening line: **The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God** (Mk 1:1). Up until now the answer to the question, *Who is this?* has been answered through Jesus' words & actions. He is the One who teaches with authority, casts out demons, heals the sick, raises the dead, calms the sea, walks on water, & feeds the multitudes. Most importantly, He's the One who announces & inaugurates the kingdom of God. Three themes related to Jesus' identity run through our passage this morning.

1) When Jesus asked His disciples, **Who do people say that I am?** He was raising the question of the ages, one that's been asked & answered in a multitude of ways. Some say He was a great teacher of wisdom. Others say He was a proclaimer of social justice & care for the poor. Still others believed He was a wild-eyed prophet announcing God's judgment & the end of the world. Others claim He was a political radical, advocating the violent overthrow of the government, or a social revolutionary calling for a grass-roots rebellion. World religions have their own take on Jesus. To Muslims He's a great prophet of Allah, who is 2nd only to Mohammed in importance but whose true mission was obscured when He was deified by His Christian followers. To ancient Gnostics & their modern counterparts in Hinduism & New Age religions, He's an enlightened mystic whose spiritual knowledge can bring about a higher consciousness & union with the Divine. To so-called *Christian*

cults He's the brother of Satan, the physical son of a union between Jehovah God & Mary (Mormons), or an exalted created being (Jehovah's Witnesses). In the midst of this cacophony of answers comes the answer of Peter. It's the answer Mark has been building to since his 1st sentence: *Jesus is the Messiah*. Peter is right that Jesus is the promised Messiah foretold by the OT prophets. He's the longed-for King who'll accomplish God's end-time salvation & bring in His eternal kingdom. Yet Peter is wrong because he doesn't understand the Messiah's role. He can't conceive of a Messiah who'll suffer & die. Yes, Jesus is the Messiah, but not the Messiah Peter envisioned. The tendency to create Jesus in our own image is still a danger. The wealth & prosperity gospel claims that Jesus is there to make us personally happy & financially successful. They ignore or pass over passages that call for a renunciation of wealth or sacrifice for His kingdom. Legalists tend to pick up on biblical passages about the judgment of the wicked but ignore Jesus' calls to love our enemies & to pray for those who persecute us. Like Peter, all of us need to hear Jesus' rebuke of our self-promoting perceptions of the Messiah & submit ourselves to His authority & lordship.

2) Most Jews of that time were anticipating the coming of the Messiah. But their expectations revolved around a military & political figure, a warrior king who'd defeat Israel's enemies & reign in Jerusalem over a reunited & restored Jewish kingdom. Though Mark doesn't tell us the reason for Peter's rebuke, it's clear that Peter couldn't accept that the Messiah would suffer & die at the hands of the religious leaders. Yet for Jesus, this was central to His mission & His coming to earth.

There could be no salvation without the perfect One who would die **as a ransom for many** (10:45).¹²

3) The way of the world is conquest & suppression. Yet the way of Jesus is radically different: **But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; & whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all** (10:43–44). Jesus teaches service instead of domination & sacrifice instead of conquest. This is how true salvation will be achieved & how the kingdom of God will begin. Though Peter has correctly identified Jesus as the Messiah, he has yet to learn the suffering role of the cross.

¹² Strauss, p 367

How do you respond to the question of who Jesus is? Many respect Jesus as an ethical teacher, whose memorable sayings about turning the other cheek, not casting the 1st stone, & loving your neighbor make for good advice. The Jesus Mark presents, however, isn't simply a Jewish holy man, a nice teacher, a fervent prophet, a peasant leader, a wandering rabbi calling people to live according to common sense & natural law. No, He's the Son of God, the Christ, the only Savior. We can't put Jesus in a box that allows us to evade the claim that God makes on our lives. He is the Messiah whom God sent to suffer & save His people through His death & resurrection. Who do you say Jesus is? Does your answer line up with Scripture? You may be standing with the multitude, saying, *Jesus is a fine example, a great teacher, even a prophet. But He isn't the Sovereign Lord of my life.* That's a badly mistaken answer. You may be standing with Peter, saying correctly, **You are the Christ**, but not understanding the sort of Christ He really is. That's an improvement over the 1st answer, but it's still inadequate. You must stand with Jesus who came as God's Anointed to bear your sins, who was raised in triumph over sin & death, who calls us to follow Him in obedience. As Peter later preached, **God has made Him both Lord & Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified** (Acts 2:36). If you stand there, ready to obey God no matter what the cost, you've correctly answered Jesus' crucial question, **Who do you say I am?** If Jesus isn't your sin-bearer & your Lord, I encourage you to read the gospels with the prayer, *God, show me who Jesus is. If You show me that He is Your Anointed Savior & Lord, I will trust Him & follow Him.* Jesus will be your Savior if you turn to Him in faith & accept His death & resurrection on your behalf. Have you done this? If not, it's my prayer that you would today.