

Gospel of Mark 16 – Chapter 8, verse 27 – Chapter 9, verse 1:-

Recognition of the truth about Jesus and about suffering -

Verses 27 – 30:-

Questions about Jesus. Caesarea Philippi was in the far north of Israel not far from Mount Hermon the possible scene of the Transfiguration (chapter 9, verses 2 – 8). Note that in these verses (27 – 33) the Lord Jesus is speaking with his disciples and not the “*multitudes*”. The questions on the person of Christ is to be kept private (verse 30). Remember that the disciples were in a privileged position, see Mark chapter 4, verse 11. They should be able to judge the work and personality of Jesus by what they have seen and heard. To the blunt question “*But who do you say that I am*” the straight forward answer from Peter, spokesman for the disciples, is “*You are the Christ*”. In this Gospel, the ‘confession of Peter’ is immediately followed by the strict instruction from the Lord Jesus “*to tell no one about him*”, (compare with Matthew chapter 16, verses 17 – 19). The expectation of a coming powerful Messiah who was to free the people from Roman rule and influence, and restore the golden era of the theocracy, was the common perception of the multitudes. That this was also uppermost in the thinking of the disciples is apparent by what follows!

Verses 31 – 33:-

Peter gets it wrong! The very blunt teaching of the Lord Jesus in verse 31 leads Peter, again as spokesman for the disciples (verse 33 implies that they were all in agreement), to ‘rebuke’ Jesus! The word is a strong one and means ‘to admonish’. Peter ‘told him off!’ That the Messiah was to prove weak and vulnerable was nowhere in the thinking of the disciples or any of the Jewish people at that time. This was ignoring the prophecies in Isaiah which we looked at recently in Holy Week. The reaction of Peter and the other disciples was very human! That their leader, the Messiah, the one they had followed, witnessed his miraculous powers and heard his teaching, should now state that he was to suffer and die was impossible. The Lord Jesus makes it very clear that this ‘human reaction’ is ‘of the world’. This is not from God but thoughts inspired by ‘the enemy’ Satan.

If we look briefly at verses in John’s Gospel, chapter 8, verses 43 – 47; verse 31 and verse 25, we find that it clarifies this teaching. Jesus is again talking to his would be followers (verse 31) and the teaching comes as an answer to the question “*Who are you?*” (verse 25). The conclusion is that “*He who is of God hears the words of God*”. In our study in the Gospel of Mark, Peter (and the disciples) are listening to, and following, the teaching of the world. This teaching comes from the enemy of God, Satan himself, (see 1 John chapter 5, verse 19) and continues to be a temptation to us as Christians as we seek to follow our Lord.

Mark Chapter 8, Verse 34 – Chapter 9, verse 1 :-

The cost of being a follower of Jesus, and its reward! After this rather disturbing confrontation with his disciples, The Lord Jesus Christ now turns to addressing “*the multitude with his disciples*” verse 34. He makes it clear that this teaching is for everyone who would follow him. The teaching of the Lord Jesus in verse 31 is now applied to all those who seek to follow him. There is no easy way of being a Christian. These verses at the end of chapter 8 in Mark’s Gospel contain some of the hardest teaching for Christian believers. There can be no compromise with worldly standards or ‘modern culture’. It is the teaching and words of our Lord Jesus Christ that sets the standard and guides the Christian believer through life. Chapter 9, verse 1 really fits at the end of this passage and forms a link with the rest of chapter 9. This saying of the Lord Jesus is somewhat ambiguous and can be taken as part of the ‘already but not yet’ of the coming of the Kingdom of God. That some of those present witnessed the power of God can be read in the accounts of the Transfiguration, the Resurrection and Pentecost. The return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the establishment of Kingdom is still in the future.

Amen, Come Lord Jesus!