

Identifying Jesus

Luke 9:18-22

- A. Jesus asked, “Who do the people say that I am?” (9:18-19).
- B. He then asked, “But who do you say that I am?” (9:20).
- C. Proper response: Tell no one (9:21-22).

A. Jesus asked, “Who do the people say that I am?” (9:18-19).

1. (vs. 18) Apparently, “Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi” (Mk. 8:27) north of the Sea of Galilee, and during this trip, “it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him.” Such lonely vigils of prayer were common for Jesus (Mt. 14:23; Lk. 6:12), and if so for the sinless, Son of God, ought not we also to pray? It must have been on His mind how He was being perceived by the people, that is, how did they understand Him? Who did they think He was? *We must understand that this is the most important question ever to be asked.* You’ll recall



1. (cont.) that in this same chapter in 9:7-9 the following:
“Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. Herod said, ‘I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?’ And he kept trying to see Him.” There in vs. 9, we pointed out that Herod was asking the right question: “but who is this man about whom I hear such things?” Had he been persuaded of the correct answer, he would have been saved. Sadly, we lack evidence that it ever happened. Notice that in the context, Jesus is asking the question on

1. (cont.) the heels of the great sign miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, which was done in part to demonstrate that He was the Christ, just as Jn. 20:30-31 plainly states. So, Jesus did the miracle, spent time in prayer, and then asked the essential question.
2. It is a mixed bag of answers, none of which are correct. The people likely think that they are being generous with their answers having *named* great OT people or *alluded* to great people: “John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again.” Mt. 16:14 says that they also mentioned “Jeremiah.” It would be interesting to dig down and see who all they named and why. But whatever their answers, they were not correct. It

2. (cont.) was merely public opinion. Even now most people are reticent to put much stock in public opinion, though admittedly, it has some significance at election time. True, at some point in the future at the second advent, public approval will be more or less unanimous, “BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen” (Rev. 1:7 cf. Zech. 12:10).

B. Jesus asked, “But who do you say that I am?” (9:20).

1. (vs. 20) It is a curious thing and interesting to delve into public opinion, but what really matters in the end re: the identification of Jesus Christ is one’s own view. This affects or rather determines one’s eternal destiny. That is clearly Jesus’ point here: “But who do you say that I am?” It is not as clear in the English, but the personal pronoun is emphatic here. We could make it emphatic in English by using italics, “But who do *you* say that I am?” But that will not work in the NASB 1995 because italics is used in this edition to indicate that a word is not in the original Greek. E.g., see “*them*” in vs. 21. Or we could use the emphatic reflexive pronoun, “Who do you yourselves say that I am?”

1. (cont.) Perhaps putting the term in bold would work, but that is unconventional and awkward. Thus, we are left to simply explain it, which is exactly what we are doing. So, may I go ahead and ask you the key question? Who do *you* say that Jesus is? Now whereas Jesus asked it of the group, it is an individual, Simon Peter, who gives the verbal response, though it is somewhat abbreviated as Luke has it: “The Christ of God (Τὸν Χριστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ),” (See Mt. 16:16b). What does that mean? The name, “Christ,” means “Anointed One.” Anointing happened in ancient times to mark one as king. Samuel anointed David as king in 1Sam. 16:13. Then in 2Sam. 7:12-16 we have the Davidic covenant. There, about David’s greater Descendant, the

1. (cont.) Messiah, God said to David, “I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. ‘He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.’” Then speaking directly to the Messiah, God said, “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever” (2Sam. 7:16). More verses on “anointing” are, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows” (Ps. 45:6-7; Heb. 1:8-9); “The Spirit of the Lord

1. (cont.) GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD” (Is. 61:1-2a; Lk. 4:18-19); “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur” (Ac. 4:27–28); “*You know of* Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with

1. (cont.) Him” (Ac. 10:38). We must remind ourselves of an essential truth here and that is to believe that Jesus is the Christ is to believe everything necessary for salvation. 1Jn. 5:1a makes that plain: “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” So also, Jn. 20:30-31 affirms this: “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Ac. 16:30b). “So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved’” (Ac. 16:31b). That is

1. (cont.) essentially the same thing as believing that Jesus is the Christ. So, what does it mean to believe that Jesus is the Christ the promised Messiah of the OT? Two key things: He is the suffering servant of Is. 53 who would be crucified (Ps. 22). This and only this deals with the sin issue, for on that cross, Jesus paid for our sins so thoroughly that He has removed them from us “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps. 103:12), and He doesn’t remember them anymore (Heb. 8:12). The second key thing is that the Messiah will one day be King of this world (Rv. 20:4). Believing that He will one day rule the world is not enough by itself to be salvific. That seems clear enough following the feeding of the five thousand in Jn. 6:14-15:

1. (cont.) “Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, ‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.’ So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone” (Jn. 6:14-15). He would not allow Himself to be accepted as King *only* and not also as the suffering Servant who saves from sin. These two facets of His messiahship are made exquisitely clear in Lk. 24, where the two on the road to Emmaus have just decided that Jesus could not be the Messiah and “redeem Israel” because He was “delivered...to the sentence of death, and (they) crucified Him” (Lk. 24:20-21). Jesus’ declaration cleared that up:

1. (cont.) “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” (Lk 24:25-26). All of that was summed up in Peter’s simple statement, “The Christ of God.”

C. Proper response: Tell no one (9:21-22).

1. (vs. 21) One might have thought that on the heels of Peter's very correct identification of Jesus as the Christ of God, that He would have said, "Now let's get organized and get busy and tell the entire world that I am the Christ so that they might all be saved." "But" instead, "He warned *them* and instructed them not to tell this to anyone."
2. (vs. 22) He was, "saying" that "the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day." Now was the time for the work of redemption to be accomplished. Later it would be the time for the

2. (cont.) proclamation of redemption. “So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth’” (Ac. 1:6-8).
3. OT people also had to believe that Jesus is the Christ in order to be saved; Adam & Eve (Gen. 3:15; 4:1), Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:6; Gal. 3:6-8; Rm. 4:9, 22) as w/ Abe, so also is it with us (Rm. 4:23-24); and David (Rm. 4:7-8).