

Mark 8:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

Analysis

This verse records the pivotal moment when Peter confesses Jesus' identity as the Christ (Messiah). Jesus' question "But whom say ye that I am?" (*ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι*, *hymeis de tina me legete einai*) emphasizes the personal pronoun "you" (*hymeis*)—contrasting the disciples' confession with popular opinion reported in the previous verse. Jesus demands personal commitment, not secondhand reports. Peter's answer "Thou art the Christ" (*Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστός*, *sy ei ho Christos*) is emphatic—"You are the Christ." The definite article (*ho*) indicates Peter recognizes Jesus as the promised Messiah, not merely a messiah. "Christ" (*Χριστός*, *Christos*) translates Hebrew "Messiah" (*māšîah*), meaning "anointed one." This title carries profound Old Testament significance—the anointed king from David's line who would establish God's eternal kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 2; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 7:13-14). Peter's confession represents a watershed moment—the disciples finally recognize Jesus' true identity. However, immediately following this confession, Jesus predicts His suffering and death, and Peter rebukes Him (Mark 8:31-32), revealing that Peter's understanding of messianic mission remained deficient. He grasped Jesus' identity as Messiah but not the necessity of the Messiah's suffering. True Christian confession requires both elements: Jesus is the Christ, and the Christ must suffer, die, and rise to accomplish redemption.

Historical Context

This confession occurred at Caesarea Philippi, a predominantly Gentile region in northern Palestine at the base of Mount Hermon. The location was significant—a center of pagan worship with shrines to Pan and temples honoring Caesar. Against this backdrop of false gods and emperor worship, Peter confesses Jesus as the true Messiah-King. First-century Jewish messianic expectations were primarily political-military—Jews under Roman occupation longed for a conquering king who would overthrow their oppressors and restore Israel's sovereignty. Various messianic pretenders had arisen (Acts 5:36-37), all attempting violent revolution. Peter's confession, while correct in identifying Jesus as Messiah, initially carried these nationalist expectations. Jesus immediately began teaching about the Messiah's necessary suffering (Mark 8:31), radically redefining messianic mission. The early church's evangelism centered on this confession: Jesus is the Christ, proven by resurrection (Acts 2:36; 17:3; 18:28). Paul's letters repeatedly affirm Jesus as Christ, often merging the title with His personal name (Jesus Christ) to emphasize that the historical person Jesus is the promised Messiah. This confession remains Christianity's foundational claim, distinguishing it from all other religions—Jesus of Nazareth is God's anointed Savior-King.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' question demand personal confession rather than secondhand faith based on others' opinions about Him?
2. In what ways do modern expectations of Jesus (as life-coach, political liberator, or prosperity-giver) parallel first-century misunderstandings of the Messiah's mission?

Interlinear Text

καὶ αὐτῷ λέγει αὐτῷ Ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγει
And unto him and saith unto him ye And whom that I and saith
G2532 G846 G3004 G846 G5210 G1161 G5101 G3165 G3004
εἶναι ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Πέτρος λέγει αὐτῷ Σὺ εἰ
am answereth And G3588 Peter and saith unto him Thou art
G1511 G611 G1161 G4074 G3004 G846 G4771 G1488
ὁ Χριστός
the Christ
G5547

Additional Cross-References

1 John 4:15 (Parallel theme): Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

1 John 5:1 (References Christ): Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

John 11:27 (References Christ): She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

Luke 9:20 (References Christ): He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.

Acts 9:20 (References Christ): And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

John 4:42 (References Christ): And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

John 6:69 (References Christ): And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

1 Peter 2:7 (Parallel theme): Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

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