

Commentary on Mark 8:27-9:1
By L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, February 6 , 2011**, is from **Mark 8:27-9:1**. Five **Questions for Discussion** follow the *Bible Lesson Commentary*. The **[International Bible Lessons](http://internationalbiblelessons.org)** can be read at <http://internationalbiblelessons.org>. The lesson is also published each Saturday morning in [The Oklahoman](#).

Mark 8:27-9:1

27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”

Jesus asked this question after the disciples and people had ample opportunity to hear Him speak, see His miracles, and evaluate the spirit or attitude He displayed in His relationships with others. Jesus gave people time to evaluate what He taught in comparison to what they knew about the Scriptures and in comparison to what other rabbis taught in their synagogues. Often, Jesus asked questions to help people think and reason about God and their relationship with God.

28 And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”

Some people had never seen or heard John the Baptist, though probably most of the disciples had met him. By this time, John the Baptist had been beheaded by King Herod (Mark 6: 14-16); therefore, some in the places Jesus visited thought He was John the Baptist raised from the dead. The common belief was that Elijah would come before the Messiah. After this conversation, Jesus told them “Elijah has come” (Mark 9:12-13; Matthew 11:11-15).

29 He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”

Jesus wanted His first disciples to come to their own conclusions about Who He was and is: the Messiah and Son of God. He wants all who learn of Him to come to their own personal decisions and either accept or reject Him as Messiah, the Lord and Savior of the world. In Matthew 16:14-17, Jesus said His Father had revealed this truth to Peter. As Messiah, Jesus came as the fulfillment of God’s promise of redemption. If we are saved, we personally acknowledge that Jesus is our Lord and Savior.

30 And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus ordered their silence because He needed and wanted time (and some quiet times at that) to teach His disciples what it would mean for Him and them because He was the Messiah. Because of false expectations of what the Messiah would do in His first coming (overthrow the oppressors of the nation by force and rule as a visible King), if the news were spread that He was the Messiah, He would not have had time to teach or prepare His followers for what he would do in His first coming and later His second coming after His death and resurrection.

31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

In this verse, we see immediately why Jesus said to tell no one about Him. He had to undergo much suffering, and even though He told them very specifically what He had to undergo and who would reject Him and how – that He would be killed – we know that the disciples never could believe this until He was crucified. Jesus had to be raised from the dead and explain everything to them again, and open the Scriptures to their minds again that spoke about His first coming, before they could or would understand.

32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

Jesus did not keep secrets that would not eventually be shared with all of His disciples and accurately recorded in the Bible, the Word of God, for us. There are no so-called “secret teachings of Jesus.” Jesus taught openly to those He had prepared to hear and those who had prepared themselves to hear the Word of God. Jesus spoke openly to His disciples, but said very little to Pilate, to Herod, or to the priests at His trial. Peter began to rebuke Jesus because Jesus was not affirming Peter’s expectations of what the Messiah would accomplish.

33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

Peter rebuked Jesus openly before the other disciples which necessitated Jesus rebuking Peter openly before His disciples to avoid misunderstandings. He could not allow a misunderstanding regarding His mission to stand without refutation and spread to others. Perhaps Satan used Peter or put false thoughts in Peter’s mind because Peter had first set his thoughts, intentions, and desires on human things instead of divine things. If our hearts are set on human things, Satan can more easily use us

34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Now Jesus speaks to the crowds and the disciples and begins to reveal both the cost of discipleship and the way He would die to His disciples. Everyone knew very well what the cross was used for by the Romans and the suffering involved when dying on a cross. Following Jesus involves self-denial – not setting our minds supremely on human things to possess them or achieve them. Self-denial can involve suffering, being willing to suffer, and following Jesus as our Lord no matter what He requires according to the Scriptures. God will not contradict himself, and Jesus will not ask us to do anything the New Covenant or New Testament forbids us to do morally.

35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

If our focus is on doing whatever we can to save our physical lives, we may lose our spiritual lives – we will die spiritually if our minds are set on human things exclusively or supremely. We will live spiritually and enjoy eternity forever if we are willing to live in such a way for Jesus’ sake that we might die physically. Living for Jesus involves sharing the good news about

Him as Lord and Savior of the world as the Lord leads us, for we will not serve Him exactly the same (John 3:16).

36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?

By keeping focused on human things some people have almost literally “gained the whole world.” Some have acquired enough money to buy anything for sale. Some have made a great name for themselves by lavishly giving to causes in which they believe or to promote their own selfish or self-centered interests as a matter of pride or other reasons. Some of these people claim to be atheists; if so, what have they truly gained, if they have forfeited eternal life?

37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?

If we imagine some of the world’s most wealthy people – millionaires if not billionaires – they do not have enough money or possessions to live forever. The only way to live forever, to enjoy the eternal life that Jesus promised and not just everlasting existence, one must do what Jesus told Peter: set your mind on divine things and follow Jesus wherever He leads even though that might involve physical suffering and death.

38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

The generation in which we live, and unfortunately more or less every generation, has had some places where most of the people were adulterous (physically and spiritually) and sinful. Think of Sodom and Gomorrah, Jerusalem in 587 BC and 70 AD (when the city was twice destroyed), and the Jews, Romans, and others in Jesus' day. We should not be ashamed of Jesus and His words, but the people of this generation will try to make us feel ashamed. If we have felt ashamed in the past, we need to repent and ask Jesus to forgive us; for, He is coming back again visibly – and we will see Him! We do not want Him ashamed of us.

9:1 And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.”

If Jesus meant by this statement His final Second Coming, then He would have been wrong, but Jesus was never wrong. Since Jesus was never wrong and always spoke the truth, He meant something different. I believe Jesus referred to His resurrection from the dead. Before He rose, Judas had killed

himself; therefore, Judas tasted death before seeing or recognizing the kingdom of God coming with power. Peter, James, and John did see Jesus transformed on the mountaintop immediately after Jesus made this statement; therefore, in some sense they saw the kingdom of God coming with power in the transformation of Jesus and His subsequent actions. Other than Judas, all the disciples saw Jesus in His glorious resurrection power. Wherever Jesus the King is, He reigns, and there is His kingdom. His disciples and other followers saw that the kingdom of God had come with power when they saw Jesus raised from the dead. Later, representing the kingdom of God and the church, they received the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the kingdom of God coming with power in their own lives and in the church. With this power, they (the church) led, and the church still leads, many to receive the free gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus the King as their Savior. The gift of eternal life through preaching and teaching the good news is the greatest power and the greatest gift anyone can give between now and Jesus final Second Coming, for the kingdom of God is present today and yet to come, and someday we will see Jesus with the holy angels. [Feel free to leave your comments, conclusions, and thoughts as a Comment on the Bible Lesson Forum. We can learn from one another.]

Five Questions for Discussion

1. Jesus knew what people were saying about Him, and what His disciples were thinking about Him, so why do you think He asked them His question in Mark 8:27?
2. Today, who do people say Jesus is (or was)? What differences do their various beliefs make in the way they live and act, the way they treat others, and their futures?
3. Why do you think Jesus wanted His disciples to keep some truths secret for awhile? Jesus told us not to throw our pearls before swine or give what is holy to dogs. Relate that advice or command to keeping some truths secret from others from time to time.
4. Why might it be spiritually dangerous to trust in so-called secret beliefs about Jesus or secret teachings of Jesus that are not recorded in the Bible, but revealed in other books or revealed in other ways?
5. Give some examples of how people deny themselves and take up their crosses and follow Jesus today where you live and in other parts of the world.

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