

• *A significant turning point*

1. An invitation to have personal faith

• *The Messiah*

• *A different kind of 'Messiah'*

• *Jesus' demand that his Messiahship should not be prematurely revealed*

2. The disciples have come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah

• *At first little real understanding*

Mark 8:27–30 is obviously a very significant turning point in the gospel of Mark. Jesus is now travelling outside of the domain of Herod. He takes His disciples to Caesarea Philippi ^{□1}.

1. He invites them to have a personal and individual faith in Him. But who do they themselves think He is ^{□1}? They are not to just follow the opinion of others. The common guesses about who Jesus might be are insufficient. Jesus wants more than guesswork. He wants them to come to a sure and certain knowledge that Jesus is the Messiah. He asks them all – the word 'you' is plural in verse 29 – who they think He is. Peter replies as the spokesman of all the disciples. They are all agreed; they know that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed king of Old Testament prophecy ^{□2}. Jesus accepts what they say but does not want His Messiahship to be announced by them ^{□3}. Those who come to see Jesus as Messiah must come to that faith themselves. Any premature talk about Jesus as 'Messiah' will only lead to political ferment. Jesus is not what people popularly thought of as 'Messiah' – that is a soldier-king who would end Roman rule.

At this point it will be worthwhile for us to take note of the various places where Jesus demands that His ministry or Messiahship should not be prematurely revealed. Demons are forbidden to reveal who Jesus is, either by being silenced ^{□1} or being cast out and sent elsewhere ^{□2}. This is not difficult to understand. Testimony from demons is of no value. One should never listen to the devil even when he speaks the truth.

Jesus also asks healed people not to speak of their healing ^{□1}; it is a request which is invariably disobeyed. Again it is not difficult to see why Jesus issued this request. When the wish was ignored it invariably brought Jesus into premature conflict with authorities. Jesus was never in a hurry to be famous or to draw attention to Himself. Anyone who started calling Jesus 'Messiah' was likely to do more harm than good. The Jewish people had rather corrupt ideas about Messiahship. He was – in their thinking – to be a soldier-king who would remove Roman rule from Israel.

For similar reasons Jesus asked the disciples also not to reveal by being foolishly loud-mouthed, what they themselves had learned only slowly ^{□1}. This was partly a practical necessity. Jesus did not want to identify with the current view of Messiahship.

2. The disciples have come to a clear faith concerning Jesus' Messiahship. They had for a long time realized dimly that Jesus was the Messiah (as John's Gospel especially bears witness; ^{□1}), but the disciples' faith at first was muddled to an extreme. In the early days there were at least some disciples Jesus would not trust at all ^{□2}.

Mark has let his readers know all along that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. At the beginning of the gospel Mark told the reader that Jesus is 'Son of God' and 'Lord' ^{□1}. God said the same thing when He spoke from heaven at the baptism of Jesus ^{□2}. The demons have recognized Him ^{□3} and Jesus has referred to Himself as 'Son of Man' ^{□4} – although that title did not convey much at first.

^{□1} 8:27a

^{□1} 8:29

^{□2} 8:29

^{□3} 8:30

^{□1} see 1:25, 34; 3:12

^{□2} see 5:7

^{□1} 1:44–45; 5:43; 8:26

^{□1} see 8:30; 9:9

^{□1} see John 1:41, 49

^{□2} John 2:24

^{□1} 1:1, 3

^{□2} 1:11

^{□3} 1:24; 5:7

^{□4} 2:10, 28

• **Jesus claims about himself came more through what he did than what he said**

Jesus did not talk about Himself directly very much. His claims came more through what He did, the way He did things, and the subtle implications of what He said. His ministry said a lot without any excessive or premature claims having to be made. John said Jesus would be 'more powerful' than John himself ^{☞1} and this was obviously true as soon as Jesus began to minister. Even before Jesus' baptizing with the Holy Spirit ^{☞2}, Jesus had obviously supernatural power. He conquered Satan^{☞3}. He announced God's kingdom^{☞4} and put Himself implicitly into a position of leadership when He called people to be His disciples^{☞5}, naming them 'apostles', sending them, giving them commands with great authority.

^{☞1} 1:7
^{☞2} mentioned by John, Mark 1:8

^{☞3} 1:12–13

^{☞4} 1:14–15

^{☞5} 1:16–20

• **Teaching with authority**

Then there was Jesus' teaching. He taught with amazing authority^{☞1}, and was sometimes called 'Teacher' or 'Rabbi' ^{☞2}. He gives teaching about discipleship, about the kingdom of God, about tradition and law. If Jesus says others teach the 'doctrines of men' Jesus implies that He teaches doctrine that comes from God.

^{☞1} 1:22
^{☞2} 4:38; see also 9:5, 17, 38; 10:17, 20, 35, 51; 11:21; 12:14, 19, 32; 13:1; 14:14

• **Power over demons**

Also, Jesus shows great power over the realm of evil. He casts out demons. He implies that He is one who is stronger than Satan and who sets at liberty Satan's prisoners.

• **One who knows God and His will intimately**

Jesus' claims have come more in what He does than in titles He gives Himself. He preaches and teaches as one who knows God and God's will intimately and accurately. He acts as lord of demons and disaster, lord of the Sabbath, lord over death and disease, lord over wind and weather. He forgives sins.

• **'Son of Man' – an ambiguous title**

The title that Jesus uses for Himself is 'Son of Man' ^{☞1}. It is an ambiguous title and can be taken simply as 'I' or 'This man here' – yet it echoes Daniel 7:13 and has the potential of being used in a greater way. The disciples' title for Jesus is at first simply 'Teacher' ^{☞2}.

^{☞1} 2:10, 28
^{☞2} 4:38

• **A clear faith**

Through their experience of Jesus and His persistent invitation to have open ears and pay special attention to His creative miracles in which He fed thousands of people, eventually the disciples come to see Jesus' Messiahship more clearly than ever before. Jesus is, they believe, God's anointed, God's king, God's royal Son.

 <p>slices.org.uk</p>	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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