

Jesus reveals to His disciples that He will have to suffer and die as the Christ (Messiah), but they obviously do not understand. Their view of the Christ was based on a superficial understanding of prophecy. In order to help them understand, Jesus states what it truly means to be one of His followers and how that it will also require suffering and potential death.

Verses 1-26: Multitudes of people have been with Jesus for days and although He wanted to send them home, He compassionately wanted to feed them since they had not eaten in three days and might be too famished to make it home. After determining that they had seven loaves of bread and some small fish, Jesus proceeded to break the food and feed 4,000 men. Afterward Jesus and His disciples boarded a ship and sailed to the area of Dalmanutha, a town on the western coast of the Sea of Galilee. There, the Pharisees came to Jesus and demanded that He show them a sign from heaven to prove that He came from God. Even though He was capable of providing whatever sign they desired, Jesus refused to perform for such faithless people. He and the disciples then board a ship to cross the Sea of Galilee once again but neglected to bring food with them. Jesus, apparently thinking about the Pharisees' demand for a sign, states to the disciples that they should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. Confused, the disciples conclude that Jesus had said this because they had forgotten to bring bread. Jesus then reminded them of the 5,000 that He had fed (Mark 6:35-44) and the 4,000 (vs. 1-9), making the point that food was not a problem for Him. He rebuked them for their spiritual blindness and not understanding that He was not talking about physical bread. When they reached Bethsaida, a blind man was brought to Jesus for healing. After taking the man outside of town and healing him, Jesus insisted that he tell no one in the town.

27 And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? 28 And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

“And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns [villages] of Caesarea Philippi” – Jesus and the disciples leave Bethsaida and travel about 25 miles north to the area surrounding the city of Caesarea Philippi.

“and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?” – As they are traveling along the road toward Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks His disciples about what public opinion said about Who He is. This question is more than whether the public understands that He is Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph the carpenter. The question is about the spiritual/prophetic identity of Jesus. Jesus likely already knows what people think about Him and is apparently using this question to open the door to the ensuing conversation that will inform the disciples about His role as the Christ and the suffering that lay in His future.

“And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets” – One of the popular opinions was that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead, which was what king Herod believed (Mark 6:14). Other opinions believed Jesus was one of the OT prophets raised from the dead, with the most popular candidate being Elias (Elijah). This belief was likely based on **Mal. 4:5-6** “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” Most did not understand that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of this prophecy and that he was the forerunner of Jesus the Christ.

29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. 30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

“And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?” – Public opinion is frequently wrong about spiritual things, not being based on a correct interpretation of scripture, so Jesus isn't as much interested in such opinions as He is in what His disciples believe. Their spiritual standing and their effectiveness as witnesses of Him depend on their view of Him.

“And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ” – Peter said a lot of silly and mistaken things during his time with Jesus, but here he says exactly the right thing. The title “Christ” means “anointed” and is the Greek counterpart to the Hebrew word “Messiah” which means the same thing. Peter understood that Jesus was the Messiah that the OT prophecies predicted would come. Matthew expands on Peter's answer and gives us Jesus' response to him: **Matt. 16:16-17** “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Peter was demonstrating that he was saved because he was not expressing a human opinion, but rather saying what the Father had divinely enabled him to understand.

“And he charged [strictly warned] them that they should tell no man of him” – Matthew states Jesus' charge to the disciples a bit more explicitly after He began revealing to them that He must suffer before completing the mission His Father had for Him. **Matt. 16:20** “Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.” Apparently Jesus did not want anything to stand in the way between Him and the cross, so He stressed to the disciples the importance that no one know the things that He is telling them about His identity as the Christ and the things He must suffer. If that knowledge were commonly known then it might upset the divine timetable that Jesus was on and cause the crucifixion to not happen at the right time. After the resurrection, however, Jesus commanded them to go everywhere and tell everyone about Him (**Acts 1:8** “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”).

31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Jesus had not talked to them of the suffering that He must endure, His death on the cross and subsequent resurrection. At this point He begins teaching them about what was coming and why He, the Christ, must experience these things. Despite the fact that He taught them these things on multiple occasions between this time and their occurrence, the disciples were still surprised and did not understand when these things happened. In fact, they did not believe the witnesses who reported that Jesus had risen from the dead (Mark 16:9-14).

32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

“And he spake that saying openly [plainly; without ambiguity]” – Jesus did not use figurative language or parables to inform them of these things. He told them clearly that He was going to suffer, die and be raised again from the dead.

“And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him” – Peter arrogantly believed that he could “correct” the Son of God. Mark is characteristically concise in his description, but Matthew gives us a bit more detail (**Matt. 16:22** “*Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee*”). Peter was likely saying what the other disciples were thinking, and they could not believe that the Messiah would be treated in this way. This could not possibly be God’s plan for His Anointed One. Surely Jesus’ miracle working power would enable Him to resist anyone who wanted to harm Him.

33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

“But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter” – Jesus apparently recognized that Peter was expressing what all of the disciples were thinking, so He faced the group as a whole with what must have been a disapproving look. He then directed His rebuke toward Peter, the one who had spoken up to rebuke Him.

“saying, Get thee behind me, Satan” – Jesus commands Satan to get out of His way and stop being an obstacle. Jesus was not accusing Peter of being Satan, but was addressing the fact that Peter’s rebuke was a temptation from Satan intended to dissuade Jesus from accomplishing His Father’s will on the cross. Satan had already been tempting Jesus to disobey His Father and now Peter was unwittingly being used by Satan to do so once again.

“for thou savourest [to think on; to hold the same opinion] not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men” – Peter’s statement that Jesus should never have to go to the cross was in contradiction to the will of God. Instead of it being in tune with God’s will, it was consistent with the way men think: that pain, suffering and death should always be avoided. Satan uses the same thinking to draw men away from following God’s will to follow their flesh, which does not like to suffer. Peter was saying Jesus shouldn’t have to suffer and die and yet that was exactly what God’s will was for His Son.

34 And when he had called the people *unto him* with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.

“And when he had called the people *unto him* with his disciples also” – These people are apparently a crowd that had been following Jesus wherever He went. They had been walking behind Jesus and the disciples at a distance, but now Jesus calls them to come forward and join His disciples so that all could hear what He was about to say.

“he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny [to refuse to recognize] himself, and take up [carry] his cross, and follow me” – Obviously Peter and the other disciples did not understand what it meant to follow Jesus. They thought that the persecution and death that Jesus had spoken of was something to be avoided, but Jesus now explains the personal cost of being one of His followers. Denying oneself means that you do not recognize your own desires and interests and instead seek the interests of Jesus Christ. To carry one’s cross (a means of torture and death) means that you must devote your life to serving Him, even to the point of being willing to face death for Him if necessary. Jesus sets a high bar to what it means to follow Him.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it” – A man who seeks to avoid suffering and death rather than follow Jesus Christ will miss out on eternal life because he is not willing to be a true follower of Christ. Those who love Christ enough to follow Him even if it costs them their life are those who will gain eternal life.

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

“For what shall it profit [benefit] a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” – If a man has devoted his life to worldly gain, the result will be a net loss since he traded material gain (which is temporary) in exchange for the eternal state of his own soul. A missionary named Jim Elliot famously said “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

“Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” – Jesus is asking a rhetorical question to make the point that nothing in this world is worth losing your soul in order to gain. If the even whole world is not worth exchanging for one’s soul, what possibly could be?

38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Jesus expects His followers to be totally sold out to Him. If they are not willing to claim Jesus Christ and all that He taught in this sinful world (i.e. they are ashamed of Him) then they need not expect Him to claim them when He returns at His second coming. He will deny knowing them (**Matt. 7:22-23** “*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*”).