

*The passage from Chapter 8:27 - 30 is regarded as pivotal because from this point on a number of changes occur in Mark's Gospel. For example, Peter takes a more prominent role, the term "Son of Man" is used more frequently, there are more direct references to the cross and the suffering Messiah and the expectations of discipleship. Generally up to this point the true dignity of Jesus had remained generally unrecognised, but now Jesus is more open as to who He is and what is to happen.*

#### **VERSE 27.**

*Mark is not in the habit of identifying where incidents take place. The reference to Caesarea Philippi must be treated with interest as there may be some significance to the reference. Caesarea Philippi was found at the source of the Jordan River and was a gift by Augustus to Herod the Great. The area included a temple built in honour of the Emperor by Herod and the area also included a grotto consecrated to the Greek god, Pan. Philip in 3 B.C. rebuilt the neighbouring village of Paneas and named the new city in honour of Caesar. As the area had association with Hellenistic and Roman deities, Lane makes the suggestion, "It may be theologically significant that Jesus' dignity was first recognised in a region devoted to the affirmation that Caesar is lord." (Page 289.)*

*Notice that it is Jesus who takes the initiative. The normal teaching method of disciple and rabbi was for the disciple to ask the question. The limited understanding of popular opinion is paralleled by John's Gospel where the woman of Samaria (Chapter 4) and the blind man (Chapter 9) in their growing awareness of who Christ is, gradually ascend from seeing Him as man, as prophet, then as Messiah and Lord. It is also interesting to note that popular opinion identifying Jesus with John the Baptist or Elijah pick out two figures who were indirectly associated by tradition with the Messiah.*

#### **VERSE 29.**

*The "You" is emphatic. "And You, who do you say that I am?" Peter's reply is also emphatic. "You are the Messiah." The Messiah is a term that was used of priests, kings and prophets. Usually in association with them being especially chosen for a particular task and being endowed with God's Power. It was also used metaphorically of the patriarchs, of the people of Israel as a whole and even at one stage, of the Persian ruler, Cyrus.*

**Messiah.** *Jesus may have been reluctant to use the term because of its limitations and the fact that His concept of Messiahship would be different to the current Messianic hopes. Mark's version of Peter's confession of faith is inadequate. Notice that Matthew adds the words, "Son of the Living God" but it is nevertheless a step along the way and a recognition of Jesus as Divine. Remember the opening words of the Gospel, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, (the Messiah) the Son of God." Peter and the disciples had seen some of the truths but their concepts of Messiahship were still limited. This is evident by the rejection of Peter and the other disciples of the concept of a "Suffering Messiah."*

**"The Son of Man."** *Note the title that Jesus uses in this passage, "The Son of Man." Whenever this term is used it is Jesus normally using it of himself. It is rarely used outside the Gospels. Even though it is used in the Old Testament to describe men in general or to describe prophets with a special relationship with God, it is probably to be connected with Daniel 7:13 where it is used as a "Messianic" title. In inter-testament literature, "The Son of Man" is used to describe a mysterious Messianic figure that would come in the last days. Why did Jesus use it so frequently of Himself? The listeners and readers could be familiar with some of the Old Testament background of the title but its ambiguity might make it suitable for Jesus to use of Himself if He is trying to both reveal and conceal*

*His Messiahship at the same time. The term could be described as an "other worldly" figure who was coming in the Last Days or merely applied to an ordinary man.*

*In Jesus' sayings where the term "Son of Man" is used, it frequently refers to His suffering and His death. Here, some commentators suggest Jesus may also be assuming the role of the Suffering Servant featured in Isaiah, chapters 49, 52, 53.*

*When the term "must" is used, this is a reference to the Will of God.*

### **VERSE 33**

*Note the rebuke of Peter. In Matthew's parallel, Peter is praised for his insight and then rebuked. Could it be here that Peter is not rebuked for his lack of insight into the fact that the Messiah must suffer but rather the dissatisfaction that Jesus has with Peter trying to lead him, instead of Jesus leading Peter. (See references to the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52: 13, 53:12).*

### **VERSES 34-38**

*Read these verses with the mind of the original readers who again we assume were Roman Christians going through a time of persecution. These words would have been very pertinent to them. When Christ indicates that people must leave self behind (Verse 34), the verb is in a past tense that indicates that it is a definite act. When they are encouraged to take up a cross and follow Christ that is in a present tense which indicates a continuous act. Verse 38 is the first reference to the parousia or the coming of Christ in the future.*

## STUDY 7

## NOTES FOR LEADERS

## MARK 8:27-38

1. Imagine there is a large vacant block near your home. It has been sold to the local Hindu Society who plans to use it for the building of a large temple. Would you object?

*A pipe opener! Attitudes of hostility, indifference and tolerance will be expressed. Question 2 will probably be anticipated in the answers to Question 1.*

**Read Mark 8:27-38**

2. The sermon implies that Caesarea Philippi was an area deliberately chosen by Christ because of its religious associations. Which of the following is closest to your feelings about the development of non-Christian religions in Australia?
  - (a) Treat them as demonic and seek to rescue adherents of other faiths and convert them to Christianity.
  - (b) Respect other faiths and understand the cultural background and see the other faiths as incomplete and seek to point them to the sufficiency and finality of Christ.
  - (c) See other faiths as valid revelations of God but Christianity being the final revelation.
  - (d) Recognise the legitimacy of all faiths, Christianity being one of them.

*(a), (b) and (c) are all approaches which honour the uniqueness of Christ. The distinction between (b) and (c) is the use of the word "valid".*

3. **See Verse 27-29.**

Why do you think Jesus asked this question?

4. (a) Is "Messiah" an adequate title for Jesus?
- (b) What is the background for this term? If you don't know, ask your leader or see cheat sheet!
- (c) Which title for Jesus appeals most to you? Son of Man? Lord? Son of God? Messiah? Rabbi? Why?

*"Messiah" does not necessarily imply that Jesus is the **Son of God**. Nor does it require a **personal response** as does the title "Lord".*

5. (a) What is the Old Testament background for "Son of Man"?
- (b) Can you see a pattern in the way that Jesus uses the title? (See Mark 8: 37-38, 9:12, 10:33, 45)

*The pattern is that "Son of Man" sayings are usually associated with statements anticipating **future glory or the suffering of Christ**.*

6. **Read verse 33.** Is Peter treated too harshly here? What was there still for Peter to learn? Why do you think Jesus was so direct?

*Peter did not appreciate that the **Servant of God** could be the **Suffering Servant** or that the **Messiahship** and **suffering** could be associated.*

7. How would you react if you were spoken to in this way? How do you cope with confrontation?

*Some may be ultra sensitive and leave the Church!*

8. a. Think of Peter - How would his feelings have altered during the course of this conversation? Would there have been a permanent impact on his life?  
b. Can you think of a moment in your life that was a “turn around” event for you?

9. **Meditate on verses 34-38.**

- a. What changes might occur in your life if you took these words even more seriously?  
b. How should this make a difference to Christian service, giving, attendance and involvement in church life?  
c. How does this study inspire you to pray?

*You may refer to the sermon at this point and note the trends that are seeking to create a "Crossless Christianity".*