
The Indispensable Element

We have seen that “the Jesus mission” involves our relationships in our city, our world, our workplace, our friendships, and (next week) our families. In all these various venues of the Jesus mission, there is an indispensable element we all must have in order to carry out the mission: an intimate knowledge of Jesus Himself.

Mark 8:27–9:1

²⁷ And 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?" ²⁸ And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." ³⁰ And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

³¹ And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

¹ And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

Let's observe three primary ideas in this text:

1. We must know Jesus as the Christ. (8:27-29)

Presented to the disciples in Caesarea Philippi were many choices. Shrines to the gods had been erected there, including an altar to Pan, the great pagan god. We can only intelligently, faithfully devote ourselves to Christ if we renounce all His competitors. Notice that Jesus first asks what others think, but inevitably the question falls upon each one of us, “But who do you say that I am?” Amazingly, Peter comes up with the right answer!

2. We must know Jesus as the crucified Christ. (8:30-33)

We might wonder why Jesus strictly forbids them from telling others about him (just the opposite of His command in Matthew 28:18-20). Scholars speculate about this “messianic secret.” It seems that this command is given because, at this point, they only know Christ without His cross. Look how Peter responded to Jesus’ teaching about His future sufferings (how quickly the “answer man” falls from his exalted position!). Peter rebukes Jesus! Mercy! Jesus then explains to Peter that his theology was actually Satanic, as is the theology of all who try to present Jesus without His substitutionary atoning work on the cross.

3. Jesus must know us as crucified Christians. (8:34-9:1)

Jesus tells us two important things about “crucified Christians”:

- Crucifixion is required. (v.34)
As Amy Carmichael wrote, “Can he have followed far who has no wound nor scar?”
- Crucifixion is rewarded. (v. 35-38)
As Jim Elliot once wrote, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

Discussion Questions

- 1) Why is it important to study other religions and to dialogue with people who believe them?
- 2) How does Jesus perfectly fit the biblical title “Messiah/Christ”?
- 3) What are some contemporary versions of “cross-less Christianity” that you have heard? Why are they so damaging?
- 4) In what ways do we sometimes try to live as “cross-less Christians”?

Suggested reading:

[What Is A Biblical Christian](#)
by Albert N. Martin

Digging Deeper

- 1) What causes you at times to shrink back in the face of the world’s persecution of Christ and His followers? Have you ever caught yourself being ashamed of the gospel? How can you change that?
- 2) What positive steps can you take to deny yourself and take up your cross?