

## Who is the Christ?

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**Mark 8:27-38** <sup>27</sup> Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, "Who do men say that I am?" <sup>28</sup> So they answered, "John the Baptist; but some *say*, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." <sup>29</sup> He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ." <sup>30</sup> Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him. <sup>31</sup> And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He spoke this word openly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. <sup>33</sup> But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." <sup>34</sup> When He had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. <sup>35</sup> "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. <sup>36</sup> "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? <sup>37</sup> "Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>38</sup> "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

There was one professor in particular at ILC who always made you show your work. Even if you got the answer right, if you didn't get there the right way you still got it wrong. Similarly, some teachers want you to explain why on the true or false questions. Its not good enough to mark true or false you have to explain why it is true or false. The point isn't to get the answer right. The point is to understand the answer.

In our text Peter gets the answer right but he can't show his work. He doesn't understand what it means that Jesus is the Christ. That becomes very clear when he attempts to stop Jesus from going to the cross. Jesus makes it very clear that although he is right that Jesus is the Christ, he is still wrong.

We just confessed in the Nicene Creed with Peter that Jesus is the Christ and the son of God. But what does it mean that Jesus is the Christ? What does it mean for Jesus that he is the Christ? What does it mean for your life that he is the Christ? There are many people who get the answer right but still get it wrong.

So today we want to look at some commonly misunderstood passages about the Christ from the Old Testament. We want to understand these passages from God's point of view.

### The Christ will bring righteousness to the people.

**Psalm 72:2** 2 He will judge Your people with righteousness, And Your poor with justice.

**Isa 11:4 But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.**

**Jer 33:15 `In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David A Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.**

All these passages seem to be very clear. When the Messiah comes, he will bring justice to those who are oppressed. That sounds like a really great thing. We all know how the big guy tends to step all over the little guy. Wouldn't it be great to have a king who genuinely will not let that happen.

Considering these passages, it is not surprising that Peter attempts to stop Jesus from going to Jerusalem to die. Not only was Jesus not going to reign as king and make sure everyone got justice, but he was suggesting that he himself would be the object of great injustice.

However, God's idea of justice for the poor is very different from ours.

### **How does Jesus explain righteousness?**

A few weeks ago, the kids had the Sunday school story of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. That parable demonstrates for us what it means that the Christ will bring justice to the poor. The Pharisee believes himself rich not in earthly wealth but in righteousness towards God. He looks down on the tax collector. The tax collector is rich in earthly wealth but poor in spirit. He comes with a humble heart before God. It is the tax collector who goes home justified and righteous. Christ gives justice to the poor in spirit.

This is the righteousness and the justice which Jesus the Christ brings to the earth. He condemns the arrogant who think that they are good enough in themselves, and he gives the forgiveness of sins to the humble in heart, the poor in spirit.

### **Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Another important parable is that of the prodigal son. The older son believes it is unfair and unjust that the younger son who ran away from home and wasted all his inheritance should be given a party. The younger son agrees with the older son. Both agree that the right thing, the just thing would be to give a party for the older son. God disagrees. For him the just thing is to rejoice that his son who was lost has come home.

The justice which the Christ gives to the poor is to give forgiveness and the righteousness of God to the younger son who comes with a humble and repentant heart.

Just this last week the kids had the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Lazarus is poor and sick and without hope in this world and to him is given the riches of heaven. The rich man receives God's condemnation. God gives justice to the poor, to Lazarus, not on this earth but in eternity.

All of these parables illustrate what God meant when he through the prophet Isaiah foretold "with righteousness He shall judge the poor." Not that he would make the poor rich with earthly things, but that he would give to the poor in spirit, the riches of the kingdom, that is the forgiveness of sins.

Paul explains in Romans.

**Romans 3:26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.**

We make the same mistake as Peter when we come to Jesus seeking what we would call earthly justice. If we come to Christ complaining about what others did and how he ought to give us justice. If we come to Christ with the attitude that we deserve more.

When couples come for marriage counseling the sometimes come not to hear the word of God but to "get justice." They sometimes come with the attitude, "Pastor tell my spouse they are wrong and I am right." This is not the justice of Christ. The justice of Christ is that you a sinner are forgive therefore you ought to forgive others.

This happened to Jesus too, a man came to Jesus and said, "tell my brother to divide the inheritance." This seems to us a just cause. Jesus thinks differently. Rather than siding with the man Jesus rebuked him for caring more about earthly possessions than for his brother.

Martha asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her with the chores. Instead, Jesus gently rebuked Martha. He suggested that she ought to care more about the word of God than about serving.

The justice of Christ is that you a sinner are forgiven because Jesus died in your place.

**The Christ will reign from sea to sea.**

**Psalm 72:8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.**

**Psa 2:8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.**

**Dan 7:14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.**

Again, the Old Testament seems clear. The Christ when he comes will rule over all the earth. Again, Peter's response is not surprising. Jesus was predicting not only that he would not rule the whole earth but that he would die before he even had any kind of kingdom at all.

How does Jesus explain these passages?

In the parable of the Sower and the seed, Jesus explicitly begins that parable by saying, "the kingdom of heaven is like a man sowing seed." This parable makes it clear that the Christ will not reign like an earthly king through the threat of force, but rather through the power of the preaching of his word.

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. It isn't big and forceful like the roman empire but seems small and yet it grows and produces fruit.

The kingdom of God is like a king who arranged a marriage for his son. When many of the people refused to come to the party, the king didn't send out his armies. He sends out *messengers* to invite more people to come to his feast.

All these parables illustrate that the Christ rules not through the power of weapons and soldiers but through the preaching of the word of God.

The psalmist confirms this when he writes:

**Psalm 19:4 Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world.**

"Their words" means that it is through the preaching of the word by which the Christ reigns from sea to sea.

Jesus told Pilate:

**John 18:36,37 36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world . . . , "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."**

Again, Paul makes it clear in Romans:

**Romans 10:17-18 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world."**

These prophecies are fulfilled. Christ does reign from sea to sea for there is no corner of the earth to which the Word of God has not gone out. In all the world Jesus the Christ has those whose hearts are loyal to him. In this way Christ's kingdom extends to the ends of the world.

We make the same mistake as Peter whenever we think that politics is the answer to the world's problems. Voting for the right people will not change the world, because the problem is here in the heart. Who is in Washington is not nearly as important as who is the hearts of the people. Wherever God's does not rule through his word there is only sin.

The reign of Christ is in the hearts of his people.

In OT reading Abraham doubted God's promise. We too may often doubt God's promises. But open your eyes and look at the world around you. Don't look at all the sins and suffering but look instead look at what Christ has done. See the righteousness which Christ pours out on the poor in spirit. See how the word of God is preached even to the ends of the earth, so that Christ reigns in the hearts of those who are loyal to him.

**Psalm 72:18 Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, Who only does wondrous things! Amen**