

I. Jesus Asks the Common Question (18-19)

"Now it happened that as He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him. And He asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"

A. Some look backward to a recent move of God (19a) - "And they answered, "John the Baptist..."

B. Some look to a historical move of God (19b) - "But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen."

There are countless opinions to the question: who is Jesus and what is He doing?

II. Jesus Asks the Critical Question (20a)

"Then He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

III. Peter Gives the Theological Answer (20b)

"And Peter answered, "The Christ of God." **{thinking ahead to Messiah's Kingdom}**

IV. Jesus Gives the Deeper Answer (21-25)

A. Jesus clearly speaks of His own cost (21-22) - "And He strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, 22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

Jesus introduces the Kingdom principle of suffering before glory

B. Jesus clearly magnifies our own cost (23-24) - "And He said to all, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it."

C. Jesus provokes us to believe forward (25) - "For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?"

Living for Christ requires a commitment to ongoing self-denial. This commitment begins when we voluntarily step off of the throne of our lives. We refute our patterns and presumed right to self-govern. When we radically renounce our self-centeredness, we are able to live as a Christian. Apart from this, we are severed from the deepest meaning of what it means to belong to Jesus. A crucified Savior is not well served by self-pleasing, self-indulging people.