

ΣΥ Εἶ Ο ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ:
THE TRIUMPH OF DIVINE WISDOM IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to prove that in Mark 8:27-33, as presented within the Synoptic Gospels, the Messiah's ultimate triumph is realized only through the cross and resurrection, where God's sovereign plan meets the full weight of human and demonic rebellion. Hidden from human understanding, divine wisdom calls all to place their faith in God and follow His Messiah within this paradoxical framework of salvation.

Israel's Hope and the Messiah's Revelation

It is the first century AD, and Israel groans under the oppression of Rome. Herod Antipas, a puppet king, enforces Caesar's will on God's people, and the land trembles toward decades of unrest that will culminate in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD—just one cataclysm among many, characteristic for a nation that is both in covenant with and in controversy against God. Israel hopes for a Messiah¹ of immediate triumph and liberation, but despite Peter's Confession that Jesus is the Christ, He, in turn, reveals a shocking truth to His disciples: the Messiah must suffer many things, face rejection, be killed, and rise again (vv. 27-31). In this revelation, the reality of the messianic hope is revealed: true salvation comes only through the paradox of the cross and resurrection.

¹ Messiah (מָשִׁיחַ; مَسِيح) is the Semitic equivalent of Christ (ὁ Χριστός).and will be used throughout the remainder of this paper interchangeably; Alexander Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), 285.

Mark L. Strauss, "Messiah," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

The Theological Center of Mark

Macro-Level Introduced

The author, like the authors of the other two Synoptic Gospels, does not identify himself within the text. The early church, as early as 125 AD, believed a person named John Mark (who is frequently mentioned throughout the New Testament) to be the one who wrote this Gospel in Rome.² It was likely to have been written close to Saint Peter's death or as late as 70 AD.³

Mark's Gospel is structured around the pivotal segment of Mark 8:27-33, where Jesus is revealed as the Christ. The full identity of His messiahship unfolds from this point and is only fully revealed through His cross and resurrection. Throughout the narrative of Mark, Jesus demonstrates His authority while maintaining the "messianic secret."⁴ As tensions rise over His true identity, He is revealed as Christ by the Father to Peter and the disciples. This segment emphasizes God's redemption plan which human reasoning cannot comprehend apart from divine revelation. Throughout his Gospel, blind human understanding at enmity with God's Messiah unfolds alongside God's wisdom. These two trajectories intersect and reach their climax at the cross, where divine victory is accomplished and Christ is fully revealed to the world. In the

² Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Mark," 2025 Edition, *Soniclight.org*, <https://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf>, (27 October 2025), 1, 4.

³ Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Mark," 3.

⁴ William Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien: Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901); English edition, William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. The Rev'd James C. G. Grieg (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1971).

resurrection, both God's sovereign plan of redemption and Jesus' messiahship are vindicated.

This overarching pattern frames the pivotal turning point of Peter's Confession.

The Chiastic Center of Mark: Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστός

Jesus' ministry, up to this point, has focused on demonstrating His authority over creation, sickness, the demonic, and the forgiveness of sins. Yet, there remains a relative obscurity regarding His identity (Mk 8:1-8:26). The crucial segment where Jesus is proclaimed Christ, Mark 8:27-33, sits right at the center of the book of Mark within a chiastic structure (a-b-c-d-c-b-a).⁵ The following outline illustrates the chiastic structure of the Gospel of Mark, where each section corresponds with its mirror and Peter's Confession stands as the central revelation on which they anchor.

Figure 1. Chiastic Structure of the Gospel of Mark

- A. Mark 1:1-13: Messiah is Introduced
- B. Mark 1:14-6:56: Jesus Establishes and Manifests His Authority
- C. Mark 7:1-8:26: Rising Tensions and Hidden Identity
- D. Mark 8:27-30: Peter's Confession
- C. Mark 8:31-10:52: The Messiah Must Suffer and the Way of the Cross
- B. Mark 11:1-15:47: Jesus' Authority is Challenged and Opposed
- A. Mark 16:1-20: Jesus is Vindicated as Messiah in His Resurrection

⁵ For discussion of literary relationships (not primarily Greek syntactical analyses), see David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina, *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014).

Peter's confession marks a dramatic shift in Mark's Gospel.⁶ From here on, the narrative takes a sharp turn from an emphasis on public ministry to the journey to the cross. From this chiasmic center, the narrative moves from obscurity to clarity as it pierces its focus on the full revelation of Jesus as Messiah, ultimately demonstrated through His cross and resurrection (Mark 8:27-16:20). While some theologians reject any connection⁷ (and certainly the comparison can be taken too far and become forced),⁸ there is no coincidence that a blind man was healed in Bethsaida directly preceding Peter's confession. The God who opens the eyes of the physically blind now invites His disciples to gain spiritual sight, and it happens along a journey.

Place

Jesus and His disciples return south from the Tyre and the Sidon regions to the Decapolis (Matt 15:21, 29; Mark 7:24, 31) unto Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26) before reaching“ the villages of Caesarea Philippi” (Mark 8:27).⁹ Caesarea Philippi, a city associated with the exaltation of pagan

⁶ Lane, William L., *The Gospel according to Mark*, (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 288-290.

⁷ Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*, Vol. 1, (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K., William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 420-421; Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, The International Critical Commentary, (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 245.

⁸ Robert H. Gundry, 246; Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 218-219. The proposal that “the people” (οἱ ἄνθρωποι) in this segment is anaphoric, referring back to “I see men” (τοὺς ἀνθρώπους) in the previous segment, stretches the normal grammatical function of the article and is too far removed contextually.

⁹ Unless otherwise indicated all Bible references in this paper, except for the Greek text analyzed in this study (Mark 8:27-33), are to the New King James Bible (NKJV) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015).

deities and imagery of unquenchable fire and perpetual decay,¹⁰ serves as the setting in which Jesus will be revealed as the Christ. The region is located about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. According to Brian Algie, it held a shrine to the pagan god Pan during Alexander the Great's conquest of the area in the fourth century BC.¹¹ Then, around 2 BC, Philip acquired the region after his father Herod's death, expanded it as a center of pagan worship, and named it after himself and Caesar Tiberius.

In Matthew's parallel account, Jesus mentions "the gates of Hades" (Matt 16:18). While the reference has no direct connection to this region, it certainly carries spiritual significance. The city had been a stronghold of worldly and demonic powers. Human sacrifice was practiced with adults and children being thrown down into the cave.¹² In such a context, Jesus' declaration that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church emphasized His authority over death and darkness. Although some theologians interpret the phrase as only referring to the realm of the dead, in line with Jewish thought,¹³ the overall contextual point is clear: the Church participates in Christ's victory over all evil, encompassing both the darkest powers of the world as well as the ultimate defeat of Satan and death.

¹⁰ Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Mark," 2025 ed., *Soniclight.org*, <https://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf>, (27 October, 2025), 216-217.

¹¹ Brian Algie, "Caesarea Philippi," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

¹² Mark Hamlet, "Caesarea Philippi and the Final Exam," *Fathermarkhamlet.com*, 1 October 2020, <https://www.fathermarkhamlet.com/caesarea-philippi-and-the-final-exam/> (31 October, 2025).

¹³ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 624.

Time

Immediately following Peter's confession, Jesus makes His first prediction of His death and resurrection (Mark 8:31-33), which is followed about a week later by His transfiguration (Mark 9:1-13). Chronological studies of the four Gospels support the view that Peter's Confession occurred between the summer and October of Jesus' third year of ministry, placing this scene less than one year before the crucifixion.¹⁴ On this account, Peter's Confession situates the revelation of Christ within the final phase of Jesus' ministry, underscoring its urgency in the Gospel narrative.

Segment Introduced

For closer examination, the crucial passage under discussion is presented below in Greek, followed by an English translation prepared by the Author.

Mark 8:27-33

27. Καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς κόμας Καισαρείας τῆς Φιλίππου· καὶ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἐπηρώτα τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ λέγων αὐτοῖς, Τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι; 28. οἱ δὲ εἶπαν αὐτῷ λέγοντες [ὅτι] Ἰωάννην τὸν βαπτιστὴν, καὶ ἄλλοι, Ἥλιαν, ἄλλοι δὲ ὅτι εἷς τῶν προφητῶν. 29. καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπηρώτα αὐτούς, Ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι; ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Πέτρος λέγει αὐτῷ, Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστός. 30. καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν περὶ αὐτοῦ. 31. Καὶ ἤρξατο διδάσκειν αὐτοὺς ὅτι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν καὶ ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι ὑπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ τῶν γραμματέων καὶ ἀποκτανθῆναι καὶ μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναστῆναι· 32. καὶ παρρησίᾳ τὸν λόγον ἐλάλει. καὶ προσλαβόμενος ὁ Πέτρος αὐτὸν ἤρξατο ἐπιτιμᾶν αὐτῷ.

¹⁴ Joelle Yanko, "A Chronological Harmony of the Four Gospels (NKJV)," *ofhisglory.com*, Fall 2019, <https://ofhisglory.com/2025/10/26/the-life-of-christ-a-chronological-harmony-of-the-four-gospels-nkjv/> (26 October, 2025).

33. ὁ δὲ ἐπιστραφεὶς καὶ ἰδὼν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἐπετίμησεν Πέτρῳ καὶ λέγει, Ὑπαγε ὀπίσω μου, Σατανᾶ, ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.¹⁵

27. And Jesus and His disciples went into the villages of Caesarea Philippi; And on the way He was asking His disciples, saying to them, “Who do people say that I am?” 28. And they answered him, saying, John the Baptist, and some, Elijah, but others that you are one of the prophets. 29. And He was asking them, But who do you say that I am? Peter, answering, said to him, “You are the Christ.” 30. And He sternly warned them that they should not speak to anyone about him. 31. And He began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and to be rejected by the body of elders and the high priests and the scribes and to be killed and after three days to be raised; 32. And He was speaking the message openly. But Peter after taking him aside began to rebuke him. 33. But turning around and seeing His disciples He rebuked Peter and said, You get behind me, Satan, because you think not on the things of God but the things of humanity.¹⁶

Jesus is Revealed as Christ

Along the Journey

The Gospel of Mark presents this segment as a journey through the villages of Caesarea

Philippi (Mark 8:27):

Καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς κώμας Καισαρείας τῆς Φιλίππου· καὶ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ . . .

And Jesus and His disciples went into the villages of Caesarea Philippi;
And on the way . . .

¹⁵ Unless otherwise indicated, all Greek New Testament references in this paper are taken from: Aland, Barbara, et. al., eds, *The Greek New Testament*, 5th ed. (UBS5), (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 2014).

¹⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations from the Greek of Mark 8:27-33 are the author’s own translation.

From the opening phrase, Mark stresses the leadership of Jesus. While two subjects joined together with a conjunction typically have a plural verb, here the singular ἐξῆλθεν¹⁷ is used. An author will choose to do this in order to “highlight one of the subjects.”¹⁸ In this case, the first named, Ἰησοῦς, is being stressed. This occurs frequently with the phrase “Jesus and His disciples,” and serves to stress that it is the disciples who are following Jesus as He leads them from place to place.

Next, the phrase ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ sets the time frame for the segment at hand. While ἐν functions temporally in this instance, it also accompanies a dative of time, τῇ ὁδῷ. By this period in Koine Greek, the ἐν began to accompany the dative and increasingly replaced older temporal dative constructions.¹⁹ In any case, both ἐν and the dative of time serve to provide a temporal reference for the actions that follow. The difference is notable: one conveys a location on the road (i.e. “on the road”), and the other the time frame of a journey (i.e. “while on the way”).

On the other hand, the parallel verse in Luke’s Gospel recounts the scene as occurring while Jesus was praying by Himself with His disciples nearby (Luke 9:18). This seems to present two discrepancies. The first, that Jesus was alone and yet His disciples are with Him. Most scholars resolve this by understanding Luke's wording to mean that Jesus was apart from the crowds, while still accompanied by His disciples.²⁰ In this way κατὰ μόνας refers specifically to

¹⁷ ἐξῆλθεν: third-person singular, 2 aorist, active, indicative, deponent, from ἐξέρχομαι, with the inflected meaning “He . . . [and His disciples] went.” The aorist indicates a completed, decisive action (Mark 8:27).

¹⁸ Wallace, 401-402, 482.

¹⁹ Bill Mounce, “Greek Verse of the Day - Mark 8:27,” 2 May 2024, *Youtube.com*, 4:43, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHejIMq3OGg> (1 November, 2025).

²⁰ Alfred Plummer, 246; Joseph Benson, “Luke 9:18,” Benson Commentary, *BibleHub.com*, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/luke/9-18.htm> (31 October 2025).

Jesus being the only one praying at this time, as indicated by the singular use of the personal pronoun αὐτὸν and the singular participle προσευχόμενον (v. 18).

Secondly, Luke's setting seems to negate a translation of "on the road," and is better seen as descriptive of their journeying through Caesarea Philippi, which fits well within the semantic range of ὁδῶ.²¹ While at first glance Mark and Luke appear to present varied settings for Peter's Confession, when viewed together they show that it was during the journey through the villages of Caesarea Philippi that Jesus and His disciples found a solitary place to pray.

Grammatically, there are two things to note in this first parallel verse of Luke. First, Luke uses his typical transitional marker, καὶ ἐγένετο, to start off his segment (v.18). While he often uses this phrase as a narrative transition, he also uses it to signal the onset of new and significant moments in Jesus' ministry (Luke 2:15; 9:33; 11:1; 24:15, 30; 24:51). Secondly, the present tense προσευχόμενον functions as a temporal adverbial participle modifying the main aorist verb ἐπηρώτησεν. Along with the temporal use of ἐν, it becomes clear that it was while praying that Jesus began His interrogation.

Who Do You Say That I Am?

From the place of prayer, Jesus begins to question His disciples as though to probe their understanding. The rest of Mark 8:27 reads:

²¹ ὁδῶ: dative, feminine, singular, from ὁδός, meaning: (a.) a road; (b.) a journey or a way of life; Alexander Souter, 171; Cf. Matthew 3:3, τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου.

. . . ἐπηρώτα τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ λέγων²² αὐτοῖς, Τίνα με λέγουσιν²³ οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι;

. . . He was asking His disciples, saying to them, “Who do people say that I am?”

It is true that Jesus begins His questioning here, because the verb ἐρωτάω²⁴ is imperfect which, along with indicating an ongoing aspect, may also signal the beginning of that action.²⁵ It may be concluded that its use here conveys both that Jesus was actively questioning the disciples and that He initiated the dialogue.

A pressing issue to first address is the exact translation of Jesus’ question. Here, εἶναι²⁶ is functioning as an infinitive of indirect discourse, following a verb of saying. The infinitive construction, together with the accusative με, is translated “that I am,” with the two elements functioning together. This may not be immediately apparent. In Greek, the subject of an infinitive construction typically appears in the accusative. However, in Jesus’ question, “Τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι;” (which will also show up similarly in verse 29 as well), both τίνα and με are accusative, creating a potentially ambiguous construction.²⁷ Relying only on grammatical form would yield a nonsensical literal translation such as “Me people say who to be?” or, “Who people say me to be?”

²² λέγων: nominative, masculine, singular, present, active, participle, from λέγω, redundant participle with the main verb ἐπηρώτα (Mark 8:27).

²³ λέγουσιν: third-person, plural, present, active, indicative, from λέγω, with the inflected meaning “say.” As is typical with λέγω verbs, this is an instantaneous (aoristic or punctiliar) present: the action is completed at the moment of speaking and does not carry a continuous aspect; Wallace, 517.

²⁴ ἐπηρώτα: third-person singular, imperfect, active, indicative, from ἐπερωτάω, with the inflected meaning “he was asking.”

²⁵ Bill Mounce, “Greek Verse of the Day - Mark 8:27.”

²⁶ εἶναι: present, infinitive, from εἶμι, meaning “to be”(Mark 8:27); Wallace, 604.

²⁷ Wallace, 195.

These verses illustrate the importance of considering both syntax and lexeme in translation. Morphology and syntax alone cannot resolve such ambiguities; interpretation must take lexical meaning into account. For, normally, a personal pronoun such as *με* would be expected to function as the direct object of the sentence, but here it is the logical subject of the infinitive *εἶναι*, while *τίνα* functions as its interrogative predicate. The main clause provides the finite verb and subject (*λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι*), while the subordinate infinitive clause of indirect discourse supplies the content of what is said. Considering that both *τίνα* and *με* are accusative and, thus, pertain to the infinitive, the logical interpretation is to put *με* as the subject of *εἶναι* and *τίνα* as its predicate. A literal word for word rendering might then read, “who...me to be,” but when expressed in proper English it becomes, “Who do people say that I am?”

This is the very question the disciples begin to answer in Mark 8:28:

οἱ δὲ εἶπαν²⁸ αὐτῷ λέγοντες²⁹ [ὅτι]³⁰ Ἰωάννην τὸν βαπτιστὴν, καὶ ἄλλοι, Ἠλίαν, ἄλλοι δὲ ὅτι εἷς τῶν προφητῶν.

And they answered him, saying, “John the Baptist, and some, Elijah, but others that you are one of the prophets.”

While Matthew’s parallel account adds “Jeremiah” (Matt 16:14), Luke goes further and adds, “others say that one of the old prophets has risen again” (Luke 9:19). The public opinion that

²⁸ *εἶπαν*: third-person, plural, aorist, active, indicative, from *λέγω*. Followed by *λέγοντες*, nominative, masculine, plural, present, active, participle, from *λέγω*. This participle functions adverbially to the main verb *εἶπαν* as a redundant participle, reinforcing the main verb's action (Mark 8:28).

²⁹ Cf. n. 23.

³⁰ The bracketed *ὅτι* indicates that this conjunction appears in some manuscripts while others omit it. The inconsistency may be attributed both to Mark's less polished grammatical style and to the tendency of later scribes to smooth over difficulties in the text; Tim Widowfield, “A Redactional Seam in Mark 8:28?,” *Vridar.org*, March 6, 2018, <https://vridar.org/2018/03/06/a-redactional-seam-in-mark-828/> (1 November 2025).

Christ was one of the prophets who had risen from the dead reflected the widespread Jewish expectation of prophetic figures reappearing in the last days before the Messiah, rooted in Jewish traditions and prophecies (Malachi 4:5).³¹ This is reflected in the ongoing Jewish custom of setting aside a seat during Passover Seder in expectation of Elijah. Altogether, this public opinion of Jesus is pointedly summarized in the phrase “εἷς τῶν προφητῶν.” Here, a partitive genitive expresses that He is part of a larger group rather than fully possessing or defining His own category.

Continuing into Mark 8:29a, Jesus poses a second contrasting question, with the conjunction δὲ signaling the shift from the opinion of the public to the disciple's personal response.

καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπηρώτα αὐτούς, Ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε³² εἶναι;

And He was asking them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Like its earlier usage moments ago, ἐπηρώτα in the imperfect indicative conveys a continual past action, portraying Jesus as continuing to probe His disciples and initiate this ongoing dialogue.³³

³¹ Donald Spence Jones, *St. Luke*, The Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 1, Ed. H.D.M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (New York and Toronto: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 267; Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, The International Critical Commentary, (New York: NY, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 175.

³² λέγετε: second-person, plural, present, active, indicative, from λέγω, with the inflected meaning “you say.” The present tense here is punctiliar; Cf. n. 23

³³ Bill Mounce, “Greek Verse of the Day – Mark 8:29,” 9 May 2024, *Youtube.com*, 2:20, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBcGeo4Mrk4> (1 November 2025).

The New American Standard Bible (NASB) captures this sense with the translation, “And He continued questioning them.”³⁴

Additionally, Ὑμεῖς is emphatic, first because it is placed at the start of the sentence, and secondly because it is repeated in λέγετε. The purpose of Jesus’ dialogue is not to gather information about public opinion, but to draw a deliberate contrast between the speculation of the people with the revelation to be received by His disciples. Jesus prompts this revelation in His disciples to prepare them for the costly implications of His messiahship. They would need spiritual sight for the days ahead now more than ever.³⁵ As R. T. France puts it, it was time for them to learn “to recognize Jesus.”³⁶ They had followed their teacher, leaving their nets behind and had been entrusted apart from the crowds (who learned in parables) to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven (Mark 4:11). Now, with the cross ahead of them they must learn “whom it is that they have been called to follow, and of what that following must mean for them.”³⁷

Τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου

Instead of the indirect discourse use of the infinitive “I am” (με . . . εἶναι) as we see in Mark, in the parallel verse of Matthew, Jesus asks, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man (τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου), am?” (Matt 16:13). The Son of Man title is uniquely common in the

³⁴ New American Standard Bible (NASB) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1973), Mark 8:29.

³⁵ Lane, William L. *The Gospel according to Mark*, (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 290.

³⁶ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K., William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 326-327

³⁷ R. T. France, 326-327.

Gospels and the book of Acts and the disciples would have been familiar with Jesus' use of it by the time we arrive at Peter's Confession. In discussing this title, Bernard points to this very verse and observes that it was not directly a messianic claim that Jesus was making.³⁸ The title occurring in the very question implies that there must be a difference between Son of Man and Christ.

Yet within Daniel 7, 1 Enoch, and 4 Ezra, the phrase that originally denoted human frailty and mortality comes to signify the advent of a divine messianic figure who executes God's judgment on the nations and inaugurates His everlasting kingdom through a great and terrible apocalypse.³⁹ Though relatively rare across the Old Testament and apocalyptic texts, the title Son of Man may have begun to shape Jewish messianic expectations as early as the sixth century BC,⁴⁰ in the time Daniel was written.⁴¹ It is through this revelation of Daniel that earlier texts may have begun to be understood in a new light (Gen 3:15; Ps 2; 89), and it is at least a possibility that some may have traced the anticipated Messiah along this unfolding storyline even in Jesus' day (John 11:50; Matt 25:15). As evidenced in the Gospels, however, most of Jesus'

³⁸ J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, The International Critical Commentary, Vol. 1, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), cxxii–cxxxiii.

³⁹ Peter Schäfer, *6. The Son of Man–Messiah in the Fourth Book of Ezra*, Two Gods in Heaven: Jewish Concepts of God in Antiquity, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 54–58, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691199894-007> (27 October 2025).

⁴⁰ Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Daniel,” 2025 ed., *Soniclight.org*, <https://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/daniel.pdf>, (27 October 2025), 6.

⁴¹ Leslie T. Hardin and Derek Brown, “Son of Man,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016); For uses of the title that emphasize human frailty, mortality, and limitation in contrast to the eternal and powerful nature of God, Ezek 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; 5:1; 6:2; 7:2; Num 23:19; Job 16:21; 25:6; 35:8; Ps 8:4; 80:17; 146:3; Isa 51:12; 56:2; Jer 49:18, 33; 50:40; 51:43; For its use in reference to a divine, messianic figure, 1 Enoch 46:1–4; 48:2–10; 52:6; 69:26–29; 71:14; 4 Ezra 2:47; 7:28–29; 13:3, 26, 32, 37, 52; 14:9.

hearers did not recognize “Son of Man” as a messianic title, either from limited familiarity with the apocryphal texts or from the distortions of contemporary rabbinic teachings.⁴² As Bernard writes, “it was not a customary or familiar designation of the Messiah in the first century.”⁴³

Jesus begins linking this title to Himself in a linguistically unique way with the double article construction, “τὸν υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.” This construction may be known as Apollonius’ Canon, where in a genitive phrase the head noun and genitive noun both have an article.⁴⁴ These articles are primarily grammatical function markers, which can occasionally carry semantic weight. In this instance, however, the accusative and genitive articles serve mainly to differentiate the head noun from the genitive noun. Nevertheless, the phrase as a whole expresses a genitive of relationship, identifying Jesus as born of humankind, of course, as the Nicene Creed establishes, “Who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven. And was incarnate of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary and was made man.”⁴⁵

This was not a natural or common use in the Greek; a more natural expression might be “a man” or “a human being” (ἄνθρωπος or τις ἄνθρωπος). In this way, Jesus deliberately forms a unique title that serves as a self-reference. He develops the Son of Man title even unto divine and eschatological contexts (Mark 8:38; 13:26). Thus, while the Son of Man title is not immediately presented as messianic in the Gospels, Jesus expands and integrates its meaning to reveal that in

⁴² Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Matthew,” 2025 ed., *Soniclight.org*, <https://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/matthew.pdf>, (27 October 2025), 257-256.

⁴³ J. H. Bernard, cxxiii.

⁴⁴ Wallace, 238-240.

⁴⁵ Joseph Wilhelm, “The Nicene Creed,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11, (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11049a.htm>> (1 November 2025).

Him the vision of Daniel 7:13-14 is fulfilled wherein, “one like the Son of Man” is made equal with God.

Of course, the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13-14 was always explicitly divine, sharing the throne of God and all of the characteristics, sovereignty, and glory of God.⁴⁶ Yet, it was only in Christ that this Son of Man figure begins to arise out of its obscurity. Interestingly, Jesus did not go around proclaiming Himself the Christ, though He did not deny the title when others applied it to him (Matt 26:63-64; Mark 14:61-62; John 11:27). By using the title “Son of Man,” Bernard notes, Jesus revealed Himself not only as the Jewish Messiah (with all of its misconstrued cultural assumptions at the time), but as the redeemer of all humanity. Moreover, it was His delight in His superabundance of mercy to become for us the Son of Man, and it is the honor of humanity, indeed their duty and salvation, to confess Him as the Christ.⁴⁷

Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστός

Peter decisively answers in Mark 8:29b, “You are the Christ,” with ὁ Χριστός placed in a convertible proposition of a predicate nominative position, with the subject Σὺ:⁴⁸

ἀποκριθεὶς⁴⁹ ὁ Πέτρος λέγει⁵⁰ αὐτῷ, Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστός.

⁴⁶ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 171-175.

⁴⁷ J. H. Bernard, cxxii–cxxxiii.

⁴⁸ Daniel B. Wallace, 40-42.

⁴⁹ Ἀποκριθεὶς: nominative, masculine, singular, 1 aorist, passive, participle, deponent, from ἀπόκρινομαι, functioning as a redundant participle with the main verb of the sentence, λέγει. λέγει: third-person, singular, present, active, indicative, from λέγω, with the inflected meaning “he says.” Together with the redundant participle (see also Wallace, 625), it translates as “Answering . . . he says” (Mark 8:30).

⁵⁰ Cf. n. 49.

Peter, answering, said to him, “You are the Christ.”

In this construction the subject and the predicate nominatives are equally interchangeable, so $\Sigma\upsilon$ and $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ can be identically exchanged. In this way, He equates Jesus with the Christ. The nominative personal pronoun, $\Sigma\upsilon$ is emphatic and here contrasts with the former partitive genitive, “one of the prophets” (v. 28). Jesus is not one of a group, but as Wallace explains, “in a league by Himself.”⁵¹ Additionally, the fact that $\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ ⁵² is in the indicative mood is significant because, by it, Peter expresses the certainty of confession. If Peter would have used the subjunctive mood, it would be expressed as a probability or possibility. History would have been left with “Peter’s Guess” rather than Peter’s Confession (for instance, $\Sigma\upsilon \tilde{\eta} \acute{o} \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$, “You might be the Christ”).

$\acute{o} \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma \tau\omicron\upsilon\tilde{\theta} \Theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon \tau\omicron\upsilon\tilde{\zeta}\omega\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma$

Matthew expands Peter’s confession with the added phrase “the Son of the living God” ($\Sigma\upsilon \epsilon\acute{\iota} \acute{o} \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma, \acute{o} \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma \tau\omicron\upsilon\tilde{\theta} \Theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon \tau\omicron\upsilon\tilde{\zeta}\omega\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma$, Matt 16:16). He thus reiterates the predicate nominative, “ $\Sigma\upsilon \epsilon\acute{\iota} \acute{o} \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$,” and adds a genitive of relationship with $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ in the nominative and $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tilde{\theta} \Theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon \tau\omicron\upsilon\tilde{\zeta}\omega\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma$ in the genitive positions. The genitive of relationship here stresses the familial relationship Christ has with the Father, wherein the family relation noun $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ is accompanied by the progenitor.

⁵¹ Wallace, 321.

⁵² $\epsilon\acute{\iota}$: second-person, singular, present, active, indicative, from $\epsilon\iota\mu\acute{\iota}$, with the inflected meaning “You are.”

While Mark focuses on the decisive and direct identification that Jesus is the Christ, Matthew stresses His divine identity with full force and adds a layer of theological specificity.⁵³ That is, Jesus is God’s unique Son, sharing in the divine hypostasis, an ontological participation in the essential *ousia* of the living God.⁵⁴ Further, ζῶντος is a present active participle functioning as an attributive qualitative adjective modifying Θεοῦ.⁵⁵

In his work “Against Heresies,” Irenaeus shows that it is God who takes the life in Himself and bestows it upon humanity through His Son:

For as those who see the light are within the light, and partake of its brilliancy; even so, those who see God are in God, and receive of His splendour. . . And for this reason, He, [although] beyond comprehension, and boundless and invisible, rendered Himself visible, and comprehensible, and within the capacity of those who believe, that He might vivify those who receive and behold Him through faith. . . For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God. For if the manifestation of God which is made by means of the creation, affords life to all living in the earth, much more does that revelation of the Father which comes through the Word, give life to those who see God.⁵⁶

In the same way, Matthew emphasizes that it is in Christ—active, personal, and dwelling among us—that God moves from veiled to fully expressed; alive in the world (Matt 1:23; John 1:14). In Christ, the revelation of God moves from temporal (“at various times,”) fragmented (“in various ways,”) and mediated (“to the fathers by the prophets,”) forms to a full, direct, and final revelation, revealing the fullness of His life and Person (Heb 1:1-3).

⁵³ Danial B. Wallace, 83.

⁵⁴ William Richey Hogg, et al., “Christianity,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 23 Oct. 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity>, (27 October 2025).

⁵⁵ Wallace, 618.

⁵⁶ Irenaeus of Lyons, “Against Heresies,” Book IV, Chapters 5 and 7, trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. C. Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103429.htm>, (October 31, 2025).

Up to this point in the Gospels, Jesus' identity as the Son of God has been acknowledged only by the demons He exorcises and by the disciples present at the miracle on the sea (Mark 3:11; Matt 14:33). It is only later in the Gospel narratives that Jesus explicitly refers to Himself as the Son of God or openly affirms the title (John 10:36; 11:27; Luke 22:70). This raises the question of the distinction between the titles "Son of God" and "Christ." The term *χριστός* (literally "anointed one")⁵⁷ originally designated Israel's expected king, anointed by God as His representative on earth (1 Sam 10:1; 12:3; 15:1). In the New Testament, it is applied to Jesus as the Messiah, recognized by His followers as God's appointed king in accordance with the messianic role. Over time, the term increasingly came to function as a proper name rather than a title.⁵⁸ In contrast, the Son of God title emphasizes Jesus' unique relationship with God. However, unlike the Son of Man title, which draws on Daniel and apocalyptic writings, "Son of God" reflects a novel concept articulated by both demons and the disciples to express Jesus' divine identity to the Father in a way that appears to be revelatory. By this means, The New Testament interprets and fulfills the royal son motif of the Old Testament (Psalm 2; 2 Sam 7) in Christ.

Τὸν Χριστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ

Finally, in Luke's formulation, "the Christ of God" (Τὸν Χριστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, Luke 9:20), the emphasis falls not on an elaboration of Jesus' divine identity and sonship as in Matthew, or on a direct equation of who He is as in Mark, but rather on Jesus' divine commissioning.

⁵⁷ Cf. n. 1

⁵⁸ Alexander Souter, 284–285.

Through the genitive of source, Luke portrays Jesus as the Christ who is appointed and sent by God (John 3:16).

Collectively, the three Gospel accounts present a comprehensive theological portrait of Jesus as both fully human and fully divine. The dynamic nuances among the Gospels in this single event demonstrate how revelatory Peter's Confession truly was. In the combined formulation of all three accounts, "Son of Man," "the Christ," "the Christ of God," and, "Son of the living God," the question of Jesus' identity is answered.

The Father's Revelation

If Peter's confession is the central point of the Gospel of Mark, then certainly "who do you say that I am?" is the central question. Matthew's parallel account interprets the purpose of Jesus' two contrasting questions among the Synoptic accounts by an additional contrast. There, Jesus draws out the crucial distinction between human reasoning and divine revelation, declaring that it was not "flesh and blood" that revealed this truth to Peter, "but my Father who is in heaven." (Matt 16:17). The Greek words "flesh" (σάρξ) and "blood" (αἷμα) highlight the frailty and limitations of human understanding, especially in regards to their fallen nature.⁵⁹ Humanity, born in sin and prone to spiritual blindness (even enmity against God) could not see this truth (John 6:44; Rom 8:7). It was the Father's revelation that enlightened Peter's understanding,

⁵⁹ Gerhard Friedrich, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. VII, (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 128-131.

offering a glimpse of the restored communion with God that had been lost in the Fall, when humanity turned to its own understanding (Gen 3:6-7; Eph 1:17-19).

The Paradox of Divine Revelation

This contrast between human understanding and divine wisdom provides the backdrop for Jesus' abrupt warning in Mark 8:30, which emphasizes the messianic secret:

καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν περὶ αὐτοῦ.

And He sternly warned them that they should not speak to anyone about Him.

The verb ἐπετίμησεν⁶⁰ means "to sternly warn" (v 30).⁶¹ It is a term used to describe Jesus' rebuke of demons and His power over creation (Mark 1:25; 3:12; 4:39). Its use here is striking, especially given that it reappears twice more within the immediate context when Peter rebukes Jesus and Jesus, in turn, rebukes Peter (vv. 32-33). While the term has a range of meaning, it is best understood here as a stern warning rather than a drastic rebuke. Nonetheless, its use here underscores the gravity of the prohibition.

The warning is articulated in both Mark and Matthew through the ἵνα-subjunctive content clause, "ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν,"⁶² which functions substantivally as the direct object of the main

⁶⁰ ἐπετίμησεν: third-person, singular, aorist, active, indicative, from ἐπιτιμάω, with the inflected meaning "he sternly warned" (Mark 8:30).

⁶¹ Alexander Souter, 95; Gerhard Kittel ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. II, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 626.

⁶² λέγωσιν: third-person plural, present, active, subjunctive, from λέγω, with the inflected meaning "they should tell." Combined with ἵνα μηδενὶ, it forms an ἵνα + subjunctive substantival direct object clause (also known as Content ἵνα clause), expressing what Jesus' warned them; Cf. n. 63.

verb ἐπετίμησεν (Matt 16:20; Mark 8:30).⁶³ This clause specifies the substance of the warning. In Mark, the prohibited content is expressed very generally, “περὶ αὐτοῦ,” treating Jesus’ messiahship as implicit. Matthew, on the other hand, is explicit in His description, adding the indirect discourse ὅτι clause, “ὅτι αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός.”⁶⁴

Luke provides even further detail. Whereas Mark introduces Jesus’ teaching on His suffering with “Καὶ ἤρξατο διδάσκειν⁶⁵ αὐτούς” (“And He began to teach them,” Mark 8:31), and Matthew with “Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς δεικνύειν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ” (“From that time Jesus began to show His disciples,” Matt 16:21), Luke dramatically ties the prohibition to His teaching: “Ὁ δὲ ἐπιτιμήσας αὐτοῖς παρήγγειλεν μηδενὶ λέγειν τοῦτο, εἰπὼν ὅτι Δεῖ τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν” (“And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, ‘The Son of Man must suffer many things,’” Luke 9:21-22). There, the participle εἰπὼν "saying," in verse 22 modifies the nearest main verb in verse 21 παρήγγειλεν "[he] commanded." Most see both ἐπιτιμήσας and εἰπὼν as circumstantial participles amplifying the main verb παρήγγειλεν.⁶⁶ Note, all three terms are aorist and so may be seen as contemporaneous.⁶⁷

⁶³ Wallace, 475.

⁶⁴ Wallace, 457.

⁶⁵ διδάσκειν: present, active, infinitive, from διδάσκω, with the inflected meaning “to teach.”

⁶⁶ W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol 1, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910), 530; Gene Brunow, “Luke: Chapter 9,” *Genesbrunotes.com*, https://genesbrunotes.com/images/Bible_Study_Notes_/BIBLE_-_LUKE_-_Chapter_9.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com (6 November 2025)

⁶⁷ Wallace, 624-625.

From these three parallel accounts, it becomes clear that Jesus strongly prohibited the disciples from disclosing His messiahship in particular, and that this messianic secret was dynamically connected to the cross.

The paradox of divine revelation may be one reason for this concealment, wherein God's self-revelation can lead those without faith to a further hardening of heart. Yet, even in this, He does not violate human free will (Exodus 4-10). In His foreknowledge, God mercifully knows when and how to reveal Himself, lest their unbelief intensify. Therefore, God often veils the fullness of revelation so that all might yet come to salvation in the fullness of time, with both individual and corporate ramifications. As Jesus' parables suggest, this dynamic was already at work while He preached to the crowds, for He spoke to them only in parables (Mark 4:11-12; John 12:39-40).⁶⁸

Alternatively, as demonstrated in other instances where Jesus' commands to silence were disobeyed, the disciples may have already been aware of the consequences to face them should they disobey: overwhelming crowds that would hinder Jesus' movement and the misdirection of public focus from understanding His messiahship to mere wonder at His miracles (John 6:26-28; Mark 1:43-45; 7:36).

Moreover, the Church was to be built upon the full revelation of Messiah, and this necessitated that His identity be withheld until after His cross and resurrection which would most perfectly reveal it, as Jones writes:⁶⁹“ to give the people time to form a proper opinion, to prevent

⁶⁸ Irenaeus of Lyons, “Against Heresies,” Book IV, Chapter 29.

⁶⁹ Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 150.

them from rising into premature opposition [or misplaced glorification], to allow them no valid excuse if they rejected him at the last...”⁷⁰

To Build the Foundation of the Church

So it is, this revelation was intentionally limited to the disciples for the time being. Mark omits the extended sayings found in Matthew, where Christ expounds on the authority, foundation, and victory of the Church (Matt 16:18-19). Even so, the Petra-Petros passage indicates that Jesus was, in this moment, laying the foundation of the Church on the true knowledge of God starting with the Twelve. Moreover, it may be that their hearts, save for Judas, were prepared to receive this truth without hardening against it.

The disciples had to learn that His mission was a leading through the cross unto resurrection before Jesus as Christ was to be preached publicly. They also must first confront their own misconceptions of Messiah before facing the crowds who hold the same misunderstandings. This is especially true in light of the Jesus’ upcoming, shocking truths and the ensuing confusion of the disciples.

In this way, verse 30 functions as a pivot between the disclosure of Jesus’ identity and the preparation for misunderstanding, including His first Passion prediction. The sharp tension between Peter’s confession and Jesus’ command to remain silent constitutes the fourth major contrast noted so far across the Synoptic Gospels. Once again, Mark is highlighting the interplay between divine revelation and human misunderstanding.

⁷⁰ Donald Spence Jones, 267; Robert H. Gundry, 427.

The Divine Necessity of the Cross

Jesus began to teach them, in the truest sense, for it is here that He first begins to expand the mystery of the suffering Messiah in Mark 8:31:⁷¹

Καὶ ἤρξατο διδάσκειν αὐτοὺς ὅτι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν. . .

And He began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things. . .

In what may possibly be an implicit literary move from cause to effect, Jesus leads the disciples from Peter's Confession to the necessity of His Passion. Across the Synoptic Gospels the term δεῖ seems to draw a direct inference from the revelation of Jesus' messiahship unto His suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection. The term governs four infinitives that follow after: παθεῖν,⁷² ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι,⁷³ ἀποκτανθῆναι,⁷⁴ and ἀναστῆναι.

We find again in Mark 8:31 that, while the infinitive typically has its subject in the accusative, there are two possibilities. Here, τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου and αὐτοὺς are both in the accusative. Context shows that τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is the subject of the infinitives, while αὐτοὺς functions as the direct object of Jesus' teaching.⁷⁵ From a grammatical standpoint, it is

⁷¹ Gould, Ezra P., 153.

⁷² παθεῖν: aorist, active, infinitive, from πάσχω, with the inflected meaning "to suffer" (Mark 8:31).

⁷³ ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι: aorist, passive, infinitive, from ἀποδοκιμάζω, with the inflected meaning "to be rejected" (Mark 8:31).

⁷⁴ ἀποκτανθῆναι: 1 aorist, passive, infinitive, from ἀποκτείνω, with the inflected meaning "to be killed" (Mark 8:31).

⁷⁵ Wallace, 196.

not strictly accurate to say that Jesus is speaking here in third person (though it is possible),⁷⁶ because Mark is reporting His words through the indirect discourse use of the infinitives παθεῖν, ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι, ἀποκτανθῆναι, and ἀναστῆναι. With τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου as their subject, these infinitives are governed under the verb δεῖ, and the conjunction ὅτι. This construction emphasizes that this was in fact, the reported speech and content of Jesus' teaching.

Why Must the Christ Suffer?: A Hermeneutical Inquiry

The Meaning and Function of δεῖ in Mark 8:31

The questions that remain unanswered with δεῖ are: Why is this necessity established, and by whom is it decreed? Is the Passion of Christ an event that is inevitable, divinely ordained, or determined by other circumstances? These questions lie at the heart of theological debates concerning the “theological δεῖ.” Indeed, δεῖ may have a variety of meanings as the following definition demonstrates:

δεῖ: to be that which must necessarily take place, often with the implication of inevitability—‘to be necessary, must.’ δέον ἐστὶν ὑμᾶς κατε-σταλμένους ὑπάρχειν ‘it is necessary for you to calm down’ Ac 19.36; ὅταν δὲ ἀκούσητε πολέμους καὶ ἀκοὰς πολέμων, μὴ θροεῖσθε δεῖ γενέσθαι ‘don’t be troubled when you hear (the noise) of battles (close by) and news of battles (far away); such things must happen’ Mk 13.7. It is impossible to tell in a context such as Mk 13.7 whether δεῖ implies mere inevitability of an event or whether the events are somehow part of the plan and purpose of God. The latter interpretation could only be derived from broader theological implications and not from the meaning of δεῖ itself.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Cf. Wallace, 240. While debated, some scholars argue that most of the "Son of Man" sayings are not original to Jesus, but instead reflect the viewpoint or traditions of later sources. This paper, however, does not engage with this position.

⁷⁷ Johannes P. Louw, ed., “δεῖ,” *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, Vol 1, Ed. Eugene A. Nida (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1988), 71.33.

Scholarly Interpretations of the “Theological δεῖ”

Peter-Ben Smit examines the concept of the “theological δεῖ” or “divine δεῖ,” tracing it back to the ancient exegetical practice called *passivum divinum*, which misread passive verbs without an explicit subject as implying God as the agent.⁷⁸ In the 20th century, various scholars extended this interpretation, going as far as to see δεῖ as meaning “God wills it.”⁷⁹ This was accompanied with a portrayal of the New Testament that was rigidly orchestrated by divine control. Smit, however, emphasizes that in many cases (including Mark 8:31) the text deliberately omits the agent, creating a literary and theological gap that invites mystery into the text rather than fatalistic determinism.⁸⁰ In this way, δεῖ can be used to predict events rather than attribute them to God’s will.⁸¹

Smit argues that while Christ does connect His Passion to “the things of God” (Mark 8:33), this is contextually derived rather than inherent in the term. For instance, the disciples’ misunderstanding shows that δεῖ did not explicitly convey to them any inherent divine agency. He goes as far as to argue that a better translation of δεῖ would be “it is fitting” rather than “it is necessary.”⁸² That, to read any further into the theological gap would risk imposing a reading

⁷⁸ Peter-Ben Smit, “Questioning Divine Δεῖ: On Allowing Texts *Not* to Say Everything,” *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2019), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26745115> (30 October 2025), 40-41.

⁷⁹ Peter-Ben Smit, 44-46.

⁸⁰ Peter-Ben Smit, 43-44.

⁸¹ William L. Lane, 296. Lane describes Jesus’ teaching in Mark 8:31 as a “prophetic utterance,” though he does not address the verb δεῖ.

⁸² Peter-Ben Smit, 49-50.

beyond the text.⁸³ Ultimately, Smit contends that δεῖ does not require a clear implied agent, and that the *passivum divinum* was a literary technique *purposefully* used to indicate necessity while obscuring the actor. He, therefore, advocates retiring the concept of the “theological δεῖ” to preserve the interpretive openness of the text.⁸⁴

Gould translates δεῖ as “it is necessary” in light of its theological implications, understanding Christ’s Passion as primarily necessitated by God’s divine purpose and central to the Gospel.⁸⁵ While δεῖ can denote a variety of necessities (arising from circumstances, logic, human or social obligation, or inevitability), it is contextually true that Christ’s Passion is certainly tied to divine purpose as foretold by the prophets.

In addition, it is worth noting that many biblical texts convey God's will without the presence of δεῖ (Matt 26:39; John 6:38). Nevertheless, we find that in this particular instance, δεῖ exhibits a curious absence of an enactor of the necessity. This absence does not simply invite the reader to focus on what is necessary (the Passion) as Smit argues,⁸⁶ but it invites reflection as to why. Approaching these texts through the lens of early church theology on God's sovereignty and human free will may reveal a paradox that illuminates this question.

⁸³ Peter-Ben Smit, 50.

⁸⁴ Peter-Ben Smit, 53-54.

⁸⁵ Ezra P. Gould, 153.

⁸⁶ Peter-Ben Smit, 54.

Divine Sovereignty and Human Agency

In considering the teachings of Irenaeus, God's will (including His sovereignty and providence) operates in perfect balance in the fallen world without nullifying human free will.⁸⁷ Thus, the Messiah's Passion and resurrection are "necessary" primarily due to God's sovereign acts that are redemptive towards sinful humanity. That is to say, Christ's Passion lies right at the intersection of the inevitable manifestation of human sin and the sovereign redemptive acts of God, and both are foreknown by God. Christ's death was divinely ordained, and therefore necessary, on at least two counts. First, when God created humanity He foreknew the Fall and ordained redemption through the cross before the foundation of the world. By condemning sin in the flesh of Christ, God opened a doorway for humanity's redemption through His propitiatory act and for this ultimate purpose, "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him" (Isa 53:10; Rom 8:3; 1 John 2:2). Note, however, that this too, though foreknown, was in response to the free willed Fall (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet 1:20).

Second, within that framework of God's creation and salvation plan, it was inevitable that humanity would, of their own volition and free will, reject God. In examining Jesus as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Christ's Passion is not simplistically a divine decree imposed upon human history (Rev 13:8). Rather, it is a manifestation of God's foreknowledge where, in His sovereignty He interacts with human free will to produce a way of salvation. That is to say, God does not override human free will at any point to accomplish the crucifixion. Rather, He foreknew the salvific plan, that pulling from the wicked earth a victorious

⁸⁷ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, Book IV, Chapter 37.

bride, who loves him freely, would necessitate His own rejection by those who do not choose him. This may also be seen within the framework of the mystery of the Church which Paul speaks of through his Epistle to the Ephesians. In this way, while the divine will encompasses the crucifixion and sets humanity in motion, it is also human agency that makes the suffering and rejection and killing of the Messiah inevitable.

While it is true that the disciples most likely did not understand the term $\delta\epsilon\iota$ to carry the force of “God wills it,” it is just as likely that they lacked the theological formation or spiritual insight to grasp the mystery of the cross and why it would be necessary. They shared the prevailing cultural expectation of a triumphant Messiah rather than a suffering one. Accordingly, while the idea that $\delta\epsilon\iota$ by itself conveys an explicit connection to God’s will may be safely rejected, it should still be concluded that Christ’s Passion is certainly situated at the very center of God’s foreknowledge and redemptive plan. In this context, the necessity of Christ’s suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection brings the disciples to the very intersection where divine sovereignty meets human sin.

In the Scales of the Sanhedrin

Notably, it is not Roman oppression that Christ must first face in His mission to save the lost sheep of Israel, but rather their false shepherds, who, through the harlotry of political alliances are on a trajectory to not only have Messiah killed but to embrace the Antichrist in His stead (2 Kings 16:7-9; Is 7:1; 56:9-12, 14-15; Ez 16:26-34; 23:1-8, 20-21; Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:3-4). Although the exact composition of the Jewish governing body in the first century

is not totally clear, the groups mentioned in Mark 8:31 are identified as the Sanhedrin (Matt 26:57-68; Mk 14:53-65):⁸⁸

... καὶ ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι ὑπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ τῶν γραμματέων καὶ ἀποκτανθῆναι . . .

... and to be rejected by the body of elders and the high priests and the scribes and to be killed . . .

This supreme council governed Jewish affairs and decided on Jewish law. The three groups, πρεσβυτέρων, ἀρχιερέων, γραμματέων. are all in the genitive case for they are all governed by the same preposition, ὑπὸ which acts as a bridge between the the verb ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι and the Sanhedrin.⁸⁹ This is further emphasized by the Greek article τῶν which is repeated and connects this plural construction of proper names, identifying them as distinct groups that are nonetheless united. As Wallace points out, some have erroneously believed this to be an example of Sharp's rule—the idea that the nouns that have the same article and case generally refer to the same group.⁹⁰ Yet, this is, in fact, not an “A=B=C” (Sharp's rule) construction but an “A+B+C=D” construction where the three distinct groups collectively refer to the Sanhedrin.

The translation "to reject," though accurate, may be over simplified, perhaps through lack of implicit context to its etymology. The term comes from the Greek noun δοκίμιον which was a test piece to compare against counterfeits, particularly coins. During the Greco-Roman era the term was used in both the marketplace and the temple to indicate testing for approval in the case

⁸⁸ Gould, 153.

⁸⁹ Douglas Mangum and Vasile Babota, “Sanhedrin,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

⁹⁰ Wallace, 279.

of a variety of exchanges including money, animal sacrifice, or even political candidates.⁹¹ An amplified translation of ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι may render “to be rejected after being tested.”⁹² Jesus' spiritual authority and authenticity were being deliberately weighed by the Sanhedrin during the course of His ministry and He was found in their balance to be wanting.

Substituting Darkness for Light

In fact, there is a clear climactic progression in their opposition to Jesus, beginning with the local scribes in Galilee (Mark 2:6–7; 3:1–6), intensifying with scribes who come up from Jerusalem to test Him (Mark 3:22; 7:1–5), leading to His public testing by the full Sanhedrin (Mark 8:11; 11:27–33; 12:13–17, 18–27, 28–34). Ultimately they hand Him over to the Roman authorities for crucifixion (Mark 14–15).

It is likely that Jesus was, in general, considered closer in thought to the Pharisees, for they believed in the prophets and the resurrection, unlike the Sadducees who rejected both. Yet these schools of rabbinic thought developed during the 400 years of silence, the intertestamental period between Malachi and John the Baptist. With the perceived silence of God, Judaism increasingly relied on human ability to obey the law, adding law upon law to create “fences” around the commandments. By Jesus' era, what began as basic prohibitions had developed into a highly legalistic framework that imposed restrictions that went beyond their original intent. The law, that was originally established to teach moral principles, (for example, forbidding murder should have produced the motivation to cultivate a heart free of anger) was reversed into a

⁹¹ Strong's Greek: 1381, “Dokimazo,” *BibleHub.com*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/1381.htm> (2 November 2025).

⁹² Author's translation.

system that focused on technical compliance rather than spiritual renewal. Jesus renewed the definition of the law in the Sermon on the Mount, but it was exactly this that separated Him from the religious leaders of His day. They could not accept His teachings on the law, because of their traditions based on human understanding (Mark 7:8-9; Matt 15:3-6; Col 2:8). Thus, Jesus is delivered over to the epitome of human distortion: the adoption of darkness for light by those entrusted with the light (Matt 6:23).

The Antichrist

The preposition ὑπὸ also works grammatically to unite them in coordinated action, illustrating that they, as a group, assemble together against him to reject him and have him crucified under Pontius Pilate (Ps 22:16).⁹³ Though they were distinct and had their differences, they were able to unite in agreement against the Messiah. Similarly, Caesarea Philippi, where Jesus gives this teaching, was a tetrarchic city and a seat of Herodian and Roman authority. Jesus would be rejected and handed over to these very powers, reflecting humanity's pursuit of an Antichrist and false messiah in accordance with their own evil desires (1 John 2:22; 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 13:8). In this way, human reasoning not only leads to the killing of Messiah, but to the creation of false ones unto the adoption of an ultimate false one (1 John 2:18).

⁹³ Wilhelm, Joseph. "The Nicene Creed.

The Cross of Divine Wisdom for Humanity's Rebellion

Thus, it was inevitably necessary for Jesus to die in an act of martyrdom. On His part, divinely orchestrated, to lay down His life in witness to the Father and, by His blood make payment for sin. On humanity's part, in the greatest manifestation of their sinful nature, to unwittingly lift up for themselves the bronze serpent (Num 21:4-9). That, in their poisoned state, they might look on the One they pierced and at once be healed by the sight of Him. The curse, made manifest, revealing the deadly nature of their rebellion. To not only treat as a stranger, but to oppose unto bloodshed the One they once walked with in the garden in the cool of the day (Gen 3:8-10; John 1:11; Acts 2:23). God's remedy for sin is the public uplifting of the curse, transforming what was meant for death into the very means of salvation (Gal 3:13).

Any tendency to assign blame to only Israel or the Sanhedrin obscures the truth that Israel serves as a prototype of humanity in general. The way God relates to Israel mirrors His relationship with all humanity, and the way Israel responds to God reflects how humanity responds as a whole. Nonetheless, Israel's national failure to accept her Messiah occurs within the context of the nation's deadly plight and is part of a greater narrative of judgment increasing unto salvation (Isa 30:7; 59:9-15; 60; Matt 23:37-39; Rom 11). The cross was the pinnacle of God's redemptive acts towards Israel and the world, setting the stage for both an open door to salvation from the law of sin and death, and divine judgment unto the Day of the Lord (Deut 28; Zech 12:10-14; 13:8; Rom 8:2).

Μετὰ Τρεῖς Ἡμέρας Ἀναστῆναι

Continuing through the end of Mark 8:31, while Matthew and Luke’s accounts describe Jesus’ resurrection with the aorist passive infinitive ἐγερθῆναι, Mark is unique in that he uses the aorist active infinitive ἀναστῆναι:

. . . καὶ μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναστῆναι·

. . . and after three days to be raised;”

From ἀνίστημι,⁹⁴ Mark's vocabulary carries the meaning of rising, either in terms of standing up or being raised from the dead.⁹⁵ The verb can also be applied to being born or raising children. While it is typical for ἐκ νεκρῶν to accompany the verb when referring to resurrection, in Mark 8:31 it is implicitly understood, particularly for readers who interpret the events in light of Easter. However, Gould writes that, because the disciples did not seem to hope for Jesus' resurrection after His death, Jesus “must have used language here, which the disciples did not understand, until after the resurrection itself, to refer to that event. . . . we find variations in the details, which suggest that these were supplied by the writers, *post eventum*, and that the prediction itself was general in character.”⁹⁶

It is interesting to consider how the disciples may have understood the word Jesus used and whether they believed that the resurrection of the dead was possible in their lifetime rather

⁹⁴ ἀναστῆναι: aorist, active, infinitive, from ἀνίστημι, with the inflected meaning “to rise” (Mark 8:31).

⁹⁵ Strong's Greek: 450, “anistémi,” BibleHub.com, <https://biblehub.com/greek/450.htm> (2 November 2025).

⁹⁶ Gould, 154.

than only in some post-messianic setting. For instance, in His first cleansing of the temple, Jesus says, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19).

There is some possibility, within the range of meaning of this word, for the disciples to understand the language abstractly, perhaps envisioning the Messiah arising as a king arises. Nonetheless, there is sufficient evidence in the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus spoke specifically of the resurrection from the dead. This would also be the most contextually clear understanding, as it contrasts literally with the phrase “to be killed.” Along with the many discussions about the resurrection between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and earlier in Luke 7:11–17 (when Jesus raises the son of the widow of Nain during his funeral procession), it seems more likely that the disciples understood Jesus' language as referring to being raised from the dead in a literal sense. Since He was speaking this word openly (v. 32) and had referred to His resurrection previously, there is no need to doubt that there was confusion in His language. Another explanation for the disciples' bewilderment may have been the natural shock and grief they experienced upon seeing their teacher arrested, mocked, tortured, and killed, coupled with their abruptly thwarted expectation of His kingdom being established. Psychologically, it may also have been difficult for them to believe that a body killed so brutally could be raised. If anything, this underscores how fully they recognized His death.

While in Mark the aorist active suggests Jesus as the agent of His resurrection, by contrast Matthew and Luke employ the aorist passive ἐγερθῆναι instead, which emphasizes Jesus as receiving the action (the passive involving Father and the Spirit).⁹⁷ The verb carries more of a

⁹⁷ Noted by Dr. Grizzle: “Modern scholarship seems to have largely adopted the active voice.” (Unpublished, private communication 13 November 2025).

connotation of rising from sleep and can be used, as it is here, to refer to rising awake from the sleep of death (Matt 9:24). This is its primary usage throughout the New Testament. Thus, while Mark stresses Jesus' narrative, the parallel accounts in Matthew and Luke stress the divine causation of the event.

Tying back into $\delta\epsilon\iota$ and the theological necessity of the cross, the resurrection is predicted to occur "after three days," emphasizing that it is neither coincidental nor circumstantial that "it is necessary." Rather, it demonstrates God's sovereign plan and the divine necessity in accordance with the Scriptures (Hos 6:2; Jonah 1:17). In contrast to death and hell (which is the culmination of the curse), the resurrection and everlasting life demonstrates a total reversal of the curse. This reversal from death to life happens in the very flesh of Christ and creates a cross to resurrection pattern for His followers. Just as all humanity entered into the cursed nature through Adam, so Christ, by becoming the curse in His flesh, yet not being held by death, reversed the curse into life (Gal 3:13; 1 Cor 15:21-22). Since death is the God ordained penalty for sin (Gen 2:17; Rom 6:23), He, being sinless, could not be held by that curse. Conversely, if death should be the payment of sin, yet He owed no payment, it follows that His transcendent blood became an atoning substitute for all souls who would enter in by faith (Rom 4:22-24). Likewise, those who come under His atonement through His imputed righteousness also cannot be held by the curse any longer. Christians thus experience the joy of living in the reversal of the curse, not only from physical death, but in the fullness of life through Christ (John 10:10).

To Make a Decision for Christ

Rebuke for Rebuke

Jesus spoke this message *παρρησία*, or “without any reserve.”⁹⁸ This word here likely has less to do with plain speech as it does with unreserved speech before His disciples. Jesus’ open speech to the disciples in the term *παρρησία* contrasts with the messianic secret, underscoring how important it was for the disciples in particular to understand His message. Then, in contrast to Jesus’ open teaching, in Mark 8:32 Peter can no longer seem to stifle his human expectations and must take the Christ aside in secret:

καὶ παρρησία τὸν λόγον ἐλάλει⁹⁹. καὶ προσλαβόμενος ὁ Πέτρος αὐτὸν ἤρξατο ἐπιτιμᾶν αὐτῷ.

And He was speaking the message openly. But Peter after taking him aside began to rebuke him.

Whereas Peter expects glory, Jesus reveals suffering. Immediately following Peter’s confession Jesus makes a straight line from His messiahship to the cross, which must have been shocking to the disciples. This section, of course, sets up His next teachings on the cost of discipleship, where all who should follow him are called to the cross unto resurrection pattern life (Mark 8:23-27).

⁹⁸ Gould, 154.

⁹⁹ ἐλάλει: third-person, singular, imperfect, active, indicative, from λέγω, with the inflected meaning “He was speaking.”

Here, the adverbial temporal participle προσλαβόμενος¹⁰⁰ in the aorist middle is followed by the main verb ἤρξατο,¹⁰¹ also in the aorist middle, and its accompanying complementary active infinitive, ἐπιτιμᾶν¹⁰² (which supplies what Peter "began" to do). The rendering, "after taking," amplifies the temporal adverbial force of the participle. In this light, it becomes clear that Peter is performing two actions in this single sequence. He first took αὐτὸν (accusative personal pronoun) aside and then ἤρξατο to rebuke αὐτῷ (dative personal pronoun). While Peter is the subject of the participle, the two personal pronouns both refer to Jesus and serve to distinguish between the two actions.¹⁰³ The verb ἤρξατο appears twice in this passage, marking a literary and theological contrast: whereas Jesus began to teach His disciples about His impending passion, Peter began to rebuke these teachings.

Whereas Peter's rebuke is concealed, Jesus' rebuke back to him in Mark 8:33 is open in front of the disciples:

ὁ δὲ ἐπιστραφεὶς καὶ ἰδὼν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἐπετίμησεν Πέτρῳ καὶ λέγει, Ὑπάγε ὀπίσω μου, Σατανᾶ, . . .

But turning around and seeing His disciples He rebuked Peter and said, You get behind me, Satan, . . .

¹⁰⁰ προσλαβόμενος: nominative, masculine, singular, 2 aorist, middle, participle, from λαμβάνω.

¹⁰¹ ἤρξατο: third-person, singular, 1 aorist, middle, indicative, deponent, from ἄρχομαι, with the inflected meaning "he began."

¹⁰² ἐπιτιμᾶν: present, active, infinitive, from τιμάω, with the inflected meaning "to rebuke."

¹⁰³ (Bill Mounce, "GreekVerse of the Day - Mark 8:32," 30 May 2024, 5:28, *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCIBXrWW3bY> (1 November 2025)).

The terms ἐπιστραφείς,¹⁰⁴ “after turning around,” and ἰδὼν,¹⁰⁵ “after seeing,” function as coordinate participles (also known as attendant circumstance) with the main verb. Together they describe the conditions under which the main verb, ἐπετίμησεν,¹⁰⁶ “he rebuked,” takes place. Although each participle could function as an independent verb, here they are semantically dependent on the main verb, showing what occurs simultaneously with Jesus’ rebuke. In other words, they coordinate with main action: Jesus turned around and saw His disciples, and in that context, He rebuked Peter. Their aorist tense further groups these actions together,¹⁰⁷ emphasizing the unity and simultaneity of the sequence, wherein, as Swete quoted in Cleon L. Rogers writes, “the Lord turned around sharply,” and rebukes Peter, calling him Σατανᾶ.¹⁰⁸ Along with ἐπετίμησεν being in the completed aorist form, in comparison with Peter’s rebuke, Jesus’ appears to be more decisive, openly stated, and sharp.

The Things of Satan

Of all the Gospels, “Satan” occurs most in Mark, but in general it is rather rare.¹⁰⁹ Σατανᾶς, and elsewhere, ὁ Διάβολος, meaning “adversary,” refers to the “prince of evil spirits”

¹⁰⁴ ἐπιστραφείς: nominative, masculine, singular, aorist, passive, participle, from ἐπιστρέφω.

¹⁰⁵ ἰδὼν: nominative, masculine, singular, aorist, active, participle, from ὁράω.

¹⁰⁶ ἐπετίμησεν: third-person, singular, aorist, active, indicative, from τιμάω, with the inflected meaning “he rebuked.”

¹⁰⁷ Wallace, 624.

¹⁰⁸ Cleon L. Rogers Jr et. al., *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 87.

¹⁰⁹ Six occurrences in four passages: Mark 1:13; 3:23–26; 4:5; 8:33.

who opposes God's plans and incites sin and rebellion against Him.¹¹⁰ Σατανᾶ appears here in the vocative case, which is used as direct, personal address. Notably, it also occurs without the emphatic omega particle ᾠ preceding it, making it technically a simple form of address.

Generally, the simple address vocative carries with it no special significance, though context may override this generality and indicate strong emotion. Moreover, of the few vocatives used emphatically with a preceding particle (nine instances in the New Testament), some are not even emphatic. In this case, the address to Peter, calling him Satan, appears to be emotionally charged even without the vocative particle.¹¹¹ It also serves as a great contrast with His vocative address for Peter in Matthew's parallel moments prior: "Μακάριος εἶ, Σίμων Βαριωνᾶ" (Matt 16:17).¹¹²

Certainly, this stands in stark contrast to the commendation and divine naming ("σὺ εἶ Πέτρος," v. 18) he had just received. Jesus demonstrated that God's favor is neither humanistic nor based on past success, but on alignment with God's will alone. In one of His sharpest rebukes, He underscores the divine necessity of the cross and equates Peter's resistance as a manifestation of Satan. Though Σατανᾶ occurs without the article, this is simply because it is a monadic noun. In Greek, the absence of the article with certain nouns does not necessarily render the noun indefinite. Satan is inherently definite, referring to the singular creature who fell from heaven (Luke 10:18). While the King James Version's renders John 6:70 as "one of you is a devil," which technically misapplies a monadic noun (since there is only one Devil), the use of a

¹¹⁰ Strong's Greek: 4566, "Σατάν," *blueletterbible.com*, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4566/kjv/tr/0-1/> (Accessed 18 October 2025).

¹¹¹ Wallace, 67-68.

¹¹² Wallace, 57.

monadic noun does not require a literal identification.¹¹³ Jesus was not identifying Peter as the literal Devil. Rather, it is a metaphorical use of a definite monadic noun. It emphasizes that Peter, by his humanistic thinking aligned with Satan himself in opposition to God's redemptive plan.¹¹⁴

Satan's relationship to the cross presents an intriguing theological puzzle. On the one hand, he actively fuels hatred and opposition toward Christ, even entering Judas to orchestrate the event (Luke 22:3). On the other hand, the cross proceeds according to the divine will of God, which Satan would naturally oppose. Yet, being inherently evil, Satan cannot produce anything good. His early opposition to the way of the cross manifested in offering counterfeits of good—comfort, fame, and power—to Christ but, finding no means to pervert or divert the mission through these, he could only continue along the trajectory of destruction and hatred. In this sense, the cross was divinely planned by God as the means of salvation in response to humanity's rebellion and plight (plight, for humanity is not evil in the same manner as Satan, acting under both free will and the influence of evil). Yet, neither Satan nor humanity could ultimately oppose it, for the cross unfolded even according to their wills, though for destructive purposes. God's sovereign plan of the cross functioned like a chess game whose outcome had been foreseen from the beginning and played out move by move, culminating in what everyone could agree on (and thereby not circumventing free will): the crucifixion.

Yet, as Paul teaches, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" if the powers that be had understood these mysteries (1 Cor 2:8). Then why was Satan, if ignorant, seeking to thwart the cross, even here, using Peter? Some theologians argue that these are only human

¹¹³ The Holy Bible: King James Version (KJV) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984).

¹¹⁴ Wallace, 248-249.

powers that Paul speaks of and they do not attribute ignorance to demonic powers.¹¹⁵ In any case, Satan continues to oppose Christians, seeking their destruction, though paradoxically, acts of martyrdom serve to advance the Church. As Tertullian wrote, “the blood of Christians is seed.”¹¹⁶ Perhaps, then, there is some perpetual ignorance or inability to do anything but eat dust according to his particular curse in the Garden (Gen 3:14-15). This also illustrates the broader biblical principle that God uses evil for good. Only through God may evil be prevented from being good for nothing, for without such divine providence, evil would prevail (Hab 1; Jer 27:6).

The Things of Humanity

Continuing through the end of Mark 8:33, Jesus’ rebuke takes place within the rhetorical structure of a hortatory substantiation,¹¹⁷ moving from the effect (the rebuke) to the cause, introduced by “ὅτι”:

. . . ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

. . . because you think not on the things of God but the things of humanity.

The neuter plural articles τὰ are being used substantially (as they have no noun to modify). Thus, they substantivize the genitive articles τοῦ and τῶν and are translated “the things.” Together they form a contrast between “the things of God,” and “the things of

¹¹⁵ "1 CORINTHIANS 2 – REAL WISDOM FROM GOD," *Enduringword.com*, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-corinthians-2/> (5 November 2025).

¹¹⁶ Tertullian, “Apology,” Translated by S. Thelwall. From *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. *Newadvent.org*, <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0301.htm>> (Accessed 5 November 2025).

¹¹⁷ David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina, 79-142.

humanity.” Various translations struggle to render these phrases into English. Notably, the construction “things” is intentionally general and so, translations may err by becoming overly specific.¹¹⁸

Humanistic thinking here is antichrist in that it replaces the will of God, which is His triumph through the cross, with the will of humanity. Like the terms σάρξ, and αἷμα earlier, here the plural τῶν ἀνθρώπων speaks to the fallen nature of humankind.¹¹⁹ As such, this thinking also joins in with Satan’s rebellion and is used by him towards his own purposes. Jesus tells Peter that he is not dwelling on (or setting his mind) on the things of God in the term φρονεῖς.¹²⁰ This word conveys more than a mere thought as it proceeds from one’s will and connotes opinion, disposition, mindset, or interest.¹²¹ Paul uses this word when he contrasts “the mind of the flesh” with the mind of the Spirit and concludes that “the carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom 8:5-7).

In contrasting the things of God with the things of humanity, Jesus provides the rationale for His rebuke, using the conjunction ὅτι, “because.” More specifically, this contrasting substantiation sheds light on why He calls Peter “Satan.” In this single rebuke, Jesus exposes

¹¹⁸ (Bill Mounce, "Greek Verse of the Day – Mark 8:33," 6:49, Youtube.com, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0LDyLfsBNQ> (1 November 2025); see also Mark 8:33 in New International Version (NIV); New Living Translation (NLT); New Revised Standard Version (NRSV); Revised Standard Version (RSV); New American Standard Bible (NASB); Wallace, 235-236).

¹¹⁹ Strong's Greek: 444, “ἄνθρωπος,” *blueletterbible.com*, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g444/kjv/tr/0-1/> (Accessed 6 November 2025).

¹²⁰ φρονεῖς, second-person, singular, present, active, indicative, from φρονέω, with the inflected meaning “you think.”

¹²¹ Strong's Greek: 5426, “Σατάν,” *blueletterbible.com*, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g5426/kjv/tr/0-1/> (Accessed 5 November 2025).

Satanism, wherein, “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.” He equates humanism, or, “the things of humanity” with Satan.¹²² Of course, though such harlotry rides on the back of Satan, he ultimately that humanism for his own means and cares nothing for the exaltation of humanity (Rev 17:1-6, 16; 18:2-3). On the other hand, Christ only lives to do His Father’s will and is His appointed, sent Messiah (John 6:38; 10:14-16). Those who join with Satan do so through humanistic means while those who join with Messiah through losing their life for His sake (Mark 8:35-36).

This serves as a climactic ending to the six contrasts in this segment across the Synoptic Gospels of Mark 8:27-33 wherein the wisdom of God in Messiah contrasts against the foolishness of humanity and the demonic forces who resist Him. These contrasts include the answers of the people versus Peter’s confession in response to Jesus’ two corresponding questions (Mark 8:27-29), “flesh and blood” versus the Father’s revelation (Matt 16:17), Peter’s confession and Jesus’ open speech on the cross versus Jesus’ command to conceal His identity (Mark 8:29-30), Peter’s rebuke of Jesus versus Jesus’ rebuke of Peter (vv. 31-32), The commendation and naming of Peter versus Peter rebuked and called Satan (Matt 16:17-18; Mark 8:33), and finally, the things of God versus the things of humanity (v. 8:33). Altogether, these contrasts are formed in a literary interchange that reach a climactic theological point: To make a decision for Christ and follow after Him in the way of the cross is life but to continue in human centeredness and reasoning is the way of death. Within the surrounding text of Peter’s Confession, Jesus reveals that true discipleship allows no middle ground: one must make a

¹²² Aleister Crowley, “The Book of the Law,” (Cairo, 1904), *sacred-texts.com*, <https://sacred-texts.com/oto/engccxx.htm> (Accessed 4 November 2025).

decision for Christ, to either follow after Him in the way of the cross as the victorious Church, or to stand opposed to Him and be cast behind Him with Satan.¹²³ Human centered reasoning leads to blindness and enmity to the things of God. It breeds self-righteousness, false expectations, resistance against God's will, and finally, it partners with Satan to seek destroy God and counterfeit His kingdom through the Antichrist.

Conclusion: The Things of God

That the fulfilled messianic hope would come through humility, self-sacrifice, and obedience unto death stands at enmity with human thinking. Humanity seeks for a pathway to salvation through military triumph, political deliverance, or some other divine intervention that requires no personal engagement or inner transformation. In reality, God calls His people not to immediate, temporal, or worldly deliverance, but to enduring transformation in Christ, as all things are progressively brought under His authority (1 Cor 15:25-26; Luke 13:35; Rom 11:11-12, 33). Here, he calls for the whole exercise of the human will to cooperate with Him in His redemptive acts towards an eschatological hope.

The human longing for instant deliverance and the disillusionment that arises when salvation unfolds through suffering gives rise to two major distortions within Christian discipleship. That is, apart from faith in Christ with the cross at the center of the path to resurrection, all portrayals of Christ collapse into either a loveless legalism (exemplified by the Sanhedrin's self-righteousness) or a lawless humanism (exemplified by Peter's attempts to

¹²³ Cf. ὀπίσω is used both in the phrase, "Get behind Me Satan," and in His teaching on the cross: "Whoever desires to come after (ὀπίσω) me" (Mark 8:33-34).

redirect Jesus' mission). Each of these, humanistic and antichrist, distorts the gospel, obscures the true knowledge of God, disfigures the image of humanity, and falsifies the nature of salvation.

In a word, these chief redemptive acts in Messiah, of the cross and resurrection, are the very wisdom and power of God—a wisdom that Paul K. Moser and Michael T. McFall term “cruciform wisdom.” (1 Cor 1:24).¹²⁴ This paradoxical framework of salvation calls disciples to exercise their free will by following after Christ to the cross in trust, humility, and obedience. They are to do so in the face of suffering, obscurity, and even death by being grounded in the assurance that God is good and that He is the one who raises the dead.

For Israel in particular, this tension carries profound significance. God preserves a remnant of faithful Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in so that the fullness of Israel will likewise come in (Rom 11:1–2, 11, 25–26). Yet, nationally, Israel has rejected her Messiah and pursues God through fleshly zeal, self-righteousness, political messiahs, and false deliverers. Ultimately, this spiral downward of deception and harlotry will culminate in the Antichrist. Yet the promise of Messiah to her remains intact and “Yeshua, Jesus is your Christ, who has not forgotten you nor forsaken you” is the Church's gospel message to her. God's desire is to proclaim Jesus Christ through His Church, drawing Israel and the nations home to Himself, and this is His promise (Rom 11:1–2, 11-12, 25–26; Zech 12:8; Rev 1). Until that day, Israel must be

¹²⁴ Paul K. Moser and Michael T. McFall, *The Wisdom of the Christian Faith* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 7.

delt with, not politically but with the full preaching of the Gospel: repentance, faith in Christ, and the assurance of the coming Deliverer (Is 40; 59–62; Rev 12).¹²⁵

Unlike an instant resurrection, this involves a lifelong sanctification and mission. It is saying “yes” to God’s redemptive exile, and as Bonhoeffer said, “a ‘yes’ to God’s earth,” in which the heart becomes fully engaged with His mission—arms outstretched, walking in the way of the cross, and confessing Him as Christ now, along the journey, until He comes again. As the cross and resurrection were the wisdom and triumph of God, the following in that same framework is the wisdom and triumph of His saints.

¹²⁵ Ronald E. Diprose, “Israel and the Church: The Origins and Effects of Replacement Theology”(Rome, Italy: Istituto Biblico Evangelico Italiano, 2000); Samuel Whitefield, “Israel and the Great Commission,” (OneKing Publishing, 2018); Samuel Whitefield, "It Must Be Finished: Making Sense of the Return of Jesus," (OneKing Publishing, 2018).

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