

The way of the cross for Jesus

Introduction. Mark's gospel account has been leading up to this pivotal exchange. The disciple Peter affirms who Jesus is but like most of his contemporaries does not understand Jesus' mission and therefore the type of Messiah he would be.

Vv. 27-30. Peter's affirmation that Jesus was the Messiah (God's anointed One) is not rejected by Jesus. However, he somewhat surprisingly tells them to tell no one. Why?

a. Possibly because of the prevailing political views of the Messiah as a warrior leader who would overthrow the Roman invaders.

b. Jesus wished to redefine 'Messiah'. He used his favourite ambiguous title, 'Son of Man'. This could mean simply a 'person', but it also points to the exalted figure of the 'Son of Man' in Daniel 7:13. Jesus also adds the picture of the 'suffering servant' from Isaiah 53 to his 'Messiah' role. The way of salvation is through his suffering and death.

Vv. 31-32a. Jesus, using the title 'Son of Man', refers to the necessity for him to suffer and die. While he also added 'and rise again on the third day', it is as if the shock of the Messiah/Son of Man 'suffering' and 'dying', completely overwhelmed them. Peter, as the spokesperson for the disciples, expressed their horror and rejection of the possibility of Jesus suffering and dying.

Vv. 32b-33. Jesus rejected Peter's rebuke and sees in it Satan's attempt to lead him away from the path of suffering and death – away from his Father's will.

Reflection. How does Peter become the mouthpiece of Satan?

Vv. 34-38. Jesus further surprises his disciples and the crowd by saying that any who would be his disciples must also be prepared to go the way of the cross – a one-way path to death. Holding onto one's life, remaining in control and living for oneself, is to lose the opportunity of real life = life with God now and for eternity. So, ironically to give up one's life in the service of Jesus, to give up control of one's life, is to gain real life. Choosing to follow or not to follow Jesus will have eternal consequences.

Reflection/Response. Paul describes becoming Christ-like or being 'spiritual' men and women as being under the control of the Spirit (1 Cor.). How does the way we live show that we have given our lives to Jesus and are therefore under the control of his Spirit? What does it mean for us to go the way of the cross, suffering and even death?