

member, lasted a little more than a year and a half. Since the raising of Jairus's daughter our Lord had (in day-school language) "promoted" his disciples. From rapt learners clustering about his feet they had been changed into aggressive workers—heralds or "missionaries" we might call them, who were sent out in couples to proclaim the coming of the "kingdom of God." Our Lord endowed them with healing powers, of which they had known nothing before, and their errand, thus made easy, was faithfully performed—though we know nothing in detail of their adventures. The winter and spring of the year 29, so far as we can now disentangle the chronology of the gospels, was thus spent. When they returned to Jesus, with them came the sad news of the beheading of John the Baptist. Soon after this the five thousand were miraculously fed. Then came a number of miracles (told by other evangelists than Luke)—such as Jesus's walk on the waves, the cure of a deaf and dumb man, and the cure of the blind man of Bethsaida. To about this time also must probably be referred Matthew's story of the feeding of the four thousand. The popularity of Jesus grew so high that all Galilee uprose, and if it could have had its way would have made him king by force. All these events, and the teaching which was concurrent with them, bring the record down to the summer of 29, and bring our Lord, on his slow advance northward, into the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi. His journey had been interrupted by two or three brief detours, but he had at last reached the foothills of the great mountain on one of whose peaks he was shortly to be transfigured in the presence of the chosen three. While pausing here for a day or two he took occasion to declare to his disciples, without reserve, his claim to the Messiahship. But he did this not by any statement of his own, but Socratically—drew the declaration right out of their own logic and convictions. He showed them also the necessity of covering up this holy secret for a while, for from that very hour the Son of man must be on the defensive. The mouths of popular triumph were now past, though not one of the disciples had suspected this. If any man would "come after him" now, he must expect fetters, a crown of thorns, and a cross. But, then, the way of the cross leads to glory. How emphatic sounds our Golden Text when read in close connection with this lesson!

Verse 18. He was alone praying. Instead of "alone" read "apart." Study our Lord's constant habit of private prayer. As we look back upon his life we can see no time when he needed the help of prayer more urgently than just at this juncture. These weeks were pivotal. **His disciples were with him.** This may mean that at the close of his prayer they gathered about him; but no oriental could ever understand how any one could be disturbed in prayer by the presence of others.

Whom say the people that I am? The men of whom he asked this were fresh from their tour among the people, and had had rare opportunities for noticing popular attitude and feeling. But the question was asked to set his disciples to think profoundly. That there were many conflicting views of Jesus is evident. Notice what Herod said (Mark 6. 16); what the Nazarenes said (Mark 6. 3); what the scribes said (Mark 3. 22).

19. John the Baptist. The people dare not assume the Messiahship of this unwelcome carpenter Rabbi, but apply the common doctrine of transmigration, and find in him some old national hero arisen from the grave. Their first conjecture may have been a mere echo of what was talked of at Herod's court; but there were, in truth, certain superficial points of resemblance between Jesus and John—the great crowds, the simple preaching, the bold rebuke of wicked rulers. **Elias.** The Jews fully expected the great Elijah to return to earth. See Mal. 4. 5, 6. **One of the old prophets.** Some great preacher and miracle worker of uncertain identity. He was anybody, in short, but Messiah; but he had too bitterly disappointed the

expectation of the masses by not assuming royalty and casting off the Roman yoke to be generally received as "the Christ."

20. But whom say ye that I am?

(1) *What do you say, student?* **Peter.** He was perhaps the oldest, as he was one of the first, of the disciples. He had the many excellencies, as well as the faults, of a passionate nature. **The Christ of God.** Or, better, "God's Anointed One." Matthew adds, "the Son of the living God." (2) *God will surely lead his sincere followers to the fullness of truth.* (3) *The nearer we live to Christ the stronger will our faith become.* Matthew tells us of the beautiful blessing which Jesus poured forth upon Peter in acknowledgment of this confession.

21. He straitly charged them. Better, "strictly;" he spoke solemnly, almost sternly, for this charge was very important. A Messiah would be to the hated Roman government what Moses was to Egypt, what David was to the Philistines. And if this man could feed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, and quell a storm by a frown, how long would it take him to send the Roman legions lying and erect Syria into an Israelite state? This was popular logic, and had already been so asserted as to trouble the Master. Evidently the multitudes were not yet prepared for Peter's great discovery. (4) *Those who preach the Gospel must exercise wisdom in presenting its truths.* Neither were the apostles themselves quite ready for the full proclamation. Transfiguration, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Pentecost were all needed before even Peter really understood what was now from his heart he professed.