Messiahship of Jesus Christ: A Contextualization of Peter's Confession in Mark 8:29 within the Purview of Humanity and National Development in Nigeria.

Andrew Olusola Ajayi, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Scholarly activities over the years have geared toward the deity and the Messiahship of Christ with little or no attention to the contextual relevance of Peter's affirmative confession in Mark 8:29 to humanity and National development; a gap this paper intends to fill. Hence, this study pays attention to "The Messiahship of Jesus Christ: A Contextualization of Peter's Confession in Mark 8:29" with a view to flame Peter's confession as it relates to interpersonal relationship and national development. In a bid to have well situated context, effort was made to consider the study from verse 27-29. This study employed lexical analysis (which has to do with the study of some key words) as the methodology to engage the chosen pericope. This methodology was adopted because there are key words to be studied and analyzed.

It was discovered that the Messianic prophecy had been foretold since the Old Testament era. Its historic fulfillment as seen in the New Testament took over 700 years. This fulfillment was historically displayed in Christ (the Anointed One). The major focus in the 29th verse of Mark 28 was very affirmative "You are the Christ." This is absolutely against the popular and general opinion of people about Jesus (Mark 8:28). It was discovered through this study that Peter's confession, which was birthed out of Christ's direct question to the disciples, was from the

inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 16:17 (one of the synoptic gospels) gives credence to this fact. This identity of Christ was hidden throughout the synoptic until that point Jesus brought the disciples to a point of critical quest. This is unlike the fourth gospel (John) which began with the Deity of Christ.

The work recommends a critical reflection on the Messiahship of Christ as it suffices for the salvation of man which in turn undoubtedly births national development. It is recommended that to Christians that; proclaiming the Messiahship of Christ is not an end in itself; it must translate to humane relationship and national development. The nation does not only need people who will profess faith in Christ; it needs those whose faith translates to meaningful contributions to national development.

Key Words: Messiah, Messianic, Prophecy, Theology, Contextualization

Introduction:

The affirmative introduction of Christ by one of the twelve disciples (Peter) is a major event in the synoptic gospel. Suffice to say that the birth of Jesus Christ has antecedent prophecy in the Old Testament (Isaiah 9). This ushers us to a new epoch in the history of faith. It is cardinal to note that significant theological turning point in the New Testament story, which is the confirmation of Peter's statement in Mark 8:29, "You are the Messiah," captures the core of Jesus Christ's person and mission. In addition to solidifying the Judeo-Christian tradition's view of Jesus as the anointed one, this crucial moment had a profound impact on current discussions about humanity and state advancement. Peter's confession has ramifications that go beyond theological recognition in a world suffering from existential crises, social inequities, and the need for transformative leadership. These compel us to investigate

how faith, identity, and social advancement are dynamically intertwined.

The historical, cultural, and political framework of first-century Judea allows us to understand the complex importance of Jesus' messiahship in meeting the needs and desires of a people yearning for freedom and reconciliation. This investigation challenges us to think about how ethical leadership, social responsibility, and the collective quest for progress in our day and age are influenced by the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah. A renewed sense of purpose is also found in our pursuit of holistic development, which includes not only the material well-being of nations but also the spiritual and moral upliftment of humanity, as we compare Peter's recognition of Jesus to modern-day messianic figures—those who inspire movements for justice and equity.

This paper looks into how contextual the statement of Peter is, in the above text, in validating the Messiahship of Jesus Christ and its relevance to national development. That being the focus, other related background matters like the meaning of Messiah from biblical descriptions, the theological overview of Messiah, lexical analysis of the passage in focus, how contextual is the affirmation of Apostle Peter in the stability of the nation and its development.

A Biblical Description of the Messiah:

The Messiah is described in the Bible beginning with the word "Messiah" or "Anointed One," (Becker, 1977) and then in a variety of other ways. All of the following provide a portrait of the future messianic figure:

A Consecrated Person*:* The Hebrew root of the word "Messiah" is the verb *mashach,* meaning "to rub or smear" (W. C. Kaiser, 1995). For example, it is used of rubbing oil on a shield (Isa 21:5) or smearing paint on a wall (Jer. 22:14) (Sailhamer, 1995). The verb is also used of smearing oil or anointing objects used

in worship such as an altar (Gen. 31:13), the tent of meeting (Ex 30:26), and the tabernacle and all that is in it (Ex 40:9-11). (Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum, 1998). These texts indicate that the purpose of this anointing was to consecrate or set apart these items for use in worshiping God. The adjectival noun form of the word is used 39 times in the Old Testament and exclusively with living beings. The noun and verb are both used of people, such as the anointed priest (Lev 4:3), anointing a king (2Sam 2:4; 5:3), or anointing a prophet (1Kg 19:16) (Horbury, 1998). It indicates that all these were consecrated to serve God. Even a pagan king (Cyrus) is called "anointed" because, in His providence, God consecrated (set apart) Cyrus to serve in bringing the people of Israel and Judah back from captivity (Isa 45:1).

With regards to the technical use of the term "Messiah" or "Anointed One" to refer to an eschatological Deliverer, it is commonly understood to be somewhat rare in the OT. Most will acknowledge that Dan 9:25-26 ("until *Messiah* the Prince;" "The *Messiah* will be cut off") and Psalm 2:2 ("the Lord and His *Anointed One*") use the term "*Mashiach*" to refer to this end-of-days Redeemer.

A King from the Line of David: In addition to being consecrated to God's service, the Messiah is viewed as a royal figure. This first becomes apparent in Gn 49:10, where the scepter and the ruler's staff are promised to the royal descendant of Judah, "He whose right it is" (Motyer, 1993). This is developed further in the Davidic covenant, where David is promised a seed or offspring, a royal heir of his house, who would have an eternal house, kingdom, and throne (2Sam. 7:12-16). Isaiah also promised a divine child who would rule over a vast dominion and "reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom" (Isa 9:6-7).

The Servant of the Lord: Although the Scriptures present the future Redeemer as a King, the prophet Isaiah also depicts Him as the Servant of the Lord. This is His title in the Servant Songs

of Isaiah (Isa 42:1-13; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13–53:12). As God's unique Servant, "He will bring justice to the nations" (42:1) and restore Israel to the Lord (49:5-6). The Servant will also serve God by obeying Him despite a violent attack and shaming (50:6-7). The Servant's ultimate work would be to provide a substitutionary sacrifice to pay for the sins of Israel (53:4-6).

Isaiah also links his description of the Servant with the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. God will make "an everlasting covenant" with the Servant, in accordance with "the promises assured to David" (Isa 55:3). This association with the Davidic covenant fits with the promise that the Servant will be a covenant (mediator) for Israel (42:6; 49:8). Additionally, J. A. Motyer has identified various links between the royal figure of a Redeemer in Isaiah's book of Immanuel (Isa 7-12) and the Servant of the Lord in the Servant Songs. For example, both the Servant and the King are endowed with the Spirit (42:1; 11:2), both bring about justice for the nations (42:3; 11:4) and both establish righteousness (9:7; 11:5; 53:11). It is insufficient to see the Redeemer as a mere Servant; He will be a Royal Servant of the Lord (J. A. Motyer, 1993).

An Eschatological Deliverer: When Jacob gave his oracle of the tribes of Israel, he declared what would take place "in the days to come" (Gn. 49:1), using a phrase that literally translates "in the end of days" (*be'acharit hayamim*) (Motyer J.). Then, he promised a scepter that will arise from Judah, who would be the rightful King ("whose right it is") and whom the peoples (not just Israel) would obey (49:10). The point is that this early prediction of the Messiah identifies Him as an eschatological figure.

Similarly, in the prediction of a ruler in Balaam's fourth oracle (Nm 24:17-19), the seer declares that he is describing events that will take place "in the future" (Nm 24:14). Just as in Gn 49:1, the Hebrew literally says "in the end of days." Balaam goes on to describe the King as both a "star" and a "ruler" who will arise "but not now . . . but not near," indicating that this King

would come in the distant future. Nearly a thousand years later, Jeremiah prophesied that the Lord would raise up a King, "a Righteous Branch of David" (Jer 23:5-6). To introduce this ruler, the prophet declared, "The days are coming," using this phrase commonly used to announce eschatological events (cf. Jer 16:14; 30:3; 31:31). In a further prediction of the coming of this Righteous Branch, the prophet declared He will arise "in those days and at that time" (Jer 33:15), also indicating an end-of-days coming of the King.

In both Jeremiah 23:5-6 and 33:15, the prophet predicted that in the day when this King came, "Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety." Not only would the King Messiah come at the end of days, but He also will be the great Deliverer of His people, "The Redeemer (who) will come to Zion" (Isa 59:20).

A Redeemer from Sin: Although the Old Testament emphasizes the Messiah as a royal deliverer, there is evidence that He was also to be a Redeemer from sin. The most significant passage that shows the Messiah in this way is the fourth Servant Song, Isa 52:13–53:12. One of the main concepts found there is that the Servant was to be a substitutionary sacrifice for sin. The prophet puts the description of the Servant in the mouth of Israel, at a time when the nation will have finally come to believe in Him. They confess that they have gone astray but the "the Lord has punished Him for the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:5-6). They declare that He was killed, "cut off from the land of the living . . . struck because of [the] people's rebellion" (53:8). As such, the Servant became a "restitution offering" (*'asham*), the same word used for the restitution offering in Lev 5:14–6:7. Not only would He die, but the song hints at His resurrection, saying God "will prolong His days" (53:10). The outcome of the Servant's death and resurrection will be that He "will justify many, and He will carry their iniquities" (53:11). This summary of the fourth Servant Song details one of the most crucial features of the Messiah—He would provide redemption from sin.

A Perfect Ruler: One final aspect of the Messiah in Scripture is that He is always depicted as a perfect ruler who will establish a kingdom of peace, justice, and righteousness. An example of this expectation is in Isa 9:7, where the promised King is described as ruling from the throne of David over a vast kingdom of peace (*shalom*), having established it "with justice and righteousness from now on and forever" (W. C. Kaiser, Jr., ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke , 1980). Just two chapters later, the same King is described as one who will "judge the poor righteously and execute justice for the oppressed of the land" (Isa 11:4). There will be such peace that "the wolf will live with the lamb" (11:6), and His influence will be so great that "the land will be as full of the knowledge of the Lord as the sea is filled with water" (11:9).

Based on the above description, it is possible to give a theological definition of the term. This is coined in line with the submission of that 'The Messiah is the eschatological, royal, Servant of the Lord, springing from the Davidic dynasty, who is consecrated by God to provide redemption from sin, bring deliverance for Israel, rule the world, and establish a kingdom of peace, justice, and righteousness.' Therefore, when speaking of Old Testament messianic prophecy, it is this King that the Hebrew Bible foretells, through both prophetic prediction and pattern.

An Overlay of the Discourse in Context: Validating the Messianic Identity

Jesus is called the Messiah in Matthew 1:16. In fact, every time someone says, "Jesus Christ," he is referring to Jesus as the Messiah, since Christ means "Messiah" or "Anointed One" (Edersheim, 2009). The Old Testament predicts the Messiah, and the New Testament reveals the Messiah to be Jesus of Nazareth.

Alfred avers that; there are several things that the Jewish people who anticipated the Messiah expected Him to be, based

on Old Testament prophecies (Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah , 2009). The Messiah would be a Hebrew man born in Bethlehem, of a virgin, a prophet akin to Moses, a priest in the order of Melchizedek, a king, and the Son of David who suffered before entering His glory (Isaiah 53). Jesus met each of these messianic requirements.

It is noted that Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the Messiah in that he was a Hebrew of the tribe of Judah (Luke 3:30), and he was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4–7) to a virgin (Luke 1:26–27). Another proof that Jesus was the Messiah is the fact that he was a prophet like Moses. Both Moses and Jesus were prophets "whom the LORD knew face to face" (Deuteronomy 34:10; cf. John 8:38). But Jesus is an even greater prophet than Moses in that, while Moses delivered Israel from slavery. Unlike Moses, Jesus did not just represent God—He is God (John 10:30).

The Messiah was to have priestly duties; Jesus was not a Levite, and only Levites were allowed to be priests. So how could Jesus qualify? Jesus is a priest in the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek predated the Jewish temple, and his very name means "King of Righteousness." Melchizedek was also called the "King of Salem," which means "King of Peace" (Hebrews 7:2). Melchizedek blessed Abraham (the greater blesses the lesser, Hebrews 7:7), and Abraham gave Melchizedek a tithe. Thus, as a priest in the order of Melchizedek, Jesus is greater than Abraham (see John 8:58) and the Levitical priesthood. He is a heavenly priest who offered a sacrifice that removes sin permanently, not just temporarily covers it.

Jesus must also be a king in order to be the Messiah. Jesus was from Judah, the kingly tribe. When Jesus was born, wise men from the East came looking for the King of the Jews. Jesus taught that He would one day sit on a glorious throne. Many people in Israel saw Jesus as their long-awaited king and expected Him to set up His rule immediately. At the end of Jesus' life, during His trial before Pilate, Jesus did not defend

Himself except to answer affirmatively when Pilate asked if He was the King of the Jews (Mark 15:2).

Another way Jesus fits the Old Testament description of the Messiah is that He was the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. On the cross Jesus was despised and held . . . in low esteem. He was pierced and oppressed and afflicted. He died with thieves yet was buried in a rich man's tomb (Mark 15:27). After His suffering and death, Jesus the Messiah was resurrected and glorified. Isaiah 53 is one of the clearest prophecies identifying Jesus as the Messiah; it is the very passage that the Ethiopian eunuch was reading when Philip met him and explained to him about Jesus (Acts 8:26–35).

There are other ways in which Jesus is shown to be the Messiah. Each of the feasts of the Lord in the Old Testament is related to and fulfilled by Jesus. When Jesus came the first time, He was Passover Lamb, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruit. The pouring out of Christ's Spirit happened at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). It is no coincidence that the first fall festival day is *Yom Teruah*, the Feast of Trumpets (Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 2009). After Jesus returns, He will judge the earth. This is the fulfillment of the next fall festival, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Then Jesus will set up His millennial kingdom and reign from the throne of David for 1,000 years; that will complete the final fall festival, *Sukkot* or the Feast of Tabernacles, when God dwells with us (Alfred Edersheim, 2009).

The proof that He is the Jewish Messiah seems overwhelming. How is it that, generally speaking, the Jews do not accept Jesus as their Messiah? Both Isaiah and Jesus prophesied a spiritual blindness upon Israel as a judgment for their lack of faith (Isaiah 6:9–10; Matthew 13:13–15). Also, most of the Jews of Jesus' times were looking for a political and cultural savior, not a Savior from sin. They wanted Jesus to throw off the yoke of Rome and establish Zion as the capital of the world (Acts 1:6).

They could not see how the meek and lowly Jesus could possibly do that.

According to Alfred, the story of Joseph provides an interesting parallel to the Jews' missing their Messiah (Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 2009). Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, and after many ups and downs he was made prime minister of all of Egypt. When a famine hit both Egypt and Israel, Joseph's brothers traveled to Egypt to get food, and they met with Joseph—but they did not recognize him. Their own brother, standing right in front of them, yet they were oblivious. They did not recognize Joseph for a very simple reason: he did not look as they expected him to look. Joseph was dressed as an Egyptian; he spoke as an Egyptian; he lived as an Egyptian. The thought that he might be their long-lost brother never crossed their minds—Joseph was a Hebrew shepherd, after all, not Egyptian royalty. In a similar way, most Jewish people did not recognize Jesus as their Messiah. They were looking for an earthly king, not the ruler of a spiritual kingdom. (Many rabbis interpret the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 as the Jewish people who have suffered at the hands of the world.)

Still, there were many in Jesus' day who saw the truth about Jesus. The Bethlehem shepherds saw (Luke 2:16–17). Simeon in the temple. Anna saw and "spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem." Peter and the other disciples saw (Matthew 16:16). May many more continue to see that Jesus is the Messiah, the One who fulfills the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17).

Lexical Overview of the Text in Context:

For the sake of proper grasp of the text, there is need to look at the preceding verses hence, the researchers look at Mark 8:27-30.

Considering **Mark 8:1-13**, emphasis is placed on the miraculous supply of food for 4000 people who had been with Jesus for three days with nothing to eat. **Verses 14-21** focused on how Christ disambiguated his expression on the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod when His disciples reasoned otherwise. **Verses 22-26** is a catalogue of another display of the power of Jesus in the healing of a blind man whom He (Jesus) only spit on his eyes and after another touch, his sight was restored (William Wrede, Trans. By James C.G. Grieg , 1971). Jesus told him not to however tell anyone; this in the Markan exponent is called "the messianic secret (Jack Dean, 1983). All these among other miraculous deeds of Jesus informed the next context of the chapter. Having seen and witnessed the supernatural deeds, Jesus (though being omniscient) decided to ask the disciples the question that led to Peter's response. It must be placed on record that the messianic secret was also displayed in verse 30 of the 8th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Mark (William Wrede, Trans. By James C.G. Grieg, 1971).

Establishing a Brief Discourse on the Context of Mark 8:27-30:

Three basic things are very fundamental in the context of the above passage: the quest for their understanding of His identity verse 27b; popular perceptions of Christ verse 28; Peter's confession of Christ as the Messiah verse 29, and in verse 30, a private command. These variables are matters of interest to Jesus.

An overview shows that this chapter describes another miraculous feeding of thousands by Jesus. He also counters the hard-hearted and selfish hypocrisy of the Pharisees in seeking even more miraculous signs. Speaking to the disciples, Jesus rebukes their short memories and reminds them about God's intent to provide for His followers. After healing a blind man, Jesus accepts Peter's proclamation that Jesus is the Messiah. Almost immediately, though, Jesus rebukes Peter for resisting the idea that the Messiah must suffer and die.

Mark 8:27–30 begins the second half of Mark's Gospel, focusing on Jesus as "the Christ." The encounters beginning here must have been a whirlwind of emotions for the disciples. Peter declares Jesus is the Christ and immediately after denies what the Christ is there to do (Mark 8:31–33). Jesus teaches a crowd that they must give up their lives for their belief in Him (Mark 8:34—9:1), and six days later, Peter, James, and John witness Jesus' true glory (Mark 9:2–8). Within a week, the disciples experience the highs and lows of following the Christ. Peter's confession is also in Matthew 16:13–20 and Luke 9:18–20.

Textual Analysis and Deductibles:

Greek / English Rendering

KATA MARKON 8:27

Καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς κώμας Καισαρείας τῆς Φιλίππου· καὶ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἐπηρώτα τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ, λέγων αὐτοῖς, Τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι;

MARK 8:27

And Jesus went out, and his disciples; into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

KATA MAPKON 8:28

Οἱ δὲ ἀπεκρίθησαν, Ἰωάννην τὸν βαπτιστήν· καὶ ἄλλοι Ἠλίαν, ἄλλοι δὲ ἕνα τῶν προφητῶν.

MARK 8:28

And they answered, John the Baptist: but some [say,] Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΡΚΟΝ 8:29

Καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπηρῶτὰ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι; Ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Πέτρος λέγει αὐτῷ, Σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστός.

MARK 8:29

And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

Three verses are put into consideration in this analysis as they really focused on the general focus and the more specific focus of the matter of Christ's Messiahship. They are Verses 27, 28 & 29. Here, the researcher discusses certain cardinal variables below examining the work of Chris Mueller (Mueller, 1998):

The Religious setting, to discuss Christ's identity Verse 27a

Mark 8:27, "Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi." The men have left Bethsaida and are now headed north into a region saturated in the religions of that day. It is the perfect place to ask, "Who do people say that I am?", because this is the place to make a black and white comparison. By asking this key question while they head into this region, the Lord is comparing religious dirt clods to the Hope diamond.

From Luke 9:18, Jesus posed this all-important question to the disciples just after He had spent time praying alone, and now Mark 8:27 tells they had not yet arrived in the city of Caesarea Philippi proper, but were passing through some of the villages on the outskirts.

The FIRST Important question about Jesus Christ Verse 27b

Mark 8:27b, "And on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, 'Who do people say that I am [to be]?'" When leading a discussion, the best way is to begin with a general question, like "What do people think, what's the general perception, how do others feel about this?" That gets people talking. Then get more specific and personal, like "What do you say?" This is what the Lord does. And this time, it was directed to Peter.

One would notice that verse 27 adds, "He (Jesus) questioned His disciples." The verb "questioned" informs us this is an ongoing discussion, and remarkably, it was Jesus who "questioned His disciples!" (Mueller, Who do Men Say I am: An Exposition of Mark 8:26-30, 1998) This is different than most rabbis. With rabbis, the students would usually ask the questions, but not now. Why? Because time is running out. The earthly ministry of Christ then was coming to a close. The disciples need to embrace the truth of why Jesus has come. They need to understand God has become a man in order to provide the only way anyone can be made right with God now and forever. That Christ is the only way to be forgiven, cleansed, made new, restored, embraced in God's family, and eternally secure in Heaven. There is only one way, and it is only through Jesus Christ. So Jesus gets the discussion going by asking, "Give me your conclusion as to what the people are saying." The question is, "Who do people say that I am?" this is tough-minded question that must be attended to.

The Popular Perceptions of Jesus Christ Verse 28

Mark 8:28, "They told Him, saying, 'John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." Perhaps different disciples gave different answers, representing the popular opinions about Christ. The first idea they come up with is "John the Baptist". One must remember what Herod thought

of Jesus. He believed Jesus was actually John the Baptist back from the dead. Herod felt guilty for beheading John, God's prophet–so Herod thought Jesus was John the Baptist, come back to announce the Messiah.

One would remember Mark 6:14, "King Herod heard of it, for His name had become well known; and people were saying, 'John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him." Some of the population had picked up on Herod's paranoia, and believed Jesus was a reincarnated John the Baptist, resurrected from the grave.

Others believed Jesus was a reincarnated Elijah–why? The last Old Testament prophet, Malachi said this in Malachi 4:5, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord." This belief is so strong that in modern Jewish Passover celebrations, an empty chair is reserved at the table for Elijah, in the hope of him one day returning to announce the Messiah's arrival.

Still others believed Jesus was one of the prophets. And Matthew's gospel reveals they thought it might be the most revered prophet, Jeremiah back from the dead. Matthew 16:14, "And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.'" One commentator puts it such that, some of the people perhaps saw in Jesus something of the character and message of John the Baptist. Some saw in Him the fire and intensity of Elijah; still others saw in Him the lament and grief of Jeremiah.

John the Baptist was popular and bold, Elijah did miracles and spoke the truth uncompromisingly, Jeremiah was both compassionate and longsuffering, and the Lord Jesus was all that, yet much, much more. Now even though they are off with their views of who Christ is, did you catch the significance of what the population did see in Christ? Each description was favorable towards Christ, which was much different than the

religious leaders who accused Christ of being empowered by Satan.

They acknowledged something supernatural about Christ. They were impressed by the Lord's prophetic character and great integrity. With each potential option, they saw Christ as a person who had died but now has risen from the dead. They saw Jesus as the forerunner of the Messiah, but not the Messiah Himself. They pictured Christ as a man empowered by God, uniquely gifted by God, and able to do miracles from God. But all of that falls short of Who Christ is.

The MOST Important Question about Jesus Verse 29a

Mark 8:29, "And He (Himself) *αὐτὸς* continued by questioning them, 'But who do you say that I am (to be)?'" This is a strikingly powerful statement in the Greek language. As verse 29 begins, the pronoun He ("and He continued")–that "He" is emphatic ("and He Himself continued"). Mark is emphasizing the Lord's pointedness and passion (Mueller)1998. The Lord is intense here–He Himself initiates the dialogue, and He does all He can to lead His men to the truth.

The Lord became more focused, looking into each of His disciples eyes? Verse 29, "And He [Himself] continued by questioning them." The tense of the verb "ἐπηρῶτὰ αὐτοῖς" (questioning them) anticipates an answer. Jesus literally kept on questioning them. He expects them to answer this question, and His desire is to hear the right answer. The researcher noticed the contrast term **"but"** in verse 29?

BUT–in contrast to the popular opinions of who Christ is

BUT–in contrast to what other people say

BUT–who do you say Jesus is?

The CORRECT answer about Jesus Christ Verse 29b

Mark 8:29, "Peter answered and said to Him, "Σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστός" (You are the Christ.) This is the inspiration of God to Peter. It is a **confession** by Peter, but its **inspiration** is from God. This confession by Peter reveals the true identity of Jesus Christ. Only twice before does Mark mention Peter, who is actually behind the writing of this gospel. But now Peter will be prominent.

The gospels tell us Peter answers for all of the men. Peter was ready to answer, ready to speak, and ready to declare, which is both a great strength and a weakness to be careful of. Peter uttered his own conviction that ten others affirmed. Eleven meant what they said, but one did not mean what he said. Judas later demonstrated he did not affirm Christ as God–though he did want Christ as a political Messiah, Judas did not want Christ as a Savior from sin, nor a Lord to obey. Judas believed, but did not have faith.

As Peter keeps saying, "You are the Christ." The Greek ὁ χριστός ("the Christ") translates the Hebrew term for "***Messiah***" which means the "Anointed One" of God. At the close of the Old Testament, the word "anointed" assumed a special meaning. It denoted the ideal king anointed and empowered by God to deliver His people and establish His literal earthly kingdom. The Jews understood this title as describing the greater son of David, who would restore the kingdom of David and rule on this earth.

Jesus is the Christ–the long-awaited deliverer of Israel, the "anointed one" has come. They got it right. It took them two and half years, but they finally came to the right confession! But there was a concern, even a danger with this term, "χριστός"–anointed one, Messiah. The danger is that, at this time, the Jewish people viewed the title Christ, anointed one, Messiah as the coming worldwide ruler–so in the gospels Jesus

was reluctant to use the title because the Jews viewed this office only in nationalistic terms.

The danger in the title "Christ" is that it would automatically cause the Jewish people to expect that the Messiah would immediately overthrow the Romans and rule the world from Jerusalem. Now Jesus did not reject the title when Peter declared it–Jesus did not say, "No" He claimed the title Messiah given to Him—"He is the Messiah."

The key for Mark here was to open the door for Christ to explain the importance of the coming cross–the God-man's death for sin, then His resurrection from the dead. But because the masses were failing to perceive His true identity, and the religious leaders were hostile to Christ–it was essential that His disciples formally accept their commitment to Him as the promised Messiah, and later as God Himself in the flesh. But the nationalistic expectations of freeing Israel from pagan Roman rule was so strong, Jesus avoided the misunderstanding by avoiding the public use of the title Messiah, which helps us understand his major mission on earth.

It is important to consider Matthew 16:18-19 where Jesus commented on the character play of Peter (one of the disciples) hence more clarification would be laid to further understand the relevance of Peter's confession to humanity.

Several arguments rage over whether "the rock" on which Christ will build His church is Peter, or Peter's confession that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:16). Objectively speaking, the researcher posits that, there is no way to be absolutely certain, which view is correct. The grammatical construction allows for either view. *The first view is that Jesus was declaring that Peter would be the "rock" on which He would build His church*. Jesus appears to be using a play on words. "You are Peter (*petros*) and on this rock (*petra*) I will build my church" (Muller, 1998). Since Peter's name means rock, and Jesus is going to build His church on a rock – it appears that

Christ is linking the two together. God used Peter greatly in the foundation of the church. It was Peter who first proclaimed the Gospel on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-47). Peter was also the first to take the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48). In a sense, Peter was the rock "foundation" of the church.

The other popular interpretation of the rock is that *Jesus was referring not to Peter, but to Peter's confession of faith in verse 16: "You are the Christ, the son of the living God."* Jesus had never explicitly taught Peter and the other disciples the fullness of His identity, and He recognized that God in His sovereignty had opened Peter's eyes and revealed to him who Jesus really was. His confession of Christ as Messiah poured forth from him, a heartfelt declaration of Peter's personal faith in Jesus. It is this personal faith in Christ which is the hallmark of the true Christian. Those who have placed their faith in Christ, as Peter did, are the church. Peter expresses this in 1 Peter 2:4 when he addressed the believers who had been dispersed around the ancient world: *"Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."*

At this point, Jesus declares that God had revealed this truth to Peter. The word for "Peter," *Petros*, means a small stone (John 1:42). Jesus used a play on words here with "petra" ("on this rock") which means a foundation boulder, as in Matthew 7:24, 25 when He described the rock upon which the wise man builds his house. Peter himself uses the same imagery (Ryken, 1998) in his first epistle: the church is built of numerous small petros "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5) who, like Peter, confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and those confessions of faith are the bedrock of the church.

In addition, the New Testament makes it abundantly clear that Christ is both the foundation (Acts 4:11, 12; 1 Corinthians 3:11) and the head (Ephesians 5:23) of the church. It is a mistake to

think that here He is giving either of those roles to Peter. There is a sense in which the apostles played a foundational role in the building of the church (Ephesians 2:20), but the role of primacy is reserved for Christ alone, not assigned to Peter. So, Jesus' words here are best interpreted as a simple play on words in that a boulder-like truth came from the mouth of one who was called a small stone. And Christ Himself is called the "chief cornerstone" (1 Peter 2:6, 7). The chief cornerstone of any building was that upon which the building was anchored. If Christ declared Himself to be the cornerstone, how could Peter be the rock upon which the church was built? It is more likely that the believers, of which Peter is one, are the stones which make up the church, anchored upon the Cornerstone, "and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame" (1 Peter 2:6).

Emphasis on the keys of the kingdom

The biblical passage that makes reference to the "keys of the kingdom" is Matthew 16:19. Jesus had asked His disciples who people thought He was. After hearing several of the more popular opinions, Jesus aimed His question directly at His disciples. Peter, responding for the twelve, acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. After this great confession, Jesus replied,

> Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven; and I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:17–19).

Keys are used to lock or unlock doors. The specific doors Jesus has in mind in this passage are the doors to the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus is laying the foundation of His church

(Ephesians 2:20). The disciples will be the leaders of this new institution, and Jesus is giving them the authority to, as it were, open the doors to heaven and invite the world to enter. At this point it is important to understand how, biblically speaking, one enters the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus said that, unless one is born again, he will not see the Kingdom of Heaven (John 3:3). One is born again as the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God to bring about new life in a dead sinner. The content of the message is the substitutionary death of Christ and His subsequent resurrection (Romans 10:9–10). So the faithful preaching of the gospel is the key to the kingdom.

In Matthew 16:19, Jesus is specifically addressing Peter, so it is significant that, in the book of Acts, Peter figures prominently in the "opening of doors" to three different groups of people so they can enter the Kingdom. In Acts 2, it is Peter who preaches in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost; about three thousand Jewish people are saved that day. Peter's preaching had "unlocked the door" of heaven for the Jews. Later, in Acts 8, the Samaritans believe the gospel and receive the Holy Spirit; again, Peter (and John) was present for this event. Peter had "unlocked the door" for the Samaritans. Then, in Acts 10, Peter brings the gospel to a Roman centurion's household, and they, too, receive the Holy Spirit. Peter had "unlocked the door" for the Gentiles. The "keys" that Jesus had given him worked in each case.

Of course, keys can be used to lock doors as well as open them. Part of the gospel message is that faith is necessary. Without faith in Christ, the door to heaven is shut and barred (John 3:18). As the apostles preached the gospel, those who responded in faith and repentance were granted access to the Kingdom of Heaven; yet those who continued to harden their hearts and reject the gospel of God's saving grace were shut out of the Kingdom (Acts 8:23).

The context of Matthew 16 also refers to a "binding and loosing." To better understand this concept, one can explore Matthew 18:15–20, where Jesus gives the guidelines for church discipline, using the same "binding and loosing" language found in Matthew 16. The apostles were not to usurp Christ's authority over individual believers and their eternal destiny, but they were to exercise authority to discipline erring believers and, if necessary, excommunicate disobedient church members. Based on God's Word, believers today can declare an unrepentant sinner to be unsaved ("bound") and a repentant believer in Jesus Christ to be saved ("loosed"). The binding or losing, based on one's rejection or acceptance of the gospel, reflects heaven's perspective on the matter.

Contextualization

A critical question confronted the disciples. The dissecting can be put in this order:

Who do you (plural) say? Literally, who do you say ME to be? "You say" (λέγει αὐτοῖς) is present tense fact–who are you saying me to be? With your life, who do you show me to be? When I am not around, in conversation, what are you saying? What do you really believe when I am not around? In the language, there is an emphasis on "αὐτοῖς" "you". It appears the NIV captures the essence of it by repeating the word "you"—"but what about you? Who do you say I am?"

This is very important as it concerns human relationships and national development. Suffice to say that it is not only those who are at the verge of leadership that has stake in national development. This fact is entrenched in the Yoruba proverb that says "*igi kan kii da igbo se*" (Olaoye, 2010) which translate to mean, "a tree does not make a forest." The implication is that nation building that will metamorphose to peaceful human relationship and national development would take the effort of both leaders and the followers in such nation. Undoubtedly, Christian faith over the years have been committed to national

development in many areas like welfare, social justice, education among others. One cannot deny the fact that to an extent, Christians today have been proactive even to the point of representing the Church in government. Christianity today is birthed out of the proclaiming effort of the early church among which Peter was a major figure especially among the vocal Disciples of Christ. We cannot shy away from the fact that it is not all who "profess" to be Christians at the vanguard of leadership that are truly so but those who have truly experience the Messiah and have submitted to His lordship are always at the forefront when it comes to national development.

Noteworthy is the fact that Peter among the Twelve Disciples affirmed that Jesus is the Christ (Mark 8:29); this same affirmation subsists till date. How has his geared national development? Jesus gave rightful teaching (orthodoxy) in His days; He also had rightful practices (Orthopraxis). Those who followed Him could not do otherwise; they were bound to living like Christ and they contributed not just to the spiritual wellbeing of their days but also communal development. This is the more reason Christianity thrived in its early incipience. History has it that when there is call to serve especially in the government then, Christians are sort for because of their heritage of rightful living and practices (Forae, 2009). The involvement of those who profess Christ and act what they profess has in many ways engender national development. If we say He is the Christ, there is then a responsibility to show Him as He is to the world in all works of life (Matt. 5:16). If one has encountered Christ, it will reflect in human relationship, and this will develop the nation.

An Overview of the State of the Nigerian Nation and the Call for Christians Involvement in National Development:

Nigeria is a nation with many virtues. To rightfully harness these virtues, there is the need for the involvement of Christians in national development. Gone were the days when it is conceived that the task of national development is not the concern of Christians because "heaven is their goal."

Nigeria is a nation characterized by a complex interplay of economic, social, and political factors. Nigeria continues to experience challenges in its electoral processes, with calls for improved transparency and accountability. The political environment is often charged, with issues of election violence and voter suppression. Corruption remains a significant challenge at various levels of government. Efforts by the government to combat corruption face resistance and skepticism, often undermining public trust.

Historically reliant on oil exports, Nigeria has been pushing for economic diversification, but this transition faces hurdles such as inadequate infrastructure and a challenging business environment. The country has struggled with high inflation rates and rising unemployment, with many Nigerians living in poverty. The economic conditions are exacerbated by global economic trends and local mismanagement.

Insurgency continues to pose a significant threat, particularly in the northeastern part of the country. Additionally, there are challenges posed by banditry, ethnic clashes, and communal violence in various regions. Efforts to address security concerns, including police and military operations, have received mixed responses from the populace, with issues of human rights abuses and the need for reform in security forces being prominent.

One cannot but say that Nigeria is home to diverse ethnic and religious groups, which can lead to tensions. Policies and

political decisions often have regional and ethnic implications, impacting national peace and unity. With a significant youth population, there is a growing movement for social change and political participation, particularly noted during events like the End-SARS protests in 2020 against police brutality; the recent End-Bad Governance protest in 2024; among others. In the same vein, Nigeria is facing severe environmental challenges, including deforestation, desertification, and pollution, which affect agricultural productivity and food security; these has put the Nigerian space in shambles.

The healthcare system is underfunded and struggles to meet the needs of the population, particularly in rural areas. Public health challenges have been magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Education remains a critical area of concern, with issues regarding access, quality, and funding impacting the youth's potential and future.

The current state of Nigeria is marked by resilience amid substantial challenges. The diverse factors influencing the nation from governance and economic performance to security and social cohesion require strategic and collaborative approaches to foster stability, prosperity, and unity. The future trajectory will largely depend on the ability of leaders, communities, and citizens to engage actively in addressing these pressing issues.

One will need to ask this critical question. How does the Peter's confession and affirmation of who Christ is in Mark 8:29 relate to National Development? To begin with, we noted that Peter's confession is foundational in affirming the identity of Jesus, which can be paralleled to the importance of national identity in Nigeria. A clear and unified national identity can foster cohesion among the diverse ethnic groups and religious divergence in Nigeria, helping to reduce tensions and promote collective national orientation and goals. Understanding and embracing a shared narrative could lead to more effective collaboration in nation-building.

The passage in focus clearly highlights the importance of recognizing true leadership. Just as Peter identifies Jesus as the true leader of faith, Nigeria needs strong, visionary leaders who are committed to the welfare of the nation not personal interest. Jesus, who is the Messiah, was preoccupied by what bothers on the welfare of those He led. Effective leadership grounded in integrity, accountability, and service to the people is essential for national development. The call for such leadership is underscored in the confession, where acknowledging Jesus also implies recognition of His authority and purpose.

In the same vein, the confession reflects a deep faith, which can be a source of hope for Nigerians facing various socio-economic challenges. Faith communities play a significant role in Nigeria's societal fabric, providing social support and fostering resilience. Promoting a culture of hope and faith can inspire citizens to actively participate in their community's development and work towards overcoming challenges together. Additionally, the teachings of Jesus emphasize love, justice, and service, which can inform the ethical framework within which leaders and citizens operate. A nation grounded in moral principles can drive positive change, reduce corruption, and enhance trust in public institutions—key components for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Peter's realization of Jesus' identity can symbolize the need for unity in Nigeria's diversity. Recognizing and celebrating cultural differences while focusing on common goals can strengthen national unity and facilitate collective development efforts.

Summarily, the themes encapsulated in Peter's confession can inspire Nigeria toward a more cohesive national identity, foster effective and accountable leadership, instill hope and faith in the populace, promote an ethical framework for governance, and encourage unity among its diverse groups all of which are vital for the nation's development. Christians have very vital

roles to play in ensuring there is practical reflection of their faith geared toward humanity and national development.

Conclusion:

As put in the introduction, the affirmative declaration of Peter is of paramount importance to Christian faith both in the then world of Christianity and now. We must come to term with the writer in Matthew who had a more emphasis on Jesus' response to Peter. In other words, in Matthew, the Lord joyously embraces this accurate confession and esteems Peter for it. Jesus says in Matthew 16:17, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." God revealed the truth about Christ to Peter. Though God revealed to Peter' Peter confessed it.

The researcher submits that, the crux of Christian assignment today is "having validated that Christ is the Messiah, having had an experiential knowledge of Him (for those who have had such), we are duty bound to proclaim to the whole world that Christ alone is the Messiah and in Him is eternal hope guaranteed." It however does not end at proclaiming Christ's Messiahship; it must culminate reflecting the light of Christ in our contribution to humanity and national development as above discussed. Our contributions must cut across all strata of national development. This is in consonance with the assertion of Osinbajo that "religion in our country (in Africa) must be used to help our people live better lives."

Recommendations

With all that have been said hitherto, this concise work is making the following recommendations to the body of Christ (Christians), individuals and the society at large. They will serve as preventive and therapeutic measures to humanitarian relationship and national development. The recommendations are that:

a. Each one in the Nigerian society should see national development as his duty. This will lead to stability and peaceful coexistence. The researcher alludes to a wise saying of the Yoruba ethnic group in this wise: "agbajo owo la fi n soya, ajeje owo kan ko gbe eru dori," meaning 'we beat the chest with the whole hand, a single hand cannot put a load on head.

b. To the Christians, the fact that the world had adopted a particular ideology does not make it right. The researchers recommend that Christians should model godliness to the society especially in all works of life.

c. This work also recommends that just as individual responsibilities are germane, prayer must not be neglected. Christians should keep on pray and working to reach the goal of national development.

d. Finally this work recommends leadership accountability and transparency; these are major hallmarks of integrity.

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