

## The Gospel of Mark- Chapter 8 Part 4

If you would be turning with me in your Bibles over to the Gospel of Mark in the 8<sup>th</sup> Chapter. This is our fourth week in this chapter and our 36<sup>th</sup> week overall.

Before we get into our reading this afternoon, let me remind you of a couple of things we have seen transpire in this gospel in the last few weeks that really lend into what we are going to be looking at today.

First of all, you might recall a couple of weeks ago the Pharisees came to Jesus asking for a sign from heaven. What was this sign for that they were seeking? They were tempting him to do something miraculous to show indeed that he was sent from God. Proof of who he was.

Now, just prior to that at the beginning of the chapter Jesus had just fed 4000 plus Gentiles. Just prior to that Jesus had healed a deaf man and then last week we saw that they brought Jesus a blind man in Bethsaida and he led him out of the city and healed him of his blindness.

Now the reason that I'm reminding you of these things is because the Pharisees were asking for a sign and Jesus is showing them signs all around them. We read last week that the Psalms declare that The Lord opens the eyes of the blind in Psalms 146:8. And we read last week that that one of the marks of the kingdom of the Messiah would be that the blind would see and the deaf would hear according to Isaiah 35:6.

Mark opened his Gospel proclaiming that this gospel was the gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God. He has been showing us the proofs of those things since verse 2 of chapter 1. Proofs through the deeds that he has done, the words that he has spoken and even the testimony at times of that of unclean spirits who called him the son of God.

But put yourself in the place of the disciples. Understand already that these men are putting a great deal of faith in Jesus. They know indeed that he is sent from God. They are ready to follow him anywhere. They threw down the nets and followed him.

They even have hopes that he is the Messiah. But you know things haven't been working out like they thought it would. Jesus doesn't seem any nearer to becoming king than when he started. There seems to be no gathering of armies to overtake the land from Rome. That is what the Messiah was to do.

So as much as they have the hope of who he is and as much as they know that Jesus is sent from God they are like the card player who has all the cards, but doesn't know he is holding a royal flush.

That is until last week. All that doubt changed last week with the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida.

He wasn't the first blind man to be healed, but he is the first blind man that Mark mentions and for Peter and the other apostles because that seemed to be the moment they knew the cards they were holding in their hands and today we see they are going all in.

So, what we are going to read today is a high point of the Gospel. Mark has been building to this revelation. But following the high point of the chapter we are immediately going to see the high made low.

Let's read our verses,

*Mar 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?*

*Mar 8:28 And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.*

*Mar 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.*

*Mar 8:30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.*

*Mar 8:31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.*

*Mar 8:32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.*

*Mar 8:33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.*

*Mar 8:34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

*Mar 8:35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.*

*Mar 8:36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*

*Mar 8:37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

*Mar 8:38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*

Let's turn our attention back to verse 27.

*Mar 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?*

Sometime has taken place between the events in Bethsaida to this event. Jesus has now traveled north about 25 miles to the city of Caesarea Philippi. That is about as far north as you can

go and still be in Israel. Very close to the ancient city of Dan. This was a place that had a lot of Gentile influence and pagan shrines but was still like the last outpost of Israel to the North.

Now Christ is going to ask two questions here. The first thing that he directs to the disciples is, "whom do men say that I am?" Here he is not asking them who they think he is, but rather what are other people saying about him. He knows they have heard what other people say and no doubt people have asked the disciples.

So simple enough they start telling Jesus who people say that he is. Notice here again...  
*Mar 8:28 And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.*

John the Baptist is the first response. Now that seems strange to us doesn't it? I mean John baptized Jesus in the river Jordan. John was older than Jesus and oh yeah, one last thing- John was dead.

Remember Mark chapter 6? This is the only section of scripture in this gospel that wasn't all about Jesus and it was about the arrest and execution of John.

*Mar 6:29 And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.*

It wasn't long after that execution that Herod began hearing about Jesus and scripture records for in chapter 6 that Herod thought that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead.

Evidently Herod wasn't the only one who was thinking along these lines.

Then there were others who said no Jesus must be Elias or Elijah. Elias the Greek way of saying his name. Now at least in my mind that makes a little more sense.

In our Wednesday nights we are going through the book of Malachi and we talked about this last Wednesday and I told those that were there they were going to get a little double dose of these verses in Malachi this week, but hold your place here in Mark 8 and let's travel to the Old Testament. The last book of the Old Testament that we call Malachi.

In chapter 3 we read,  
*Mal 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.*

Here we see in this verse that before the Lord comes that he will send his messenger. In the next chapter we read a little more of this messenger.

*Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:*

*Mal 4:6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*

The messenger in chapter 3 is called Elijah here in this chapter. The end of the Old Testament is the hope of the coming of Elijah to prepare the way for the Sun of Righteousness that would come with healing in his wings, that is to say, the Messiah, the Christ.

So, some were thinking that Jesus was Elijah. That he was the one preparing the way for the Lord to come. Observant Jews today are still looking for the return of Elijah. For those that have done the Passover Meal next door you might remember toward the end of the Supper that someone gets up to open the door to show they are physically looking for Elijah to come. A place of honor is set for him at the table.

We know of course Elijah has already come. Scripture identifies John the Baptist as the one coming in the spirit of Elijah. His significance was proclaimed by an angel before his conception and that truth was relayed by Jesus himself.

So as much as Jesus was not John, he was also not Elijah.

Mark goes on to record here that some thought he might be one of the other prophets. That might have you scratching your head because you are wondering what other prophet could be? Well the Jews had other prophets in mind like that of Jeremiah.

In the book of Second Maccabees which is a book that is not in your Bible, but a book well known to many Jews there is a story of Jeremiah hiding the Ark of Covenant before the pending Babylonian invasion.

I'll read you the excerpt...

<sup>4</sup> *It was also in the same document that the prophet, having received an oracle, ordered that the tent and the ark should follow with him, and that he went out to the mountain where Moses had gone up and had seen the inheritance of God.* <sup>5</sup> *Jeremiah came and found a cave-dwelling, and he brought there the tent and the ark and the altar of incense; then he sealed up the entrance.* <sup>6</sup> *Some of those who followed him came up intending to mark the way, but could not find it.* <sup>7</sup> *When Jeremiah learned of it, he rebuked them and declared: "The place shall remain unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy."* <sup>8</sup> *Then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will appear, as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that the place should be specially consecrated."*

Now did Jeremiah really do that? I don't know, but the Jews had developed a tradition that

before the Messiah came that Jeremiah would first return and go get the Ark of the Covenant. That tradition of course is outside of the book of 2 Maccabees and the bible and Jeremiah didn't come before Jesus.

I suppose there could be other prophets maybe they had in mind. I don't know. But the point is when it came to the people they had no problem in believing that Jesus was a prophet. They had no problem in even believing he was Elijah or a resurrected John. But the people had a hard time with the thought of Jesus as the Messiah.

Now why is that? It's because Jesus didn't fit the mold of who they thought of as the Messiah. We understand that many Old Testament prophecies are about his first coming and many more about the second coming and sometimes we have verses that contain information about the first and second coming together. It's confusing even for us if we are honest.

The Jewish people though at this time at least for the most part wasn't getting the two distinct appearances. They focused on his second coming. Where he comes in power and glory. Comes ready to dominate the political world. That's the guy that they were waiting on.

But Jesus wasn't that guy. No armies. No weapons. Hardly did he ever even talk politics besides calling Herod a fox and telling people to pay their taxes. Jesus wasn't wearing a t-shirt that said, "not my emperor" and didn't sell hats that said "make Israel great again."

This guy Jesus, he was something, but as far as being the Messiah- he seemed to be something else. Anyone else but the Christ.

So now Jesus asks them again, but now brings the question closer to home.

*Mar 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.*

Jesus turns the question to them. He knows what others are saying. But what about them. Do they think Jesus is a prophet or something more?

Peter answers here. He really is the spokesman of the group. I have no doubt that all the apostles had been talking about this topic. And Peter answers, "Thou art the Christ".

Now understand, this is the first time in this gospel that we see a person proclaiming who Jesus is. He is the Christ!

Did he have an army? No. Did he have great riches? No. Did he have political power? No. Did it look like he could pull this thing off and become king? Not really. But still yet they got it!

They got who he was! He is the Christ!  
Matthew 16:16 says in the parallel passage Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

That's pretty exciting brothers and sisters! I'm excited about that even today! I hope you are as well. Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God! Hallelujah!

So, despite the traditions of Jewish Christology that these men grew up with the ruling and reigning and power and glory, these men were still able to look at Jesus and say- yes you are the Christ.

So, the question becomes, how were they able to take their Jewish blinders off and see him for who he was? The answer is the same way any of us are able to see him for who he is. Through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew adds in his account the next words of Jesus,  
*Mat 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

For two and a half years they have been seeing the gospel of Jesus before their eyes. They have seen all the great works that he has done and recently they have seen the healing of the deaf man and the blind man. The signs of the Messiah himself and it has finally clicked because the Holy Spirit took those blinders off to see him for who he is.

They had to forget about what they had been taught as kids. They had to forget about what the religious leaders were saying. They had to let go of the physical realities that seemed like he couldn't be a king and put their faith in him and folks they couldn't have done it without the working of the Holy Spirit.

And I know I said this last week, but it bears repeating again. Someone can hear about who Jesus is and what Christ has done from the time they are able to sing "This Little Light of Mine" in the nursery class till the time that they are 80 years old and never come to the heart filled knowledge of whom Christ is until it is revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. And then...and only then those blinders fall off and they see him for who he is.

They can let go of what they think they know. They can let go of what they have heard some falsely teach and just believe. Oh man it is an amazing thing when someone says to you, "you mean all I have to do is believe he died for me and I can be saved" and when they do there is a change in that person from above down inside out. Oh I love it. I love to see it over and over again and it brings me such joy because I remember the day that I was able to see him for who he is. See him as the man upon the cross, there for sinful me.

Oh, folks what a glorious thing to dwell on this afternoon. Hardly gets better than that. It's the apex of revelations in this book so far. We've been building up to this moment.

But after every apex you must come down of the mountain a little and sometimes a lot and as such we have to keep reading.

Look here,

*Mar 8:30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.*

The biggest bomb in all of histories history is dropped and Jesus tells them- yeah you're right, but don't tell. We see him do this a lot when he isn't wanting crowds around. No crowds here. So why does Jesus tell them this? Isn't this what his coming was all about? Shouldn't it be shouted from Dan to Beersheba- Jesus is the Christ. Get ready his kingdom is coming!

But know it's not time to because there is more to the story. There is more to the story than the fact that he is the Christ.

You see the story isn't that he has a physical kingdom coming right now, which they still are clinging onto. Right now, they don't know the rest of the story. They don't fully understand that the Christ came first to make reconciliation for his people. Right now, they don't know the fullness and richness of the gospel message.

There will come a day in the not so distant future, that Peter will stand before Jews of every nation at Pentecost and he will declare the fullness of the gospel. A crucified and resurrected Jesus. And upon hearing of how they have crucified the Lord and Christ the blinders will fall off of their eyes as they are pricked in the heart and say what can we do to be saved?

Right now, though, right now as Jesus speaks to them the fullness of that message is not yet known. Right now, they are still thinking somehow, someday he's going to pull off the power and glory thing. Someday it might be me at his right or left hand.

So, Jesus has to straighten out their thinking. They have to know he didn't come for power right now. He came to die and that revelation is going to bring them from the high of confessing Jesus is Christ to a spiritual low.

Look here,

*Mar 8:31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.*

This is the first time in this gospel that Jesus sits down and tells them the plan. The plan is not for a throne in Jerusalem. The plan is that people are going to hate me. The priests are going to come against me and kill me, but in three days I'm coming back again because the Lord will not suffer his Holy one to see corruption.

Now we see all that from this vantage point of the cross. That all makes sense to us. Made no sense to them. They Spirit has shown them a lot, showed them he is the Christ but not this. This is new. They don't understand.

Peter the same one that made the confession only moments ago in scripture now rebukes Christ for what he has said. He thinks he is going to straighten out Jesus.

*Mar 8:32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.*

*Mar 8:33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.*

Words of praise followed Peter's confession of whom Jesus was. Now Jesus openly rebukes Peter back saying Get behind me Satan. You know Satan was someone Peter would become all too familiar with.

Peter later writes,

*1Pe 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*

Peter knew all about that devil. Knew all about Satan because he'd gone a few rounds with him himself.

Satan had every desire to stop Jesus. You all realize when Satan entered in Judas to betray Jesus so that he might be killed, Satan was desiring to stop the coming kingdom. Satan thought he was winning on the cross. You see he has limited knowledge himself.

Peter by saying that they weren't going to let him die and all that is at that point in time just as much against the plan of redemption as much as Satan was trying to thwart God's plans.

Peter goes from the high of thou art the Christ to get behind me Satan. Seems like that is the way it is sometimes right after your greatest spiritual highs immediately comes your greatest spiritual lows.

Peter and the disciples are going to see a lot of those in the months to come.

Now as we get to the next verse the scene moves away from just the apostles to calling in his disciples so they might hear the teaching of Christ. He has privately just spoken about his death and they need to know the costs of following after him.

*Mar 8:34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

Isn't it interesting that Jesus alludes to the cross even here? It was well known that the one who was to die of crucifixion would have to carry the

burden of their cross. Christ says if you are going to follow me you are going to have to be willing to follow me to death. You are going to have to give up yourself and surrender to me.

Look here again,

*Mar 8:35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.*

Jesus is saying here if you aren't willing to give up who you are and your life for me then you are going to lose it. That is you can't be saved without following Jesus in this manner. But if you take up your cross and follow him, there you will find life and life eternal.

We have a lot of preachers today that are preaching Jesus like some kind of good luck charm to wear around your neck. Trust Jesus and everything is going to be great. Riches will come. Happiness will come. Just claim him and it's all yours.

That doesn't sound at all like giving up yourself to follow him. That sounds like follow him in hopes of more.

*Mar 8:36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*

*Mar 8:37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

Again, I read verse 36 and the message today in many pulpits is take Jesus and gain the world. Jesus says no it is the other way around. If you are chasing after this world then you are going to never find eternal life.

Is there anything on this earth worth more than eternal life? No. Nothing.

Again, let's read and finish the chapter.

*Mar 8:38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*

These last five verses could be no doubt an entire message, but I think it is the right place for us to end today and here is why.

What have we seen today? We have seen that no matter whom the world says Jesus is he is the Christ and we have seen the purpose why he came today and the purpose was to die a death on the cross, but that death would not be his end, for he would rise again.

We have seen that if we are to have life then we need to quit following after the things of this world and start following him.

How do we start following after him? Believe in the heart and confess him with our mouths.

The only hope you will ever have in this life is to lose it and follow after Jesus the Christ.

Today before you leave, I want to ask you whom do you say Jesus is? Is he the Christ? Are you following after him?

And if you are here today and you can't see him for who he is I pray that the Father might reveal him to you through the working of the Holy Spirit to take those blinders off your eyes just as he did the apostles this very day when they confessed him.

Now listen you don't want to miss next week as we start chapter 9 and speak about the transfiguration of Jesus