

Day 5. Journey to Jerusalem, 1

Mark 8:31 - 9:50

Structure

In this section Mark records three times Jesus' explanation of his death to his disciples (8:31; 9:31; 10:33) and each time it is followed by misunderstanding and then teaching by Jesus on the nature of true discipleship.

1. In your own words, summarize what Jesus said and taught in the first two declarations about his death and then about the subsequent call to discipleship — 8:31 - 9:1 and 9:31-50. You will need to write down your summary.
2. Putting the interests of God and others before your own is never easy. In practical terms, what does this mean to you? From these verses what motivates you to live by this standard?
3. In what ways could the transfiguration (9:2-13) have helped the disciples to understand Jesus' identity, forthcoming death and glorification?

As you read verses 14-29 try to enter into the weary exasperation of Jesus towards his disciples and their misunderstanding. And yet he did not give up on them. Do you think that Jesus is often exasperated with you and your slowness of heart? Spend time thinking over this and praise God that he has not deserted you.

Weekend

1. Look back on your notes. Some of the studies may have taken longer than you expected or had time for. But above all, remind yourself of what you have learnt about Jesus.
2. Pick out one incident from Jesus' life that has particularly struck you this week. Now tell it in your own words from the point of view of one of the people involved (it could even be Christ's!).



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Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes

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Week 52: Mark's gospel, 2 (A detailed study)

Day 1. More of the later Galilean ministry

Mark 4:35 - 5:43

Interest point

A common theme in Mark is that, although Jesus spent much time with the disciples, they often misunderstood and he had to rebuke them. 4:40 is just one example. See also 7:18; 8:17-18, 21, 32-33; 9:19.

In these four miracles Mark wrote of the power of Jesus at work over nature, the forces of evil, death and chronic sickness.

1. If you were reading these verses for the first time, what would strike you about Jesus? Write down your observations.
2. Pin-point the reactions of the disciples, the demon-possessed man, the people in the Decapolis, Jairus and the woman with the bleeding, to such demonstrations of Jesus' power. How do they give both good and bad examples about faith and the need to respond to Jesus and what he has done?

Write down some things that Jesus has done for you, e.g. in saving you from sin, and in removing fear. How have you reacted to what he's done? Then thank him and pray that you may grow in responsive faith and in obedience.

Day 2. Withdrawal beyond Galilee, 1

Mark 6:14-56

Interest point

The New Testament writers relied heavily on their Jewish background in writing, frequently finding parallels between the Old Testament era and the new era brought in by Jesus. One example is here, where Mark could be paralleling John the Baptist with Elijah, and possibly Herod and Herodias with Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-2). The wilderness motif is

another example which is brought out in these verses. The feeding of the 5,000 could be paralleled with Israel in the wilderness, experiencing the compassion of God who feeds and teaches them (Exodus 16:4-16; Deuteronomy 29:2-6). Notice also the phrase of Jesus in 6:34, 'sheep without a shepherd', which is also used by Moses in Numbers 27:17.

1. The ministry of Jesus aroused Herod's conscience. What had been his attitude and behaviour towards John while he was alive (verse 20)? Yet he remained untouched by John's message. Can you think of examples of people today whose conscience can be aroused by hearing about Jesus and the truth about him and yet remain untouched? Pray for them and for any Christians who are in regular contact with them.
2. The love and compassion of Jesus are outstanding. In what ways was his love demonstrated in these two miracles — towards both the crowds and his disciples? Note down your comments.

Recently, how have you experienced his love towards you? How far are you willing to allow his compassion to flow through you towards others? (Don't pass quickly over this question!)

Day 3. Withdrawal beyond Galilee, 2

Mark 7:1-37

Structure

7:1-23 forms a single teaching unit which seems to have no clear relation to what has gone before nor what follows after it. Fitted in here, however, it forms a prelude to the three miracle narratives in which Jesus extends his grace to the Gentiles. The unit's position is similar in structure to the place of the teaching unit (4:1-34) in the period of Jesus' later Galilean ministry (3:7 - 6:8).

1. What was wrong with the Pharisees' view of the law and tradition and what did that mean in practice? How had this affected their views towards the attitude of the heart?

Note: The law itself was not wrong; it was given by God and written down. Rather, Jesus was calling into question the authority of the oral law of tradition accumulated over the centuries.

2. How easy is it to be bound by traditions or customs of the church or Christian group to which you belong - so that they become more important than God himself? Is this so in patterns of worship, or the way that you spend Sunday?

3. So what, then, is Jesus saying to those who keep the letter of the law without the spirit of it?

Note on verses 26-30

At first sight, it looks as if Jesus is insensitive to the Gentile woman with her crying need. Is Jesus out of character here?

The faith of the Gentile woman and of the deaf man with his friends provides a sharp contrast to the behaviour of the Pharisees, crowd and the disciples. Write down all the contrasts you can see in their attitudes and behaviour. You might find it useful to make two columns.

Day 4. Withdrawal beyond Galilee, 3

Mark 8:1-30

Structure

In 6:31 - 7:37 Mark has presented a pattern of incidents which includes a feeding of a multitude, encountering the unbelief of religious leaders and acts of healing. 8:1-30 has a similar pattern, climaxing in the confession of 8:27-30. The first pattern ends with the deaf ears of the man being opened. The second pattern ends with the deaf ears and the blind eyes of the disciples being opened.

Interest point

The conversation at Caesarea Philippi (8:27-30) is the climax of the preceding chapters. Up to now, Mark has made no clear statement about Jesus' identity except in 1:1. From this point he shows Jesus talking openly about his death. He has set his face towards Jerusalem. This dominates the rest of the Gospel.

1. The disciples could hardly have forgotten about the previous feeding of the 5,000, yet they seemed unsure of what Jesus would do (8:4). Their lack of faith, however, was different from the blatant unbelief of the Pharisees. From verses 1-21 what differences can you detect?

Note: 'Yeast' was a common metaphor for corruption.

2. The unbelief of the Pharisees meant that they wanted to judge him on their own terms: 'Give us a sign'. What was Jesus' response to them? Ask God to forgive you if at any time you have made demands on him and judged him when to do so is like throwing an insult in his face.

If someone were to ask you what you thought about Jesus, what would you say (without using any jargon)?

Write down your answer. What about getting a friend to read it and talk

about it with you?