

## Messiahship and Discipleship Mark 8:11-9:1

Up to this point in our study, we've been asking the question that others are asking in this gospel: **Who is Jesus?** Misunderstanding still exists, but in this pivotal section in Mark's gospel, the veil is being removed. **Jesus has not plainly revealed the central purpose to his life yet: the cross (cf., Mark 10:45).** But in this section, He explains it plainly (8:32) – and then everything in the gospel is headed crossward.

Now, the cross makes sense to us because we know the whole story. But remember, the people didn't. Sure, it was there in the OT (eg., Isa 53), but when Jesus declares his journey to the cross, even the disciples protest. Why?

**Because Messiahs win!** They don't die on crosses! **When people heard Messiah, they heard the King who will conquer their enemies.** They didn't expect a Messiah to be crucified. What kind of Messiah is this?

**When Nick Saben went to Alabama as football coach, everyone expected him to win championships! Anything less would be a disappointment. But imagine if Nick Saben showed up and said, "Sorry guys, but we're going to lose every game." The people would be like, 'What? ... No we're not. We're Alabama, not Kentucky!'**

In a similar way, it was hard for people to grasp a crucified King. And it still yes. Paul later says that this message is foolishness to some people (**1 Cor 1:18**).

**But here's the good news: Even though Jesus wasn't the King the people expected Him to be and wasn't the King the people wanted Him to be, He was the King the people actually needed Him to be.** Jesus took care of our greatest enemies by dying on the cross, and then three days later, rising from the dead.

**Mark 8:11-9:1 is all about Messiahship and discipleship.** Jesus unveils His identity and purpose, and calls his disciples to follow him. Let me give you three challenges as we walk through this important text.

### #1: See Jesus as the Messiah (8:11-26)

#### A. The Pharisees Refuse to See (11-13)

**V. 11:** Despite seeing Jesus do miracles, and hearing him teach, the Pharisees **persist in their unbelief.** They raise the stakes a bit in this confrontation. They come to **"test" Jesus** (11). They want to see a **"sign from heaven."** That is, they want to see **some apocalyptic proof that Jesus is the Messiah and will overthrow their enemies.** They know He has power, but they want to a sign to see **if Jesus fits into their category of Messiah. None of his signs thus far have been "big enough proof."** Previously the religious Gestapo attributed his power to Satan (Mk 3:22). They want something more certain.

Notice what they're doing. **They're basically blaming their unbelief on Jesus, not themselves.** They have a grid, and Jesus doesn't fit in it. So they won't believe. This happens today all the time – people have a category for God and they have their own preconceived expectations for how He should act. If He fails to meet their expectations, they rebel and reject Him. **But you need to see that we don't get to create a god of our imagination. We follow the Savior of biblical revelation.** He defines the categories.

**VV. 12-13:** Jesus is grieved by their question and their unbelief. He refuses to give them a sign. He appears to reject their attempt because of the **hardness of their hearts.** No amount of evidence will do for this group (“this generation”). People today may say “If I could see a miracle, I would believe.” No they wouldn't. You don't need a miracle to see, but a new heart to embrace Jesus (**cf., Lk 16:30-31**).

Jesus is caring for the afflicted, and feeding the hungry, not overthrowing Rome. He doesn't fit their category for Messiah.... Ironically, their request comes right after a miraculous feeding of *Gentiles!* **Jesus' mission involves saving Israel's enemies, not smashing the enemies of Israel!** The Pharisees don't see, they don't believe.

### **David Garland**

“What is it that blinds them? Is it Jesus' unconventional behavior? Their concern to preserve their own power and status? Their constipated faith? Their skepticism that God would work in such an enigmatic fashion? Their desire that God destroy Gentiles and not feed them? Their wish to embarrass Jesus when he fails to produce such a sign?.... Jesus says that false prophets and false christs will give signs and wonders to deceive (13:6, 22). But Jesus will offer this generation no noisy sign from heaven, only the wind whistling through an empty tomb after his crucifixion.”

**My friend, we have all the proof we need and more to believe.** We have been reading about Jesus' ministry in 8 chapters – and it's stunning. **Soon, we will read about the greatest of all proofs, the greatest of all signs – the empty tomb. Do not harden your heart toward Jesus.**

### **B. The Disciples Still Cannot See Clearly (14-21)**

**V 14:** The scene opens with **an unusual sentence.** **The disciples forgot to bring bread, but they have one loaf?** Why the contradiction of no loaves, but one loaf? Perhaps they don't know that they have one loaf... Of do they think that one loaf is insufficient? **A better option, as the commentaries point out, is that Mark is teasing the readers, and is allusively referring to Jesus as the one loaf (Garland, 310).**

**V 15:** A Caution. Jesus warns them about the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod. **Leaven symbolizes corruption and the infectious power of evil.** These two groups really had only one thing in common: they both refused to believe in Jesus. They would not embrace Him as Lord, despite all the evidence (re Herod, see Mark 6:14-16).

**Therefore, Jesus is warning the disciples about falling victim to a similar kind of unbelief.**

V 16: The disciples start squabbling about the bread predicament.

VV 17-20: Jesus jogs their memory with a series of questions about the previous feedings. They don't need to worry about bread! They have lots to be concerned about, but bread shouldn't be one of them! If Jesus can feed over 9,000 people with just a few pieces of bread and fish – he can feed 13 people!

V. 21: The bigger problem is with **their hardness of heart. The feedings should have helped them identify Jesus. The miracles – including the feedings – should have caused them to identify Jesus as the Messiah, who alone can do the works of God.** But the **feedings apparently had little impact on the disciples (go back and read of their lack of reactions to the feedings)...** Garland says, **“They are mired in their own little world, with its petty alarms, and cannot see God’s reign breaking into their mists.”**

**But Jesus doesn't give up on the disciples.**

The **phrase “not yet” in verse 21 is hopeful.** They have not yet understood who He is – **but they will if they keep following Jesus. They will if they don't succumb to the Pharisees hardness of heart.** That leads us to this miracle...

### C. A Blind Man Sees – Gradually (22-26)

**This miracle not only shows the compassion and power of Jesus, but it also contains a parable.** The miracle is placed in this precise context to illustrate the nature of the disciples – they see but can't see fully. **Gradually they will see, and after the resurrection, everything will make sense.**

22-23: After taking the blind man away, spitting in his eyes, laying his hands on him, Jesus for the first time asks a question, like a Physician, “Do you see anything?”

And for the first time, it seems like a failed miracle attempt. **Has Jesus lost his mojo? No.**

24-26: The man says he can see, but he doesn't have good focus. He sees men, who look like trees. Jesus then repeats the procedure, and then the man sees clearly. Jesus then tells the man to avoid going into the village. Jesus again shies away from unnecessary publicity, and stays focused on his mission.

**You could get the impression that blindness was harder for Jesus to overcome.** But there's more going on here.

**This two-stage miracle appears right between the two examples of the disciples' blindness (8:14-21; 8:31-33). The miracle serves as an illustration of the disciples' spiritual condition.** Peter's confession reveals this exact thing. **He sees partially – Jesus is the Messiah. But not fully – He doesn't understand the cross...** Peter only sees

the equivalent of men walking as trees. After a second touch, he will see that the Messiah must suffer and die.

### **Application: How do you see Jesus?**

- Do you refuse to believe like the Pharisees, despite the evidence? Please don't harden your heart toward him.
- Do you not fully understand/believe but are seeking answers? Let me encourage you to press on, if so.
- Do you see Jesus as the crucified and risen Messiah?

## **#2: Confess Jesus as the Messiah (8:27-30)**

**V 27: Here is the continental divide in the gospel.** Jesus takes the disciples to Caesarea Philippi – a beautiful place about 25 miles north of Galilee. It's usually cool, and it's a nice place to eat a *falafel*! It was also well known for idolatry. In the midst of all the pagan religions, Jesus asks them this question: **"Who do people say that I am?"**

### **A. The Culture's Answer (27-28)**

(1) **John the Baptist** – a thundering preacher of repentance – like *Herod Antipas* thought he was (Mark 6)

(2) **Elijah** – a miracle worker, eschatological figure...

(3) **Jeremiah (in Matt)** – the weeping, persecuted prophet...

(4) **or one of the prophets.**

All of these were positive views of Jesus but they were inaccurate.

Jesus wasn't a forerunner.

**He wasn't a pointer, He was the point. And if you miss Jesus, you miss the point.**

Jesus was just a preacher of repentance, a miracle working prophet, a prophet who wept – *but He was more than that.*

**If someone asked about Bill Clinton, and you just said he was a man from Arkansas. That'd be true, but very incomplete.**

### **Popular Opinion Today**

The culture's opinion has not changed: Jesus is a good man, but not the god-man. He is a holy man but not the Holy One.

Confusion abounds.

If someone says they "believe in Jesus" the follow up question is "which one?"

- **Robert Funk:** Jesus was witty teacher like Buddah or Socrates.
- **J.D. Crossan:** Jesus was a wandering philosopher
- **M. Borg:** Jesus was a charismatic faith healer.

- **Bart Ehrman:** Jesus was a first century apocalyptic prophet, who expected the end of his world.
- **Islam:** Jesus is a prophet inferior to Muhammad.
- **Ghandi:** “I cannot attribute exclusive divinity to Jesus. He is as divine as Krishna, or Rama, or Muhammed, or Zoroaster.”
- **Susan Haskins:** “Jesus was a feminist.”
- **Gorbachev:** “Jesus was the first socialist.” (Gorbachev)
- **Rollo May:** “Christ is the therapist for all humanity.” (Rollo May)
- **Scientology:** “Jesus is an implant forced upon a Thetan about a million years ago” – *Vintage Jesus (Whatever that means)*
- **Lakota Tribe:** – “Jesus is the buffalo calf of God.” (Lakota tribe) (VJ)
- **Jesus of Pop Culture:** he’s on T-shirts, TV: *Simpsons, South Park*, the movie *Major League*, Talledaga nights...

What’s also common about this positive but inaccurate spin on Jesus is that people actually **think they are complimenting Jesus!** Jesus is not honored when you say, “Oh, I think he’s one of the prophets!” Or, “I think he is one of the great religious leaders.” Imagine saying that about your spouse. If I said, “**Oh, I think she’s a beautiful woman among many beautiful women.... I think she follows in the line of many beautiful women.... Or “I respect her as a lovely woman.”** That doesn’t honor her. Exclusive praise of her does. You honor her would you declare that she’s in a class by herself, that there are none like her.

### **B. The Correct Answer (29-30)**

“But who do YOU say that I am?” (You is plural. Like Y’all or Yous Guys if from N MI) **Angels hold their breath as Peter takes his foot of his mouth to speak!**

- Peter gets it right, “You are the Christ.” You are the Messiah. You are the anointed one.
- This is **the first human confession of Him as Messiah in the book.** Mark states Jesus’ identity in the first verse (Mk 1:1), but the people are struggling. The Father declared who Jesus was at the baptism (1:11). Demons have confessed His identity (1:24; 5:7). But now, mid-way through the gospel, Peter gets it right.
- Jesus just wasn’t just any king. He was the King to end all Kings.
- The gospel now approaches its first of two climactic spots — one in its middle and one at its end. **8:29**, Peter says, “You are the Christ.” Then in **15:29**, a centurion at the cross says, “Surely this man was the Son of God.” “First one of his own disciples understands who he is, and finally the whole world will see who he is” (TK).

### **Illumination**

**Matthew 16:17** adds that **God showed this to Peter.** God opened Peter’s eyes. Mark’s account is brief, perhaps because Peter is showing humility here. Whatever the case, Matthew wants us to know that God has indeed opened Peter’s eyes to see this.

**Eph. 1:14** “May the eyes of your heart be enlightened.” Your heart has eyes!

**1 Cor 12:3: Only God can overcome our blindness. “No one says ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit. (cf., 1 Cor 2:14)**

I had the most interesting phone call a few years ago by friend named **Mike**, who pastors in **Sydney Australia**. You can't make his story up. He used to be in a **quartet, “God's Own,”** with our second basemen. After graduating, I had not heard from him. It had been nearly 10 years. I found out that after graduating, he pastured a church in **Pine Knot, KY**. After being there, a friend told him about a Christian website where you could meet single people (**sorry, I don't remember the website!**). Anyway, he meets this girl, they talk for 6 months, they get married, and then he moves to Sydney.... **But when I answer the phone, he has this total Australian accent! He asked me to come and do an event... I asked him if he had seen anyone come to Christ. He said, yes, we've baptized three Muslims from the Middle East. Three Muslims. Two of them showed up on a Sunday morning and said, “Tell me everything about Jesus Christ.” Another one came and said, “I'm studying all religions. We can't study about Jesus in our country, not even do a Google search on the internet. I've heard of my Muslim friends becoming Christians.”** Imagine that, Pine Knot, KY, Sydney Australia, baptizing Muslims from the Middle East. Explain that! What's happening? God is opening up the eyes of Muslims all around the world.

**Nashat** – in a city in the U.S. working with Muslims. A friend, kept having dreams, and he came and he said “Who is this I Am?” What is “I Am?” Nashat said you don't encounter this type of evangelism without intense *prayer and fasting*. His friend read the Gospel of John and was converted, and came back and he said that many of these I am statements were in his dreams.

#### Applications:

1. **See the foundational importance of this confession.** Christianity is not first and foremost about behavior. Behavior matters. But it's first about *belief*. You may hear people say today, “**I don't need religion. I have a conscious.**” They assume that all religions are intended to somehow modify one's behavior, make one moral, and so on. But if that's what you think about Christianity, you're missing it. The foundational question is not, “How can I be good/moral?” But “Who is Jesus?” **Christianity is about living your whole life based on the truth that Jesus Christ is King.**
2. **Prayerfully present Jesus Christ to people** – asking God to open up the eyes of their heart. Let's believe that God does it! After all, he opened up our yes. And stay on message.

**Verse 30** – there was still much to learn, particularly the next verses...

**#3: Follow Jesus the Messiah (8:31-38)**

## A. What did Jesus Come to Do? (31-34)

**V 31:** Son of Man – is a statement for divine Messianic figure, talked about in Daniel. He’s not just a man. Notice verse 38, the audaciousness of this prediction, “return with holy angels.”

Jesus tells us his purpose through this prediction. It is the first of **three predictions.**

- **8:31**
- **9:30-32**
- **10:32-34**

One thing is definitely clear: This is important to Mark and Jesus. After all, it is the central point in all of human history!

All three share these things in common:

- His death will include suffering, “must suffer many things” (8:31). These things are spelled out in 10:34.
- His death is intentional. He means for it to happen. He is walking into it.
- He will be rejected by religious leaders. It’s going to be a murder (not suicide), “be killed” “hand of men.” He was exploited, a victim of injustice.
- In the tomb for precisely three days
- He will rise again

All of this is moving to the climactic verse in Mark: 10:45.

He “**must**” suffer many things.

- This is one of the most important words in the Bible.
- Jesus is saying “I have to die.”
- Could God have saved us any other way? I think not. It required the cross.
- Either he suffers for our sins, or we suffer eternally.

**V. 32:** He said this plainly. It’s clear. No parables. No enigmatic statements.

**V. 32b:** Peter rebukes Jesus!

- **Peter decides to go explain the entire OT to Jesus!** Maybe he thought he was on a roll after getting one question right! He was confident.
- Peter was basically the errand boy (33). **They remind me of a group of middle school boys, smelling like Axis body spray, hyped up on monster drinks.**
- No one put these two together: **Son of Man and Suffering.** They had a category for each, but not the two together. This dual nature is reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls community’s expectation of two Messiahs, one royal and one priestly.

- Peter had been told from the time he was a child that Messiah would be a conquering king. The “government would be on his shoulders” according to Isaiah. But Jesus doesn’t even have an army!
- David was a King, a type of Messiah. Why? Because he defeated enemies! Jesus was the Son of David. But he was a different type of Messiah. He defeated the greatest of all enemies.
- But Jesus says, “I’m going to Jerusalem not to live and reign on a throne, but to die on a cross.... All kings go to a throne; I’m going to a cross.”

### V. 33: Jesus’ Rebuke of Peter (33)

- Jesus’ rebuke is shocking. He calls him Satan. Why? **Because this is exactly what Satan wanted Jesus to do – not go to the cross.** In the wilderness, he essentially said, “bow down to me – don’t do that cross thing.”
- **The cross involved cosmic warfare.**
- **Don’t be surprised when you encounter warfare when the conversation centers on the cross of Jesus.** The “things of man” will collide with things of God.

### B. What does Jesus Calls Us to Do? (34-38)

#### i. The Call (34)

This is a call to all disciples: “calling the crowds” “anyone who wants to follow”

#### Deny Yourself

Now, everything about us, wants to **reject this**. Or we want to **redefine it** – it’s talking about “a mother-in-law” or it’s about quitting coffee, tea, etc.” No, it’s about giving up your will. It’s about denying that self-worship. We live in the most **comfort-obsessed culture**; a self-centered culture.

#### Take Up Your Cross

- A cross was painful; it was gradual; it was final...
- **It means being willing to pay any price, shame, embarrassment, reproach, rejection, persecution or martyrdom. It means to be prepared to be ridiculed, be spit on, been seen and treated as a criminal, be thought of us guilty of shameful things.**
- Cross was vivid – it was the instrument for the worst criminals. **100 men were crucified in Caesarea Philippi just prior to this conversation.**

Remember: He is the king. **We don’t negotiate with the King.** But he’s not just a king. **He’s a king on the cross. That means, he’s not just the king with all the power; he’s the king who loves you more than you’ve ever dreamed.** Why would you not want to obey this king?

#### Follow Me



- You **follow Jesus by joining him in what he was sent to do**; not in the atoning for sins sense, but in the ministry sense.
- Following Jesus means doing what he came to do: rescuing people, loving people, laying down your life for the Gospel.

## **ii. The Incentives (35-38)**

Why heed this call?

### **i. For your own sake (35, 36-37)**

- **V. 35: Live Life Now!**
  - **In following Jesus you find life – you find yourself – there’s self-discovery, joy, and adventure.**
  - **Jesus offers you life abundantly.**
  - **Most men are not satisfied with the permanent output of their lives. Nothing can wholly satisfy the life of Christ within his followers except the adoption of Christ’s purpose toward the world he came to redeem. Fame, pleasure and riches are but husks and ashes in contrast with the boundless and abiding joy of working with God for the fulfillment of his eternal plans. The men who are putting everything into Christ’s under- taking are getting out of life its sweetest and most priceless rewards.” -J. Campbell White, Secy. of the Laymen’s Missionary Movement, 1909**
- **VV. 36-38: Receive Eternal Life!**
  - **Jesus contrasts your soul with gaining the whole world. It does cost to follow Jesus, but the cost for not following Jesus is greater.**
  - **I remember being in Cairo in August visiting King Tut’s tomb...**
  - **He gained the whole world, but did he lose his soul? *What good is a gold card in hell?***

### **ii. For other’s sake (35b)**

- **to lose your life for “the Gospel’s sake” – that is for the good of others.**
- **If you decide to truly follow Jesus, not only do you find gain, but you will also bless countless others.**

### **iii. For Christ’s sake (35a)**

- **Lose your life for “Christ’s sake”**
- **WE GET JESUS. He is our Treasure.**
- **In following Jesus, you experience the satisfaction of the soul.**
- **In spreading the fame of Jesus, we find joy.**

**V. 38: Don’t be Ashamed of Jesus, Treasure Jesus. You don’t want this King to oppose you! His first coming was humble; the second will be shock and awe.**

1. **Don’t be embarrassed of “Me.”**

2. Don't be embarrassed by "**My Words.**" Many want to say, "I follow Jesus" but I don't like the bible.
- You can't have Jesus without his words; you can't have anyone without their words because that's how we make ourselves known. We wouldn't say, "**I like you very much but I'm not going to listen to anything you say....**"
- I love that he says this because it takes this following Jesus, out of the realm of abstractness, and makes it practical. **You aren't following Jesus if you aren't following his Word.**

**9:1: A climactic promise.** This is a mysterious statement that could refer to (1) the Transfiguration, as an already now foretastes of the not-yet coming kingdom (possible), (2) the resurrection and the events that immediately follow it (probable), (3) the fall of Jerusalem (unlikely), (4) the Parousia (unlikely). (5) It may also be a blending of resurrection and transfiguration (possible). The third option seems unlikely since it assumes that Jesus would return during the disciple's lifetime.

Whatever the case, the point is that His suffering will not go on forever. **After speaking of death, Jesus gives them a promise of seeing glory** - which may even include a number of events... He promises a great reversal. Suffering will give way to glory.

### **Conclusion**

What kind of people does Jesus use? He uses ordinary people like these disciples, who take up their cross and follow Jesus. He uses people that are willing to suffer now, and experience glory later.

**When people told John Patton not to serve as a missionary to the New Hebrides - an island of cannibals - protesting that Cannibals would eat him. Patton responded, "I am already dead. You can't kill a dead man."**

The people whom God uses are **people who die to self, and say Jesus is everything to me.**

What Kind of Messiah is this? He's the kind of Messiah we need Him to be.

See Him for who He is, and follow Him, until you see Him in glory. On that day, you won't regret having followed Him.