

Mark 8

This chapter records another miracle of feeding a multitude of people (8:1-10). Following that, the Pharisees challenge Jesus to show them a “sign” from heaven (8:11-13). Next, the disciples are warned about the leaven of the Pharisees (8:14-21) and then Jesus heals a blind man (8:22-26). The chapter ends with Jesus asking His disciples Who they think He is (8:27-30) and then Jesus challenges their understanding of the requirements of discipleship (8:31-37).

TRANSLATION - 8:1-10:

1 In those days, again [there] being a large crowd and not having anything they might eat, after calling His disciples He says to them, **2** “I have compassion on the crowd because already three days they remain with Me and they do not have anything they might eat. **3** And if I dismiss them hungry to their homes, they will faint in the way; and some of them from a distance are present.”

4 And His disciples answered Him that “From where will someone be able here to feed with bread from the desert?”

5 And He kept asking them, “How much bread do you have?” And they said, “Seven.” **6** And He ordered the crowd to recline on the ground; and after taking the seven breads after giving thanks He broke [them] and was giving to His disciples in order that they might set before [the crowd], and they set [them] before the crowd. **7** And they were having a few little fish; and after blessing them He said also these things to set before [them].

8 And they ate and were satisfied, and they took away of fragments of leftovers seven hamper. **9** And they were about four thousand. And He dismissed them.

10 And immediately after embarking into the boat with His disciples He left into the region of Dalmanoutha.

GREEK WORDS:

“To eat” (ver. 1) was used earlier at 1:6. “To call” or “to encourage” was used earlier at 3:13. “To have compassion” (ver. 2) was used earlier at 1:41. “To remain” is used only here in Mark, out of seven uses. “To dismiss” or “send away” (ver. 3) was used earlier at 6:36. “Hungry” is used twice: Matthew 15:32; Mark 8:3. “To be present” is used only here in Mark, out of five uses. “To answer” (ver. 4) was used earlier at 3:33. “To feed” or “to fill” was used earlier at 6:42. “Bread” was used earlier at 2:26.

“To order” (ver. 6) or “to command” was used earlier at 6:8. “To recline” was used earlier at 6:40. “To give thanks” is used here and 14:23 in Mark, out of 38 uses. The Greek word gives us *eucharist*, which is often used to refer to the Lord’s Supper, although the NT does not use the word for that purpose. “To set before” was used earlier at 6:41. “Little fish” is used in Matthew 15:34 and Mark 8:7. The Greek word for fish (ἰχθύς) in early church history was developed into an acronym for “Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Savior” and the fish became a symbol for Christianity. “To bless” was used earlier at 6:41. “To be filled or satisfied” (ver. 8) was used earlier at 6:42. “To take away” was used earlier at 2:3. “Fragments” is used only here in Mark, out of five uses. “Leftovers” was used earlier at 6:43. “Hamper” is a basket, but it was apparently a larger basket, enough to hold a grown man (Acts 9:25). It was used also in Matthew 15:37; 16:10.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

“Dalmanoutha” (ver. 10) is not used elsewhere in the NT nor in other literature. Matthew identifies the region of “Magadan” (15:39), on the western side of the Sea of Galilee.

PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

Matthew’s parallel is found in Matthew 15:32-39. While the feeding of the five thousand is found in all four gospel accounts, this feeding is found only in Mark and Matthew.

COMMENTS:

Jesus has already fed 5,000 men within a Jewish context. Most scholars think that this context is a Gentile context. The surrounding regions seem to be Gentile areas. Once again, thousands of people are following Jesus to hear Him teach or to be blessed by His healings. On this occasion, they have followed Jesus for three days and if they had brought food (which we presume they did), they have eaten all they had.

Jesus takes the initiative this time, telling His disciples that He is motivated by compassion (ver. 2) because they had been with Him and now have nothing to eat. In verse 3, Jesus continues that if He sends them away while they are hungry, they might pass out from hunger on the way home, because many of them had traveled from a long distance.

While it is true that Jesus had already fed 5,000, His disciples still struggle with trusting Jesus' power, their hearts being hardened (ver. 17), and so they ask (ver. 4) where they might obtain enough food in such a deserted place to feed such a large crowd. Jesus responds by asking His followers what they might have at their disposal (ver. 5). They responded they have seven loaves of bread. As He did earlier, He had the people sit in orderly groups and He took the loaves of bread, gave thanks for what He had, and broke the bread (ver. 6). He then started giving the bread to His disciples, with the bread likely multiplying in His hands, so they could distribute them to the crowd.

In verse 7, Mark mentions that along with the seven loaves of bread, they also had a few small fish, which Jesus blessed, and the apostles distributed the fish among the people as well. Verses 8-9 note how miraculous this event was. The crowd ate and were satisfied. Then the apostles took up seven "large baskets" or "hampers" which were all full of leftover fragments. We earlier suggested that the apostles took up twelve baskets of fragments because there were twelve apostles. That is only a presumption. Perhaps here only seven apostles are present, or perhaps these baskets were larger and fewer were required. The end results of the miracle were greater than the initial food! Then Mark tells us that Jesus fed a total of 4,000 people, which probably included the women and children. Then Jesus sent the crowd away.

APPLICATION:

Jesus feeds these people with the compassion of a Shepherd. Christians need to imitate the compassion of Jesus in serving others (Gal. 6:10). To have compassion, it has been said, is to have someone else's hurt in your heart. Jesus displays His miraculous power over nature in these types of miracles. Jesus also expects us to use what we have, for His service, instead of fretting that we don't have more to use for Him.

It is a good practice to give thanks to God before each meal. The end result of the miracle illustrates that Jesus has the power to give beyond what man thinks He can (Eph. 3:20; Phil. 4:19).

TRANSLATION - 8:11-13:

11 And the Pharisees went out and began to debate with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him. **12** And sighing deeply in His spirit, He says, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly I say to you, There will not be given to this generation a sign." **13** And after leaving them again, after embarking, He went to the other side.

GREEK WORDS:

"To debate" (ver. 11) or "to dispute or argue" is used ten times in the NT, six times in Mark at 1:27; 8:11; 9:10, 14, 16; 12:28. "To seek" was used in 1:37. "Sign" is normally (but not always) used as a synonym for "miracle." There is no reason not to accept that meaning here. Mark uses the word six times: 8:11-12; 13:4, 22; 16:17, 20. John uses the word 17 times. "To test" or "to tempt" was used of Satan in 1:13, but that's not the last time Satan tests in Mark: 8:11; 10:2; 12:15. "To sigh deeply" (ver. 12) is an intensified use of the word used in 7:34. This

verb is only used here. "Spirit" was used in 1:8; it is not often used of Jesus' spirit. "Generation" is used four times in Mark: 8:12, 38; 9:19; 13:30, out of 43 uses.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

False prophets might perform "signs," but one test was if they taught the Law of Moses accurately (Deut. 13:2-6; 18:18-22).

PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

This paragraph is also found in Matthew 16:1-4. Compare also these texts: Matthew 12:28ff; Luke 11:16, 29; 12:54-56.

COMMENTS:

Jesus gets into the boat - much of His miracles have been performed around the Sea of Galilee, on the west and eastern sides. He goes into the area of Dalmanutha (ver. 1). There, the Pharisees confront Him and begin to argue with Him, asking for a sign from heaven. Jesus has been giving signs already and we know that He gave many more signs than are recorded (John 20:30-31). What further sign could they desire? Mark tells us here that they were "testing" Him. Just as Satan did in his temptations (1:13), these men are trying to get Jesus to perform a miracle simply for the benefit of their curiosity, as they will again (10:2) and again (12:15). Perhaps they were looking for some type of sign that would validate, in their minds, that Jesus was the Messiah who would lead them to freedom from Rome. When God was challenged in Numbers 16, God caused the earth to open up and swallow the critics, but that miracle did not change the hearts of those who still chose not to obey God (16:41-50).

Jesus sighs deeply at their hard and closed hearts (ver. 11; an intensified form of the verb used in 7:34), and He asks why they truly want to see a sign? What is their motivation? What will they "do" with the sign once they see it? In fact, He tells them that no (further) sign will be given to that generation. The ultimate sign they will "see" is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Matt. 16:4). What will they do then?

APPLICATION:

There have always been and will always be men and women with closed hearts who will refuse to see the truth before their eyes. Indeed, Pharaoh of Egypt is a clear example of someone with such a recalcitrant attitude. In 2 Thessalonians 2:10 Paul warns there are people who will not receive the love of the truth "so as to be saved." These men are difficult to reason with and difficult to study the Bible with. They simply do not want to be taught because they do not want to be corrected. They refuse to change their behavior when the truth is set before their eyes. In the words of Jesus, "men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed" (John 3:19-20).

Jesus' critics called on Him to come down from the cross and they would believe in Him (15:28-32). Once He rose from the dead, did they believe?

TRANSLATION - 8:14-21:

14 And they forgot to take bread and except one bread they were not having with them in the boat. **15** And He was ordering them saying, "Pay attention, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod."

16 And they were discussing to each other that bread they did not have. **17** And after knowing, He says to them, "Why are you discussing that bread you do not have? Not yet do you comprehend nor understand? Do you have hearts having been hardened? **18** Eyes having do you not see and ears having do you not hear? And do you not remember? **19** When the five loaves I broke for the five thousand, how many baskets of fragments full did you take up?" They say to Him, "Twelve." **20** "When the seven for the four thousand, how many hampers of

fragments of leftovers did you take up?" And they say [to Him], "Seven." **21** And He said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

GREEK WORDS:

"To forget" (ver. 14) is used eight times in the NT, only here in Mark. "To order" (ver. 15) was used earlier at 5:43. "Pay attention" was used earlier at 1:44. "Beware" was used earlier at 4:12. "Leaven" is used 13 times in the NT, mostly in a negative sense. Its basic figurative sense is that of influence. This is Mark's only use of the word. "Herod" was first used in 6:14. See that text for Herod's family which is important for the NT. "To discuss" (ver. 16) was used earlier at 2:6, 8. "To know" (ver. 17) was used earlier at 4:13. "To comprehend" was used earlier at 7:18. "To understand" was used earlier at 4:12. "To become hard" was used at 6:52. "Heart" was used earlier at 2:6. "To remember" (ver. 18) is used only here in Mark, out of 21 uses.

GREEK GRAMMAR:

Verse 15 uses a verb in the imperfect tense, which denotes Jesus' warning was a continuous warning.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Not only is Isaiah 6:9-10 quoted here (8:18) as it was in 4:11-12, but other OT passages include the same imagery: Jeremiah 5:21; Ezekiel 12:2; Psalm 115:5-6.

PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

This paragraph is also found in Matthew 16:5-12.

COMMENTS:

After crossing in a boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (ver. 13), Mark informs us that the apostles had forgotten to take bread. They only had one loaf for the thirteen of them (presuming all the twelve were with Jesus). In that context, Jesus kept telling them to pay attention and be careful of the influence of the Pharisees and of Herod. Jesus uses "leaven" as a metaphor for influence or for teaching. In Luke 12:1, He uses it for the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. Just because one sounds sincere or sounds as if He respects Jesus does not mean he (or she) is teaching Jesus' doctrine accurately nor that they are conscientious about their obedience to Jesus' commands.

The apostles' hearts are hardened (as they were in 6:52), so they think in physical terms, not spiritual terms (ver. 16). Jesus perceived their misunderstanding, and He chastises them for thinking only in physical terms, with eight questions:

17 "Why are you discussing that bread you do not have?

Not yet do you comprehend nor understand?

Do you have hearts having been hardened?

18 Eyes having do you not see and ears having do you not hear?

And do you not remember?

19 When the five loaves I broke for the five thousand, how many baskets of fragments full did you take up?

20 When the seven for the four thousand, how many hampers of fragments of leftovers did you take up?

21 Do you not yet understand?"

Then Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 in reference to His apostles when earlier He had quoted the text in reference to those who were not His followers (ver. 18; 4:11-12). In verse 19, Jesus reminds them of these two miracles which He had done most recently, feeding the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and feeding the 4,000 with seven loaves of bread. They remembered the leftovers they took up (ver. 19-20).

Jesus concludes this discussion by asking the apostles if they understand (ver. 21)? Matthew will record that they finally do understand, and that they realized He was talking about the influence of false teachers (Matt. 16:12).

APPLICATION:

The NT warns frequently about false teachers: Matthew 7:15-21; Romans 16:17-18; 2 Corinthians 11; 1 John 4:1-2.

Leaven is used as a metaphor for influence. It can be an evil influence (as here; 1 Cor. 5:6-8; Gal. 5:9) or it can be a positive influence (Matt. 13:33).

TRANSLATION - 8:22-26:

22 And they come into Bethsaida. And they bring to Him a blind man and they encourage Him that He might touch Him. **23** And after taking the hand of the blind man, He lead him out outside of the village and after spitting into His eye, after putting His hand He was asking Him, "What are you seeing?" **24** And after looking up he was saying, "I see the men that like trees I see [them] walking." **25** Then again He placed the hands on his eyes, and he looked intently and He restored [the sight] and he saw clearly all things. **26** And He sent him into his house, saying, "Do not enter into the village."

GREEK WORDS:

"Bethsaida" (ver. 22) was used earlier at 6:45. "To bring" was used earlier at 2:3. "Blind" is used 50 times in the NT, five times in Mark: 8:22-23; 10:46, 49, 51. "To encourage" was used earlier at 1:40. "To touch" was used earlier at 1:41. "To take" or "to grasp" (ver. 23) is only used here in Mark, out of 19 uses. "To bring" is used only here in Mark, out of eight uses. "To spit" is used three times in the NT: Mark 7:33; 8:23; John 9:6. This word for "eye" is used only here and Matthew 20:34. "To see" was used earlier at 4:12. "To look up" (ver. 24) was used earlier at 6:41. "Tree" is used only here in Mark. "To walk" was used earlier at 2:9. "To look intently" (ver. 25) is used three times: Matthew 7:5; Mark 8:25; Luke 6:42. "To restore" was used earlier at 3:5. "To see" is used here and 10:21, 27; 14:67. "Plainly or clearly" is used only here in Mark.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Only God can open the eyes of the blind: Psalm 146:8; Isaiah 29:18. For Jesus to open the eyes of the blind proves that Jesus is God.

COMMENTS:

Continuing their itinerant ministry, Jesus and His apostles come to the village of Bethsaid (ver. 22). There, a blind man was brought to Jesus. His friends ask Jesus to touch him, understanding that Jesus could heal with a touch (see also 1:31, 41; 5:23, 41; 6:5; 7:32; 8:23, 25; 9:27). This is the first blind man mentioned in the gospel of Mark. There are seven blind men who are healed by Jesus. Perhaps for the sake of privacy, Jesus takes the blind man by the hand, leading him outside of the village. We can only speculate as to the reason. Jesus spit on the man's eyes; we can only speculate as to the reason. Jesus then laid His hands on the man and asked if he saw anything (ver. 23).

The man responded (ver. 24) that he could see individuals, like trees walking around. He was not yet fully healed. Why Jesus chose to heal this man in stages, we can only speculate. Some suggest the man is a living metaphor for the slowly-progressing understanding of the apostles themselves. That, too, is speculation; neither Jesus nor Mark make that connection. We do see such a connection in John 9. Apparently the man had not been born blind, since he seems to know what trees look like. What he meant by comparing men to trees is also not understood.

Jesus laid His hands on the man a second time (ver. 25); this time when the man looked intently, he could see clearly. His sight was restored. Between verses 23-25, there are five different Greek words used for the idea of "seeing" (and two words for "eyes" and two verbs

denoting the idea of “restoration”). In verse 27, Jesus sent the man home, telling him not to return to the village. Why, we can only speculate; probably it was to keep Jesus’ fame to a minimum, or perhaps directing him away from begging, as he had been doing.

APPLICATION:

There are many questions relative to this miracle. There is no doubt that Jesus had the ability to heal the man all at once. He had done that before, even without touching someone, even at a distance. Perhaps it is true that this man served as a metaphor for the apostles who were also slowly gaining their (spiritual) sight. The next paragraph will actually show that the apostles, verbalized by Peter, have come to “see” Jesus for Who He is.

TRANSLATION - 8:27-30:

27 And Jesus went away and His disciples into the village of Caesarea of Philip; and on the way He was asking His disciples saying to them, “Who do men say Me to be?” **28** And they spoke to Him saying [that] John the immersing one, and others, Elijah, and others that [you are] one of the prophets.” **29** And He was asking them, “But you yourselves, who do you say Me to be?” And Peter after answering said to Him, “You are the Christ.” **30** And He cautioned them that they may tell no one about Him.

GREEK WORDS:

“Philip” (ver. 27) was mentioned at 3:18. “Christ” (ver. 29) is the Greek translation of “Messiah.” The designation, which becomes a proper name in the NT, is used 529 times, in Mark (seven times) at: 1:1; 8:29; 9:41; 12:35; 13:21; 14:61; 15:32. “To caution” or “warn severely” is used 29 times in the NT; in Mark it is used at: 1:25; 3:12; 4:39; 8:30, 32-33; 9:25; 10:13, 48.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

“Caesarea” (ver. 27) is only mentioned here in Mark, out of 17 uses. The only other mention of “Caesarea of Philip” is in the parallel account in Matthew 16:13. It was located 24 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. This Caesarea had been known as Paneas or Panion for the god Pan. King Herod Philip enlarged the city, naming it after himself and Caesar Augustus. The “Caesarea” mentioned throughout Acts (15 times) is Caesarea on the Mediterranean Sea.

PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

The confession by Peter is also recorded in Matthew 16:13-23 and Luke 9:18-22.

COMMENTS:

On their travels, Jesus now leads His apostles to the village of Caesarea Philippi (ver. 27). There, He wants to have a serious conversation with His apostles. They have been with Him for some time. Biblically, they have been with Him since chapters 1 and 2. We do not know how much time has passed since then. Various beings (including demons) have confessed who they think He is. Now, He asks His twelve, “Who do people say that I am?” The Father has “confessed” His Son’s identity (1:11). The demons have “confessed” His identity (1:24, 34; 3:11-12; 5:6-7). Herod is confused about His identity (6:14-16) and the apostles have expressed wonder at His identity (4:41).

We have seen the answers given in 6:15-16, which are repeated here in verse 28: John the immersing one, Elijah, or one of the prophets. All of those are worthy comparisons for someone who was not from heaven (ver. 28). For the One who is from heaven, the comparisons are woefully inadequate.

Jesus turns the focus to His apostles: “Who do you yourselves say that I am?” (ver. 29). The apostles had surely talked about Jesus’ identity over the years they had been together with Him. Peter tended to be their spokesman, so he answered, “You are the Christ.” Peter expressed his conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God, the

Son of Man. Jesus and the gospel writers help us to understand, combines all those ideas from the OT into one single individual. Mark tells us that Jesus is the “Christ” in 1:1, but the name has not been used since.

Following the “Great Confession,” Jesus warned the apostles not to tell anyone (yet) about His identity. He will be crucified at the appropriate time; He did not need to distort the Father’s timetable.

APPLICATION:

People are often amazed at Jesus’ power: 1:22, 27; 2:12; 5:20, 42; 6:14-16; 7:37. He is recognized as a healer and a teacher: 1:45; 2:2, 13; 3:7-8; 4:1; 6:54-56.

As we have hinted above, Jesus embodies the OT ideas and predictions of many “personalities:” the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God, and the Son of Man.

The “Messiah” was One who was anointed to be *the* priest and king by the Holy Spirit who would reign on the throne of King David: Exodus 29:7, 21; 1 Sam. 10:1, 6; 16:13; 2 Sam. 1:14, 16; Psa. 2; 89; 110:1, 4; Isaiah 9:1-2; 11:1-10; 61:1; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15-16; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Daniel 9:25-26; Micah 5:1-5.

The “Son of David” would re-establish God’s kingdom, but a new kingdom which would include both Jews and Gentiles: Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Amos 9:11-12; Zechariah 13:1.

The “Son of God” was a designation for the son of David, the Messiah, but there will be more to His nature than just being the descendant of David.

“Son of Man” identifies the Messiah as the one who would establish the Kingdom, which will never be destroyed: Daniel 2:44-45; 7:13-14.

TRANSLATION - 8:31-38:

31 And He began to teach them that it is necessary for the Son of Man to suffer much and to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and to be killed and after three days to rise. **32** And He was speaking the word openly. And after taking Him aside Peter began to rebuke Him. **33** And after turning and after seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and says, “Get behind Me, Satan, because you are not thinking of the things of God but the things of men.”

34 And after calling the crowd with His disciples He said to them, “If any desires behind Me to follow, let him deny Himself and let him take up his cross and let him follow Me.” **35** For whoever may desire his soul to save, will lose it; and whoever will lose his soul for My sake and for the Gospel will save it. **36** For what will it profit a man to gain the whole world and to forfeit his soul? **37** For what might a man give in exchange for his soul? **38** For whoever may be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, even the Son of Man will be ashamed of him, whenever He may come in the glory of His Father with His holy angels.”

GREEK WORDS:

“To teach” (ver. 31) was used earlier at 1:21. The verb “it is necessary” carries a moral element. It is used 101 times in the NT; Mark uses it at: 8:31; 9:11; 13:7, 10, 14; 14:31. “To suffer” is used 42 times, first at 5:26. “To be rejected” at 8:31; 12:10. “Elders” was used earlier at 7:3. “Chief priests” was used earlier at 2:26. “Scribes” was used earlier at 1:22. “To kill” was used at 3:4. “To rise” was used earlier at 1:35. “Openly” (ver. 32) is used only here in Mark, out of 31 times. “To take aside” is used only here in Mark, out of twelve uses. “To rebuke” was used earlier at 1:25; 3:12.

“To turn” (ver. 33) is used 36 times, earlier in Mark at 4:12. “Satan” was used earlier at 1:13; it is also used in Mark at: 3:23, 26; 4:15; 8:33. “To think” or to put one’s mind on something, is used only here in Mark, out of 26 uses. “To follow” (ver. 34) was used earlier at 1:18. “To deny” is used at 8:34; 14:30-31, 72 in Mark, out of 11 uses. “To take up or away” is used earlier at 2:3. This is the first use of “cross” in Mark; it is also used in 15:21, 30, 32. The word is used in the NT 27 times. “Soul” (ver. 35) can also be translated “life.” It was used earlier

at 3:4. “To save” was used earlier at 3:4. “To lose” or “to destroy” was used earlier at 1:24. “Gospel” is used 76 times in the NT; in Mark it was used earlier at 1:1. “To profit” (ver. 36) was used earlier at 5:26. “To gain” is used only here in Mark, out of 17 uses. “To forfeit” is used 6 times in the NT, only here in Mark. “In exchange” (ver. 37) is only used here and in the parallel account in Matthew 16:26. “To be ashamed” (ver. 38) is used only here in Mark, out of 11 uses. “Adulterous” is used only here in Mark, out of seven uses. “Sinful” is used 47 times in the NT, earlier in Mark at 2:15. “Glory” is used 166 times in the NT, three times in Mark: 8:38; 10:37; 13:26. “Father” is used 413 times in the NT, earlier in Mark at 1:20. “Angel” or “messenger” (relative to a human messenger) is used 175 times in the NT, first in Mark at 1:2. “Holy” or “saint” was used earlier at 1:8.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

The idea that Jesus (the Messiah) would be rejected and would suffer was predicted by Isaiah in 52:13-53:12. The Messiah was also predicted to suffer by the prophet Zechariah (11:4-14; 12:10-14; 13:7-9). Also, the idea of rejection is hinted in Psalm 118:22. Hosea 6:2 might predict Jesus’ resurrection in three days.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

The “elders, chief priests, and scribes” (ver. 31) combined compose the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of Jews in major cities. The Sanhedrin in Jerusalem had the most influence.

The Persians and Greeks used crucifixion before the Romans. By hanging someone on a cross (or “tree,” as it is often translated literally), the criminal was exposed to both intense pain, humiliation, and shame. For the Romans, only the worst criminals were crucified and their enemies. It would not have been the expected type of death a Jew would expect to die, at least not one with the nature and reputation of Jesus of Nazareth. Death by crucifixion was a long, painful ordeal as the victim was usually allowed to suffer on the cross until he died from suffocation, exposure, or blood loss. Often scavengers would help themselves to the ravaged body on the cross. At a crucifixion, the Romans made the condemned criminal carry his own cross to the site of execution, or at least the horizontal beam, the *patibulum*. This is the “cross” to which Jesus alludes in verse 34.

The concept of spiritual adultery was applied by the prophets to Israel because of her idolatry toward God: Isaiah 1:4, 21; 57:3-13; Ezekiel 16:32-41; Hosea 2:2-6.

The Messiah, or Son of David, was identified as the son of God: 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2:7; 89:26.

PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

This paragraph is found also in Matthew 16:24-28; Luke 9:23-27.

COMMENTS:

Now that the apostles have confessed that they are convinced Jesus is the Messiah promised by the OT prophets, Jesus begins to inform them about what will happen to Him (ver. 31). Mark writes that Jesus said it was “necessary....” It was necessary for Jesus to suffer both because the voice of the Lord had already stated this (Isa. 52:13-53:12; see also Mark 12:10-11) and because it was planned by God. He will not be a messiah after the image and likeness of human kings. Rather, He will be a Messiah, the Servant of the Lord, who suffers on behalf of His people. He will “suffer many things.” He will be rejected by the Jewish ruling body: the elders, chief priests, and the scribes. Consequently, He will be killed, but after three days, He will rise again! Matthew (16:21; 17:23; 20:19) and Luke (9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 46) use the expression “on the third day,” which is synonymous with Mark’s “after three days.” The apostles did not understand nor expect His resurrection. Perhaps they understood it in the context of the metaphorical resurrection of Ezekiel 37. But they did understand what He said about being killed...

While Jesus stated the matter plainly (ver. 32), Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked Him for His thoughts about the coming death. In response, Jesus turned, saw His apostles, and then rebuked Peter, calling Him Satan (ver. 33; which means “adversary”). He told Peter to get out from in front of Jesus, essentially “blocking” Him from trying to fulfill His role in God’s plan to save man. Jesus tells Peter that his mind was set on man’s goals, rather than God’s goals. Satan will eventually use another apostle, Judas, to lead Jesus to this very death Jesus anticipates.

In verse 34, Jesus opens the discussion to the crowd, along with His disciples, and talks about the expectations of discipleship. It will not be easy. If anyone wants to be a follower of Jesus, he will have to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus. The “cross” here is not one’s personal problems, health problems, family problems, etc. By “cross,” Jesus intends to say that His disciples need to be prepared to die on a cross for His sake and for the sake of the gospel, if that is what is required. Luke will clarify that Jesus is speaking metaphorically by using the adverb “daily” (9:23). Jesus requires His followers to stand up for Him and for His doctrine, on a daily basis, even if it would require dying daily (see 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 4:10-11).

In verse 35, Jesus says the same thing in different words. If someone wants to save his life by denying Christ’s doctrine, he will lose it (spiritually). But, if someone loses his life because He is supporting and defending Christ’s gospel, he will save it (eternally). There is nothing more important in life than to believe Christ’s gospel, obey Christ’s gospel, and teach Christ’s gospel. In verse 36, Jesus challenges the crowd and His disciples to consider what is worth more: the world, or one’s soul? For what price will a man sell his soul (ver. 37)?

Finally, Jesus makes the application of His teachings with His words, His doctrine (ver. 38). If someone is ashamed of Jesus and His teachings, so that he refused to believe, obey, or defend His teachings (on a daily basis; see verse 34), in a generation full of sinful and adulterous (from a spiritual perspective) people, then Jesus (the “Son of Man”) will be ashamed of Him on the day of judgment and He will not confess that person before the Father (Matt. 10:32-33). Jesus will confess those who confess Him, when He comes in the glory of His Father, with His holy angels. This statement refers to the second coming of Christ. Chapter 9 will begin with Mark recording Jesus’ prediction of the establishment of the kingdom / church.

Verse 38 is Jesus’ first identification of God as His Father in the Gospel of Mark. He will refer to Himself as God’s Son in 13:32 and will refer to God as “Father” in prayer in 14:36. In John’s gospel, Jesus will identify God as the Father of His disciples as well (John 20:17).

APPLICATION:

Jesus will predict His death, burial, and resurrection three times: Mark 8:31; 9:30-31; 10:31-34. The fact that His predictions come true prove that He is a true prophet of God. “Word” is used here, as it was in 1:45, as a synonym for the gospel message; see also: 2:2; 4:33; 8:32; 9:10.

It was certainly audacious for Peter to rebuke Jesus! Yet, we tend to want to “correct” Jesus too when there is a doctrine that we do not like and we “correct” Jesus to give a teaching that is more supported by the world. The problem with setting our mind on things of men is that a distorted gospel cannot save (Rom. 1:16). That’s why Peter warned about distorting the words of Christ: 2 Peter 3:15-16.

If man wants to be saved, he will have to deny himself. Humility toward the teachings of the Bible is paramount to glorifying God and reaching heaven. Observe the frequency of the theme of the “cross” in subsequent texts: 8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33-34, 45.

We must give up anything we need to give up, to keep Christ and His gospel at the center of our lives: fortune, family, friends, or fame.

Nothing is comparable to inheriting heaven.

We cannot be ashamed of Christ and His teachings. Nothing dishonors Jesus more than our refusal to believe, obey, and teaching (out of shame) His words. Peter will eventually grasp the relationship between suffering and glory (1 Peter 1:6-8; 4:13-5:10).

Paul will write his famous words in Romans 1:16 that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God for salvation. The Christian should never be ashamed to believe, to teach and to defend any verse of the Bible since it comes from the mouth of God.