

# mark 8:22-9:29

## THEME SENTENCE:

Jesus the promised king-for-ever must suffer and die if we are to be saved for his future kingdom.

The 2 themes of Mark's gospel come together at this central point: who Jesus is culminates at 8:31, what Jesus came to do continues from now to the cross.

### Seeing who Jesus is

Although the displays of Jesus' awesome authority through Mark 1-8 may make his identity obvious to us, it is not yet obvious to the disciples (8:17-21).

- 8:22-26      Miraculously, a blind man sees      This story is sandwiched between the disciples' lack of understanding (17-21) and their clear declaration of who Jesus is (29), and so is an illustration of what is also going on in them. Just as this blind man initially only half sees, so too the disciples will need to come to understand much, much more (cf 31f).
- 8:27-30      Miraculously, blind men see      The geography of 7:31; 8:10, 22, 27 shows Jesus journeying nowhere, withdrawing again to teach his disciples. All those listed in 28 pointed forward to the One who'd fulfil all God's purposes. It needs a miracle (cf 17-21) to recognise that the pointing-forward time is over and that this man is the Redeemer.

### Seeing what Jesus came to do

- 8:31-9:1      But the disciples only half see      Jesus immediately 'began to teach' the next important lesson, in a section which continues to 10:45, and to the cross itself: with three predictions of the cross (8:31; 9:31f; 10:33f), he now explains what sort of a Christ he is. The strong rebuke of Peter (33) indicates how serious it is to misunderstand ...  
(i)      that Jesus' concern is with saving us *from* this world and *for* the next;  
(ii)      that Jesus the Lord of all achieves his kingdom *in a weak and unpopular way*.  
Jesus is working towards his next-worldly kingdom rather than seeking what this world has to offer; he will suffer and die since that is the only way to accomplish the redemption of his people for this next-worldly kingdom. An application of this is that we too should live for the next world, for that eternal world is far more important: in fact, all the time we're not doing this, we're working against Jesus.
- 9:1-8      A glimpse of divine power      The chronology link in 2 suggests that Mark believes the transfiguration is a glimpse of the kingdom of God come in power (of course, it only fully comes in power at the Second Coming, but here are 'some' allowed a confirmation that he is the glorious, other-worldly, everlasting king-for-ever, ie 'Christ'). There are lots of OT references here (listed in commentaries) which give evidence that this is who he is.
- 9:9-13      'Power' and 'weakness' meet in Jesus      If Jesus is to be 'raised' (9) then the end must have come (cf Daniel 12:1-3); but God promised to send 'Elijah' before the end (Malachi 4:5). Jesus' point is that since John is Elijah (cf 1:4-8), yes, now is that 'great and dreadful Day of the Lord' (Mal 4:5). Jesus is the powerful Judge of all, and yet, scandalously he will be despised and rejected (as John was). It's the same conjunction as 8:29 and 8:31.
- 9:14-29      A glimpse of human weakness      This story is not straightforward. Of course it is another wonderful miracle, but ... since ch 6, every miracle has more significance than just 'Jesus is powerful'; there are only two miracles in Mark part II; there is more detail here than any other exorcism. The emphasis falls on the disciples' inability (18-19, especially after 6:7). Presumably the disciples would have tried praying, but the significant thing is that Jesus doesn't need to (despite 29). There are some problems that are so beyond us that only he/God can deal with. In particular, Satan delights in judgement/destruction ('fire' and 'water' [22] are OT pictures of God's judgement). In other words, it's God's final judgement that only God can save us from. We need him to do what we cannot do for ourselves (as Mark part II will now fully explain).