

# Teaching Extra on the Gospel of Mark

29<sup>th</sup> January 2017

## With particular context for chapters 9 & 10

Four angles to help our understanding of chapters 9 & 10, but also relevant to the movement of the whole book:

### ONE **The Halfway Hinge** in 8:27-30

Mark's gospel is in two halves around Peter's Confession.

**Up until 8:30**, Jesus has been working towards his disciples understanding that he was the promised Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. In chapter 8, Jesus' frustration is obvious. Will they never get who he is claiming to be? On the road to Caesarea Philippi, Jesus puts them on the spot: Who do you say I am? At last Peter gets there.

*So if you are in 1-8, the big question is 'who is Jesus claiming to be?'*

**From 8:31**, Jesus feels he can change tack. Now he heads for Jerusalem (and prepares his disciples for what will happen) and talks mainly about what the Messiah has come to do.

*So if you are in 9-10, the big question is 'Now you know who Jesus is claiming to be, what does he say the Messiah has come to do?' It's no surprise that he repeats his main answer: 8:31, 9:9cf12, 9:31, 10:32ff, 10:45, 12:7f, 14:8*

### TWO **The request to stay quiet**

One of the surprises for readers of Mark is that Jesus nearly always asks receivers of good news to keep it quiet: 1:43f, 3:12, 5:43, 7:36, 8:26 and part of the reasoning can be seen in 1:45. The exception to this request to stay quiet is in 5:19, the time when he has gone to Decapolis, outside the boundary of the Jewish area of Galilee and Judea. Everywhere within Galilee and Judea, Jesus wants himself and his disciples to be able to take his message clearly to every town and village, not others taking the message (especially enemies), and without the overwhelming distractions and demands of reports of healing and deliverance.

In and after 8:31, Jesus teaches the new angle (to teach everyone what the Messiah has come to do) but he still requests them to be quiet about certain things for the moment and leave it to him (9:9). This is not least because their understanding is so antagonistic to his (eg 8:32f, 10:13f) although he does encourage them to permit those who are doing things which pull in the same direction as them (9:39f) but teaching the main message is Jesus' job.

### THREE **The Countdown: Time is running out**

Jesus knew his time was limited. He read the scriptures and he noticed the growing opposition:

- 3:6 The opposition emerges as a pincer movement: Pharisees (Jewish leaders) and Herodians (in with the Roman puppet king). They hate one another, but both hate Jesus enough to join forces against him.
- 3:22 The teachers of the law from Jerusalem seek to undermine Jesus by saying his powers are demonic.
- 6:3 Some from his home town took offence at him, but he escaped before it got nasty.
- John the Baptist had been arrested early in Jesus' ministry. Not so long after, he was beheaded by Herod (6:14ff). Jesus knew that John was his forerunner. It was logical for Jesus to think that John's experiences would very likely be repeated in his own experience. They were. Jesus was arrested and executed.
- 8:15 Jesus warns his disciples of the influence of the Pharisees and of Herod. He is only too aware that the pincer movement (cf3:6) is closing in. And this helps explain his frustration at their lack of progress (8:21).
- From 8:31 Jesus repeatedly warns them of what will happen soon in Jerusalem. Jesus knows his time is running out. *This is the main context of chapters 9 & 10 and is behind our title: 'Testing Times'.*

### FOUR **Tricks before Threats**

In chapters 9-12 Jesus' enemies are seeking to catch him out, with ever less subtle methods.

In 9:14 the teachers of the law were arguing with the other disciples.

In 10:2 some Pharisees came and tested Jesus by asking him a tricky question about marriage.

In 11:27ff, 12:12, 12:13ff, 12:18, 12:28, 12:38, 12:43 there is a series of testing and trick questions, and Jesus' clever and robust responses.

In the end the authorities got their hands on Jesus by tricking one of his 12 disciples.... And then the threats started. *So our chapters 9 & 10 are in this period of tests and tricks, on the progress to Jerusalem. That's why we've called the series: 'Testing Times'.*

Rob McLaren (without reference to books other than Mark)