

# MEETING JESUS



BIBLE STUDIES ON MARK'S GOSPEL

TERM 1, 2025







<i>STUDY 1 – Week Beginning Feb 3   Mark 1 .....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>STUDY 2 – Week Beginning Feb 10   Mark 2 .....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>STUDY 3 – Week Beginning Feb 17   Mark 3 .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>STUDY 4 – Week Beginning Feb 24   Mark 4 .....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>STUDY 5 – Week Beginning Mar 3   Mark 5 .....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>STUDY 6 – Week Beginning Mar 10   Mark 6 .....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>STUDY 7 – Week Beginning Mar 17   Mark 7 .....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>STUDY 8 – Week Beginning Mar 24   Mark 8 .....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>STUDY 9 – Week Beginning Mar 31   Mark 8 .....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>STUDY 10 – Week Beginning Apr 7   Mark 14 .....</i>	<i>33</i>



# THE GOSPEL OF MARK

## Who was Mark?

Although this Gospel is anonymous, there is an unbroken tradition that it is the work of John Mark, whose mother owned the house in Jerusalem where the early Christian community met (Acts 12:12). This is the Mark who we meet in Acts 12-13 as one of Paul's missionary companions, who retired from that mission, was later reconciled with Paul (2 Timothy 4:11) and who laboured with the apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:13).<sup>1</sup> Around 130 AD the Christian writer Papias refers to Mark as the "follower and interpreter of Peter", who wrote down carefully what he had been told from Peter,<sup>2</sup> and the Gospel has a number of instances where "Peter remembered..." something, and therefore represents Peter's eyewitness account. However, as noted above, Mark was also a travelling companion of Paul, and so Mark's Gospel represents the "backstory" to Paul's preaching. As Paul proclaimed the Risen Christ, Mark wrote up the "prequel" to Jesus' resurrection – namely the account of Jesus' ministry, life, works and death. Mark's Gospel probably dates from the decade of 60-70 AD, and as such is most probably the earliest of the four Gospels, written while many of those who were involved were still alive<sup>3</sup>.

## What is a "Gospel"?

Whereas "the gospel" is a way of referring to the news about the saving work of Jesus, a "Gospel" is a type of literature invented by the early Christians to explain and outline their distinctive message.<sup>4</sup> Though it is a continuous story it is not a complete account of the life of Jesus. Rather it is an account of some significant features of that life. The Gospel writers were concerned to show Jesus' significance within God's divine purpose<sup>5</sup>. It is also an interpreted account; within the story the author interprets the significance of certain events for the readers. At this level the fact

---

<sup>1</sup> Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, p.21-22

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius citing Papias as cited in Lane, p.8

<sup>3</sup> Bolt & Payne, *News of the Hour: Mark's Gospel*, p.10

<sup>4</sup> Bolt, *New Testament 1 notes*, Moore College External Studies, p.10

<sup>5</sup> Hurdato, "Gospel (Genre)", *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, p.276



that it is a continuous story is important – sometimes events are used to interpret or illustrate Jesus’ teaching, and vice versa.

The opening verse of Mark’s Gospel gives us an insight into Mark’s purpose, and indeed into the purpose of “A Gospel”: “The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Mark is written for those living after the time of Jesus, to tell them how the Christian message originated – what was the earliest basis for the good news about Jesus.

As Mark’s account unfolds, Jesus is presented in such a way as to persuade the reader of His identity and to show the reader what this means. It is right to refer to Mark as seeking to “persuade”, because even the casual reader will notice that this Gospel is not a grab-bag of raw data about Jesus. The ordering of material, the events Mark chooses to highlight and emphasise, the recounting of events with authorial comments, all means that the reader is moved towards asking such questions as “Who is this man?”, “What has he come to do?” and “What does it mean to follow him?” Mark constantly provides opportunity for readers to assess where *they* stand in relation to answering these questions about Jesus’ identity. Mark presents the events of Jesus’ ministry alongside the competing interpretations of Jesus by various characters within the story, in an effort to force the reader to also come to an opinion.

This does not mean that ‘the Gospel’ is for people who are not yet Christians. Christians need to know the basis for their beliefs regarding Jesus’ identity, and Mark provides these in his account (Mark 1:1). Christians need to be constantly “re-persuaded” of who Jesus is, what it means to follow him and the benefit of doing so. In a world that seeks to undermine our confidence (Mark 4:17), choke our commitment (Mark 4:19), and offer us alternatives to following Jesus (Mark 4:19), the Christian needs constant reminding of who Jesus really is, and continual encouragement to keep following Jesus, until He returns (Mark 8:34-38).



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU GET THE MOST OUT OF MARK

1. When we study a letter in the Bible we are presented with a series of propositions about God and some detailed outlines of how we should respond to these ideas. But a Gospel doesn't offer a list of things we should do. Rather a Gospel tells us his story about a person.

What might be some good things about this? What might be some challenges when it comes to people saying "that's a nice story, but so what?"

2. Each time you read a section of Mark ask yourself the question: What do I find most striking about Jesus?

3. Each time you read a section of Mark, pause and imagine: What do I expect Jesus would do next? Then read on and see what he ***actually does***. Is there a difference between our expectation and reality when it comes to Jesus?



## **THE BEGINNING AND THE CALL**

### **WARM UP**

Write one key sentence that would help introduce you (i.e. no more than a tweet).

What, if anything, do you already know about Mark's Gospel?

What is something that you are expecting or hoping to get out of reading Mark's Gospel this term?

### **READ MARK 1:1-45**

Go around the group and ask what stood out for you?

Matthew and Luke start their Gospels with genealogies and the accounts of Jesus' birth (you may be familiar with these thanks to Christmas). Mark however starts with a couple of quotes from the Old Testament, and then Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist.

How does John's ministry prepare the way for Jesus' ministry?

How will Jesus' ministry surpass John's ministry? (v8, 11)

In the baptism, all 3 persons of the Trinity are present. Can you spot them?



Why might it be important for readers to know that the whole Trinity is involved in this ministry and mission?

Despite the accolades (1:1) and the divine encouragement (1:11) Jesus' ministry is a battleground right from the outset. What evidence do we see of spiritual conflict in this chapter?

What does that suggest to us to expect out of Jesus' mission, and indeed our own experience?

Throughout Mark chapters 1-8 most people are asking regarding Jesus: "Who is this man?" So how is it that the evil spirits already know (v24), and why do you think that Jesus silences their correct testimony? (v25) Jesus' first recorded preaching in Mark's Gospel is that there is good news: "The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (v15)

Do you think that most people think of Christianity as news or rules?

What did Jesus expect of his followers? (verses 16-20) What implications might there be in this for us?

Jesus' healing ministry is described as "teaching" (1:25-28). Do you find this an odd connection, that a miracle would be described as teaching? What does Jesus' ministry of miraculous work "teach" us about his character or identity, and how does it demonstrate his authority?

## **IMPLICATIONS**

What thoughts / ideas will go with you from reading this chapter?

What questions are you left with at the end of this first chapter (which might keep you reading!)?



Sometimes the “so what” piece is as personalised as saying: “If this account of Jesus is true, then what does that mean for my present life?” (that could unpack into the areas of values, priorities, sense of assurance....)



## **THE SURPRISING SON OF MAN: JESUS AND SINNERS**

### **SHARE**

Share about a time when something happened which you completely did not expect – a time when you were surprised. Was it a good surprise?

Have you ever met someone who thought that they weren't good enough for God?

Have you ever met someone who was too embarrassed to come to church because they knew that their life was in a mess and they were worried about what God would think of them, or what God's people would think of them?

In Mark 2 we see Jesus coming into contact with "sinners"; with people whose lives are marked by rebellion against God. We also meet the religious leaders of Jesus' day, who had firm opinions about how Jesus should treat sinners (that is, if he really was from God!) But as we read this chapter we see that when it comes to the issue of how Jesus will treat sinners, there are a few surprises.



### **READ MARK 2**

What did you notice? What stood out for you?

Zoom in on Mark 2:1-12


After the action in verses 1-4, why is Jesus' response in v.5 a little bit surprising?



What insight does this give us about Jesus' views on what is really important in life?

Are the teachers of the Law right in what they say in v.7? Why or why not?

Why does Jesus perform the miracle? Whose benefit is it for?

 Look up **DANIEL 7:9-14**. What is given to the "son of man" in v.14 and by whom is it given?

How does this illuminate what Jesus says about himself in 2:10?

### Zoom in on **MARK 2:13-17**

We hear about "tax collectors" and we might think of some respectable public servant who works for the ATO. But that is not what Mark's first readers would have thought of. First century Jewish sources tell us that tax collectors were regarded among the "notorious sinners": *"When a Jew became a tax collector he was regarded as an outcast from society: he was disqualified as a judge or a witness in court, was excommunicated from the synagogue and in the eyes of the community his disgrace extended to the rest of his family."*<sup>6</sup>

Can you think of some modern-day equivalents of the kinds of people that we might regard as "outcasts" in this way?

What is Jesus' reaction to meeting this "outcast" and what does this tell us about the qualifications needed by someone to follow Jesus?

---

<sup>6</sup> Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, p.102-103



How is Jesus' treatment of outcasts and notorious sinners an encouragement to us? How is it a challenge to us?

Why do you think that the religious leaders were so surprised with Jesus' actions?

In verse 17 when Jesus responds to their surprise, is Jesus implying that they don't need him?

**Zoom in on MARK 2:18-22.** The only time that the Old Testament Law told people to "fast" was as an act of repentance leading up to the one day of the year when God dealt with the people's sins (The Day of Atonement). The religious leaders of Jesus' day had instituted many more of their own fasts. If fasting was a symbolic way of preparing for sins to be forgiven, how does Jesus' little story in v.19-20 suggest that sins will be forgiven? (v.20)

### THINK

How does Jesus burst the expectations of people in this chapter?  
How might Jesus burst the expectations of a sinner today?

Do you think we are ever in any danger of falling into the attitude of the religious leaders in v.16-17?

### SHARE

What are the implications for you personally from what you have read in this chapter? If these things are true, what does it mean about you, and what does that mean for you?







## **EARLY AND VARIED RESPONSES TO JESUS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Mark 3 is a chapter in which many verdicts are offered. Many observers make up their minds about Jesus in this chapter, basing their verdicts on his actions. However, Jesus also offers a few verdicts of his own, and with them a few challenges for his hearers, and for us as readers.

### **SHARE**

What are some common opinions or verdicts about Jesus that are around today? Do you think that the majority of people in our area have an opinion or not?



### **READ MARK 3**

List as many verdicts about Jesus as you can find in this chapter. In each case who makes the verdict and why do they come to that conclusion?

How can you tell whether the people in verses 1-6 are “open minded” about Jesus?

Do the people seem to care about the man with the shrivelled hand?  
Does Jesus?

The Pharisees in v.6 were the people who kept themselves separate for God (the word Pharisee means separated). The “Herodians” were those who like King Herod were mixing with the Romans for their own political advantage. It’s marvellous the way that Jesus brings people together!!!  
What does the fact that these two groups were willing to work together



say about their opinion of Jesus? What is ironic about their action? (see v.2&4)

In chapter 3 Jesus' mission brings him into conflict with the spiritual forces of evil. This is not the first time that Jesus has encountered evil spirits (see 1:12-13, 21-28). Why might the demons be keen to reveal who Jesus is and why might Jesus be keen to silence them?

What accusation is made about Jesus regarding the evil spiritual forces? (v. 22)

How does Jesus expose the logical problem of this accusation?

What does Jesus' answer tell us about the true nature of Jesus' mission? (v.23-27)

If Satan holds people captive in their sin, what does it mean for them now that a "stronger" man has come to deal with him? (v.28)

Belief in the spiritual world is once again popular today. Is the spiritual world usually seen as a good thing by people?

What dangers do people face if they don't believe in a spiritual world?  
What dangers do they face if they do believe in a spiritual world?

What spiritual mistake does Mark warn us about making in v.29-30?

How might the following statements illustrate that mistake:



*“Christianity is too intolerant and exclusive. Christians should be more accepting of other people’s spiritualities”*

*“Jesus teaches his followers to be intolerant of other faiths, therefore Jesus is responsible for spreading hatred”*

Mark 3 also shows us Jesus offering some verdicts of his own. The first one is subtle. How many tribes were there in Israel in the Old Testament? What does Jesus action in v.14ff suggest about his verdict on the “Old Israel”?

At the end of chapter 3 Jesus’ family arrive. But who does Jesus say are his “true family”?

How is this statement a potential verdict on us as readers? How is it a challenge?

### **PROCESSING**

Do people have an advantage with Jesus if they come from a Christian family? If yes, why; if no, why?

Jesus realigns our understanding of allegiances and family in this chapter. Do you find it a challenge or an encouragement to hear Jesus describe the relationship between faithful believers as his family?

The religious leaders responded badly when Jesus said things that they found unacceptable. What is our attitude when we read Jesus saying things that we find hard to accept?

What does it say about us when we actively say that we don’t accept this part of Jesus’ teaching or that part of God’s word?



What do you feel you need to pray about in light of this chapter?



**“BE CAREFUL *HOW* YOU HEAR”: JESUS’ PARABLES****SHARE**

Do you know any riddles or puzzles or word games which you had to have explained to you before they made any sense? Perhaps something that seems really obvious now but which you would never have worked out for yourself?

People often think of Jesus’ parables as stories he told to make his point clear. In Mark 4 we learn that Jesus told parables for exactly the opposite reason.

Parables do reveal something, but only to those who are “in the know”. Parables don’t necessarily make it easier for you to understand what Jesus is saying. Certainly, Jesus uses details in his stories which are familiar images from life – especially if you are a 1<sup>st</sup> century agricultural worker! However, rather than making Jesus’ message clearer to everyone, parables offer the reader a challenge. They don’t just convey information, they offer a confrontation!

You can “listen” to them, but the challenge is whether we will really “hear” what they are saying. You can tell whether or not a person hears their message by looking at how a person responds.

 **READ MARK 4:1-9.**

If you have read this chapter before you may already know Jesus’ interpretation of the parable. But try and imagine that you are just one of the crowd, hearing the parable for the first time. How would it leave you feeling? What would you know from hearing it?



 Now **READ MARK 4:10-20**

What stood out for you?

Who gets given the “interpretation”?

What does Jesus say is the effect of such parables on “outsiders”?

In Jesus’ interpretation of the parable, how does the first “soil” give us further insight into the response of outsiders to the gospel? (v.13-15)

What challenges are there for us in Jesus’ explanation of the second and third soil types? What dangers does Jesus draw our attention to as hearers?

What encouragement is there in the explanation of the fourth soil?

 **READ MARK 4:21-32**

How are Jesus’ words here a challenge to us as we think about his importance and the fact that his message might sound weak or unimpressive?

It can be disheartening sometimes to look around at how much effort is going into gospel proclamation and yet see very little obvious fruit in some areas. How might Jesus’ third parable be an encouragement to people who see little fruit from their ministries during their lifetime?



Does the fact that God's word does its work all by itself mean that it doesn't matter if we are slack in our efforts to spread it? Sometimes Christians feel as though what they are part of isn't very impressive or exciting. How does the fourth parable about the kingdom of God (v.30-32) encourage the "insider" to keep going?

## **PROCESSING**

Jesus begins this section with a command to "listen" (v.3). What messages are being shouted at us by the world which make it hard for us to "hear" Jesus' words?

What are the different types of hearing in this passage, and how can you tell if you have really heard Jesus' parables or not? What will hearing look like?

The disciples asked Jesus to give them understanding, and Jesus says that understanding is something that has to be given. What does this tell us about our own ability to understand Jesus' words on our own?

Do you think "soils" stay the same or change over time? Is your answer to this question encouraging or unnerving?

What and who do you feel a need to pray for in light of this chapter?



## **“WHO IS THIS MAN?”: JESUS THE “LORD”?**

### **SHARE**

Are there any hints from the world around us that everything is not in good order? What are some examples of our world being out of control?


This section contains 4 stories, each of which demonstrate Jesus’ control in situations that seem out of control.

Genesis 1 & 2 show us that God created a world of good order, yet Genesis 3 reveals that, as a result of mankind’s rebellion, creation now suffers from disorder and chaos. The ravages of disaster, demons, death and disease have come upon the human race. And into this world steps Jesus.....

 **READ MARK 4:35-41**

What details do you notice?

This confrontation between Jesus and nature prompts the disciples to ask an important question.

 **READ PSALM 89:8-9.** What answer does the Psalm suggest?

 Come back to Mark and **READ MARK 5:1-20**

From the description of the man in v.1-5 what do we learn about the impact of demon possession on this man, both in social and personal terms?



What does this suggest about Satan's intentions towards people? What does the demons' effect on the pigs suggest about their ultimate intentions towards their host?

The occult is often something that interests people today. Some people even think it's fun to dabble in. How would you respond to someone who suggested that ouiji boards or horoscopes or "white witchcraft" are all just a bit of harmless fun?

What response do the locals make to Jesus? What was their main concern?

What can we learn from this about people's openness to Jesus when he challenges their interests or status quo?

Look closely at what Jesus commands the man to do, and then at how Mark describes the man's response (v.19-20). What conclusion did this man come to about Jesus?

 **READ MARK 5:21-41**

Again, share what details stood out for you?

In what sense was Jairus a powerful man? In what sense was he a powerless man?

How does the woman interrupt the story? How does her story increase the tension?

What would have been some of the effects of the disease on this woman, both socially and personally?



For whose benefit do you think does Jesus ask the question in v.30?

Do the mourners take Jesus seriously? What reactions are there by the end of the story?

## **PROCESSING**

Natural disasters weren't part of God's original plan for creation. Despite their tragedy how can natural disasters provide us with a helpful reminder of the true state of this world and our relative human powerlessness?

Are sickness and disease just a part of life that we should accept? What does this chapter about Jesus' encounters with sickness and death teach us about their nature?

What impact should these accounts of Jesus' confrontation with disaster, demons, death and disease have on:

- Our sense of assurance or safety?
- Our prayer lives?

As well as revealing Jesus' identity – he does what only God can do - how do Jesus' actions allow us a glimpse of what his kingdom will be like when he brings it to fulfilment? What is the impact of that on our hope?

## **SPEND TIME**

Thanking Jesus for his dominion over all creation. Thank him for his ability to overturn the effects of evil in people's lives. Ask him to bring on the day when we will all be free from the effects of evil, and when he will be recognised as Lord over all.



## **NO HONOUR, NO PEACE (AND SOMETIMES NO HEAD!): HOW THE FAITHFUL ARE TREATED**

### **SHARE**

How does social media today usually react when Christians faithfully speak up? Can you think of any recent examples?

Despite the power, authority and compassion Jesus displayed throughout his ministry, Jesus experienced constant hostility, conflict and rejection. We have seen this in Mark's Gospel already. In Chapter 6 the theme of rejection comes out again, but this time rejection also for Jesus' followers and for others involved in the larger sphere of his ministry.

After the amazing events of chapter 5, what responses to Jesus might we as readers expect from his home town crowd?

 **READ MARK 6:1-6**

What responses do the people of Nazareth make?

What does Jesus' reluctance to do any miracles in Nazareth suggest about the place, purpose and effect of miracles in Jesus' ministry?

"A prophet in his home town has no honour". Have you ever seen the truth of these words in your own experience? What expectations should these words give us as we seek to do gospel ministry?

 **READ MARK 6:7-13**



What do Jesus' commands to the disciples in verses 8-10 imply about the way that people who bring the news of the kingdom should be treated?

How do Jesus' words in v.11 indicate the way he expects gospel messengers will be treated?

What do these words suggest to us as Christians about how we should treat gospel messengers and how we should expect to be treated as gospel messengers?

 **READ MARK 6:14-29.**

What things stood out for you from this episode?

What are the effects of the disciples' preaching and healing ministry? (v.12-14)

What is the result of John's faithfulness in declaring God's words and design to the world? (v.17-20)

Stories can convey to us character comparison. What picture of Herod do we get from this story? What kind of character is he? How does he compare to John?

Jumping ahead to Mark 9:11-13, Jesus calls John "the Elijah who has come", saying that "they have done to John everything they wished". If John was to "prepare the way" for Jesus (1:2-8), does John's treatment in chapter 6:14-29 give us any clues about the kind of "path" that he prepares for Jesus?



 Compare the following passages:

**MARK 6:18-19** and **MARK 12:12**

**MARK 6:26** and **MARK 15:15**

**MARK 6:29** and **MARK 15:42-43**

What similarities are there in each case?

What do you think Mark is preparing us as readers for through recording the story of John and then Jesus?

### **PROCESSING**

Some Christian groups focus on the power and victory of Jesus and the power and victory of being one of Jesus' followers in this world. Do you think that this is Mark's emphasis?

Should the possibility of negative reactions cause us to be more cautious about speaking up about Jesus?

How can we prepare each other and support each other to live through the consequences of consistently following Jesus?

What are some situations or relationships in which you need courage to be faithful to Jesus in the face of hostility or rejection? In your prayers you might also thank the Lord for His willingness to endure rejection for us.



## **CLEAN HANDS, COLD HEART? – CHALLENGING “RELIGIOUS DEVOTION”**

### **SHARE**

Can you think of any habits that all good Christians really *should* adopt if they are serious about following God?

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the Old Testament God gave his people certain Laws which served as a visual aid, teaching and reminding them of certain important truths. God is a Holy God, separate from sin and defilement, and so God gave his Old Testament people the food Laws to help them live out the fact that as God’s people they were to be “holy and pure”; they were to be “clean” in a world of defilement, they were meant to represent God’s character in the way they conducted themselves. However by the time of Jesus the teachers of Israel had taken many of the Old Testament laws and added to them, extended them, in short, they had required things of people which God himself had never required. In some cases the teacher’s own traditions had begun to take precedence over God’s word. And into this situation walks Jesus.....

### **READ MARK 7:1-23**

What stands out for you?

What is the presenting issue for this conflict between the Pharisees and Jesus?

What do the Pharisees think Jesus and his followers *should* be doing?



In v.6-13 Jesus ignores the presenting issue in order to deal with the larger problem. Does Jesus have any firm opinions about the way the Pharisees are practicing their devotion to God? How can you tell what Jesus thinks of their traditions?

What kind of “cleanness” were the Pharisees concerned about? What kind of “cleanness” is Jesus concerned about? What is the difference between the two?

Which was more important to the Pharisees, God’s word or their own ideas? How can you tell?

Is there anything wrong with devising your own personal preferred way of worshipping God and expressing your devotion to him?

How can you tell whether someone is truly “clean” or “unclean” in God’s eyes?

 **READ MARK 7:24-30.**

How does Mark make it clear for us that the woman in this story was not one of “God’s people” Israel?

How would the Jews have assessed this woman’s standing before God?

Previously in Mark’s gospel Jesus is seen as the “compassionate Messiah”. Does his initial reaction to the woman (v.27) seem a little harsh to you? How might the following verses help us understand Jesus’ initial response?

 **ROMANS 1:16**



### ACTS 13:44-47

In Mark 7:17 Jesus' disciples fail to understand his parable, but in Mark 7:28 the woman understands Jesus' parable in v.27 straight away. What does this suggest about the woman? What does it suggest about her standing before God?

How does this miracle illustrate Jesus' teaching in the first half of ch.7?

### THINK

Where do you draw the line between a helpful, godly discipline and a new rule which would undermine the gospel? Can you think of areas where you think we go either too strict or too relaxed?

The Pharisees were more attached to outward symbols than inward realities. Are there any areas in our own personal devotion or church life where we might be in danger of too much attachment to symbolic actions and not enough pursuit of inner realities?

How can we guard against our faith becoming merely a bunch of religious habits rather than a genuine commitment of our heart?

What do you feel you need to pray about from this chapter?



## **20/20 VISION? BEING CLEAR-SIGHTED ABOUT JESUS, PART 1**

### **SHARE**

Find out how many members of the group wear glasses/contacts. What was it like when you first got glasses? What did you realise about your old eyesight the first time you put glasses on?

When have you seen something, but not realized or appreciated the significance of what you've seen until later?

### **INTRODUCTION**

"Sight" is an important theme in this passage. Jesus questions the disciples about their ability to "see" and then he gives a blind man back his "sight". However "sight" is a metaphor of understanding. To "see clearly" is to understand.

Sometimes we fail to understand because we don't recognise the significance of the things that we are "seeing". At other times we don't like what we "see", we so we choose not to "see" it; we refuse to accept what we are seeing. Both these reactions to Jesus are found in this passage. Yet by the end of the passage a clear picture of Jesus' identity is announced and offered for us to "see".



**READ MARK 8:1-21**

What stood out for you, and what questions do you have?

No, you are not seeing double, this is the second time Jesus has fed an enormous crowd (Mark 6). And the disciples saw both miracles



Have the disciples progressed very far in their understanding of who Jesus is? How can you tell?

What do you think Jesus is pointing to regarding his identity by feeding crowds in the wilderness? What history does this draw on and what ability does this reveal?

What is ironic about the Pharisees request in v.11?

What do you think Jesus is referring to when he warns his disciples about “the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod”?

What should the disciples have understood by now?

 In **MARK 8:22-26 (READ)** Mark records the second of 2 “spitting miracles”.

Look back to **MARK 7:31-37**. What similarities are there between the two miracles?

What is unusual about the second miracle (8:22-26)

Because Jesus’ actions often have multiple layers, how might these stories illustrate *the disciples’* problem? (see 8:18)

What hope do these miracles hold out for the disciples?

 **READ MARK 8:27-30**



Jesus asks his disciples 2 big questions (v.27&29) How is the first question less confronting than the second?

What do we learn about Peter's "sight" from his answer?

How might this help us understand Jesus healing the blind man in stages? What might Jesus have been illustrating through his actions?

### PROCESSING

What stops people today from seeing the truth about Jesus? What factors blind people to the truth?

What stops you from having your ideas about Jesus challenged or reformed? What have you seen in Mark so far that might make you think that you could grow in your vision and understanding of Jesus?

There is a big difference between knowing *about* Jesus (8:27) and committing personally to a position on Jesus (8:29). What potential danger does this highlight for us as regular group members?

What gets in your way of you seeing Jesus as the divine Lord with authority in every situation? What might we pray for ourselves in light of this passage?



## **20/20 VISION? BEING CLEAR-SIGHTED ABOUT JESUS, PART 2**

### **SHARE**

When have you ever had a situation go very differently from what you expected; for example a time when you thought you'd gotten things right, when actually you had made a significant misjudgement about someone or something?

Have you ever been so overwhelmed by something or starstruck by someone that you started to make illogical suggestions?

Last week, we left the story on a high – Peter had correctly identified the truth about Jesus' identity. Mark has been leading us to this understanding and confession of Jesus' identity for 8 chapters. Peter is answering the question "Who is this man". But no sooner has Peter gotten something technically right, he suddenly gets something very, very wrong.

### **READ MARK 8:27-9:13**

What stands out for you? What questions do you have?

What is strange about Jesus' reaction to Peter's confession in v.29-30?

Why not send the disciples out straight away to spread this message of Peter's confession?



What would their message have been lacking if they had departed after v.30 but before v.31?

Why do you think Peter reacts the way he does to Jesus' prediction?

How might Peter's words have been a "temptation" for Jesus?

Jesus says that his way of being God's king (suffering to bring glory) doesn't only affect him personally, but also has huge implications for any who would follow him as king.

What does Jesus say life will look like for the person who follows him (v.34-36)?

Can you think of particular examples of what this teaching might look like in practice (give specific examples) for Christians living in Sydney, Australia in 2025?

Jesus lays out a pretty clear cost vs benefits analysis for his followers in v.34-38. Despite the clearness of Jesus' words do you think we still have trouble "denying ourselves and taking up our cross"? If so, why might this be?

Jesus has been talking about suffering being the pathway that "the Son of Man" would take to glory. Having heard this uncomfortable truth, the disciples now do get a glimpse of his glory.

How would this vision of the transfigured Jesus be an encouragement to the disciples? Why do you think Mark has included this event – how is it meant to encourage readers like us?



Do you think there is anything significant about why Elijah and Moses are there?

The voice from heaven gives a clear instruction. What is it?

In what situations do we need to hear that command?

Jesus tells his friends that they have to wait until after the resurrection to tell what they saw. How does the resurrection of Jesus give us a clearer message to tell?

What aspect of the truth about following Jesus slips out of your field of vision more often – the present suffering for his name, or the certainty of future glory? Which aspect do you need to have reminded and reinforced to you more at the moment?

What do you need the group to pray for you as a result of reading this passage?



## **PREPARING FOR JESUS DEATH**

Acknowledgement: Study 10 is taken from Matthias' Media's "News of the Hour" and is used with permission under our church's "Gotherefor" subscription licence.

### **INTRODUCTION**

When have you made preparations for a significant upcoming event? Did everything go according to your plans and preparations?

This week we are preparing to celebrate Easter. But as we go back to the story of the first Easter we discover lots of preparations were being made.

 **READ MARK 14:1-11**

How do the priests, the woman and Judas each prepare differently for Jesus' death?

 **READ MARK 14:12-25**

What are the different reactions to Jesus' announcement that he will be betrayed?

In Exodus 11-13 God was preparing to send a terrible plague of judgment on Egypt where His people were captives. This judgement plague would be the catalyst for their release. The Israelites were told to sacrifice a lamb and paint its blood on their door frames so as to escape the judgement - the destroyer would "Passover" these houses and spare them; they would be saved through judgment. Each year the Israelites remembered this act of salvation through a shared meal.



How does Jesus reinterpret this meal?

How does his interpretation prepare you for what is about to happen to him?

 **READ MARK 14:26-52**

What do you think of Peter's protestations? Are you positive or negative towards him?

What is the struggle facing the disciples? How do you react to them?

What is the struggle facing Jesus? How do you react to him?

What does the arrival of Judas indicate?

How do you end up feeling towards the disciples, Judas and Jesus respectively?

 **READ MARK 14:53-72**

Is it a surprise to find Peter still following Jesus?

At his trial, what is Jesus condemned for?

What does Jesus promise?

How does Peter's denial reinforce the trustworthiness of Jesus?



## **REFLECT**

How does the failure of the disciples prepare us for Easter as we examine and reflect on our own faithfulness and consistency in following Jesus?

How does reflecting on Jesus' preparedness for the cross prepare your heart for Easter?

What would you like to pray about in light of this chapter?