

Suggested Reading

This week you may wish to read the following passages from the Bible.

A Recommended Reading

Mark 14: 1 - 16:8 The Passion Narrative

B Read Carefully

Mark 15: 21 - 41 **The Death of Jesus**
Mark 14: 1 - 2 The Conspiracy against Jesus
Mark 14: 32 - 42 Gethsemane
Mark 14: 53 - 64 The Trial of Jesus
Mark 11: 1 - 11 Jesus' entry into Jerusalem

C Background Reading

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12. The Suffering Servant.

Prayer

O God, who by the pages of both Testaments
Instruct and prepare us to celebrate the Paschal Mystery,
Grant that we may comprehend your mercy,
So that the gifts we receive from you this night
may confirm our hope of the gifts to come.
Through Christ our Lord Amen.
(From the Easter Vigil)

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Sacred Heart Catholic Church

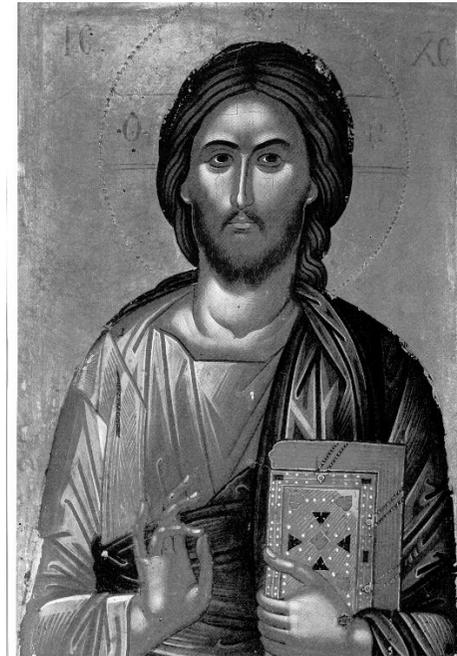
Henley on Thames



Jesus, the Messiah.

4

Mark 8:22 - 10:52



Peter's profession of faith (*Mk 8:27-30*) is the turning point in the Gospel story. At the beginning of the Gospel, Mark states that '*Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.*' During his ministry in Galilee this is progressively revealed by the teaching and actions of Jesus. Peter's declaration of faith reveals Jesus' true nature which will only be fully revealed on the Cross. Peter's declaration acts as a hinge which unites these two parts of the Gospel.

From this moment onwards, the focus of the Gospel changes and also its geographical setting. Jesus teaches his disciples that he must suffer and die. They need to understand that Jesus is also God's suffering servant.

Jesus' ministry in Galilee concludes as he resolutely takes the road to Jerusalem. The journey of Jesus is 'a way of the Cross' which is emphasised as they continue 'on their way.' The followers of Jesus are called to carry their cross after him. There are three predictions of the Passion which in turn are linked to the disciples' threefold failure to understand the full meaning of this teaching. The Cure of the Blind Man at Bethsaida (*Mk 8:22 - 26*) and blind Bartimaeus at Jericho (*Mk 10:46 - 52*) frame this section of the Gospel.

Each miracle stands at the beginning and at the end of the journey to Jerusalem and draw our attention to what Jesus has been doing on the way: striving to open the eyes of his disciples. Both of these miracles have a symbolic quality. The blind man at Bethsaida has his sight restored gradually. This symbolises the gradual awaking to faith which the disciples display. (*Compare Mark 8:22-26 & 8:27-30*) Bartimaeus recognises Jesus, as Son of David, rather than Jesus of Nazareth. He is healed immediately and follows Jesus on the way to Jerusalem.

This section of the Gospel continues the previous theme of '*discipleship & faith.*' The previous section concluded with Jesus exclamation; '*Do you still not understand?*' (*Mark 8:21*) It also points forward to the next part of the Gospel, in which the disciples will struggle with the mystery of the Cross as an essential aspect of Jesus' identity.

Peter's profession of faith is momentous and marks a turning point in the Gospel. It is the *first* time that the disciples have expressed their faith in Jesus and echoes the declaration of *Mk 1:1*. '*The good news about Jesus Christ, Son of God.*' The title *Messiah or Christ (in Greek)* means the anointed one. This was distinctive of Kings of Israel and applied to the future leader of Israel who would come to set them free.

Peter's declaration of faith (*Mk 8:27 - 30*) is united with the first prediction of the passion. Jesus seeks to clarify their understanding of the Messiah by explaining his suffering, death and resurrection. Jesus rejects a political understanding of this title. The disciples must unite themselves with Jesus by sharing his suffering and following him on the way of the Cross. Peter fails to understand its meaning.

Next Week

The Passion according to Mark.

We will conclude Mark's Gospel by studying the Passion Narrative. This section (*Mark 14:1 - 16:8*) comprises one third of the Gospel. As we study the Passion narrative, it would be helpful to note how Mark refers to the themes he has introduced previously. We shall find this week's study of the journey to Jerusalem very helpful. The concepts of the '*Suffering Servant*' and the Messiah who came to serve will be revealed in greater clarity.

Our study of the Passion according to Mark will become an important foundation for our future examination of the Passion of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel and Luke's Gospel. In future we shall concentrate on comparing the passion narratives of Luke and Matthew with that of Mark.

II. Christ

436 The word '*Christ*' comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Messiah*, which means 'anointed'. It became the name proper to Jesus only because he accomplished perfectly the divine mission that 'Christ' signifies. In effect, in Israel those consecrated to God for a mission that he gave were anointed in his name. This was the case for kings, for priests and, in rare instances, for prophets.²⁹ This had to be the case all the more so for the Messiah whom God would send to inaugurate his kingdom definitively.³⁰ It was necessary that the Messiah be anointed by the Spirit of the Lord at once as king and priest, and also as prophet.³¹ Jesus fulfilled the messianic hope of Israel in his threefold office of priest, prophet and king.

The cure of Bartimaeus reveals to us the true nature of discipleship and faith. Bartimaeus understands who Jesus is although he has never met him. He is told that *Jesus of Nazareth* has arrived in Jericho; whereas he declares Jesus to be the '*Son of David*' = *the Messiah*. This title is important, because Jesus is travelling to Jerusalem = the City of David. It is as the Messiah that he will enter the city triumphantly. Following the restoration of his sight, Bartimaeus follows Jesus to Jerusalem, where the prediction of the passion will be fulfilled.

438 Jesus' messianic consecration reveals his divine mission, 'for the name "Christ" implies "he who anointed", "he who was anointed" and "the very anointing with which he was anointed". The one who anointed is the Father, the one who was anointed is the Son, and he was anointed with the Spirit who is the anointing.'³⁵ His eternal messianic consecration was revealed during the time of his earthly life at the moment of his baptism by John, when 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power', 'that he might be revealed to Israel'³⁶ as its Messiah. His works and words will manifest him as 'the Holy One of God'.³⁷

439 Many Jews and even certain Gentiles who shared their hope recognized in Jesus the fundamental attributes of the messianic 'Son of David', promised by God to Israel.³⁸ Jesus accepted his rightful title of Messiah, though with some reserve because it was understood by some of his contemporaries in too human a sense, as essentially political.³⁹

440 Jesus accepted Peter's profession of faith, which acknowledged him to be the Messiah, by announcing the imminent Passion of the Son of Man.⁴⁰ He unveiled the authentic content of his messianic kingship both in the transcendent identity of the Son of Man 'who came down from heaven', and in his redemptive mission as the suffering Servant: 'The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'⁴¹ Hence the true meaning of his kingship is revealed only when he is raised high on the cross.⁴² Only after his Resurrection will Peter be able to proclaim Jesus' messianic kingship to the People of God:

Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Transfiguration of Jesus (*Mk 9:2 - 8*) can also be understood in the context of the prediction of his passion. Jesus is revealed in glory in the presence of Moses & Elijah, symbolising the fulfilment of the Law & the Prophets. The voice of the Father reveals his true nature as God's Son. However, once again its significance is not understood as the disciples discuss what '*rising from the dead*' could mean. (*Mk 9:10*)

The Second Prediction of the Passion (*Mk 9:30 - 32*) continues to develop the themes within this section of the Gospel. Jesus passes through Galilee and does not wish anyone to know because the Galilean ministry has ended. The focus of the Gospel is now the journey to Jerusalem. Jesus wishes to teach his disciples (about his passion and death) as he travels on the way. Each prediction of the passion is more detailed than the previous account.

Jesus stresses that the Son of Man will be '*delivered*' into the hands of men. (*Mk 9:31*) His prediction of the passion is linked with the disciples' failure to understand. This is emphasised by the passage which follows, as the disciples argue who is the greatest? (*Mk 9:33-37*) Which can be contrasted with the declaration of Jesus that anyone who would be first '*must make himself last of all and servant of all.*' (*Mk 9:35*)

This statement is clarified in the third (and most detailed) prediction of the Passion. (*Mk 10:32-34*) Jerusalem, the goal of their journey is mentioned. It is here that Jesus will suffer and die; yet he travels resolutely to his destiny. The detail within this prediction is a summary of the passion narrative and as such sets the scene for all that is to follow. Jesus explains the significance of his suffering, and reveals its importance for understanding his nature and the way of the disciple.

The request by James and John only serves to heighten the disciples' misunderstanding of Jesus suffering. They shall share the 'cup' & 'baptism' of Jesus. These are references to his passion and death. However, the seats in the kingdom are not his to grant. The other disciples' indignation at the perceived advancement of James and John allows Jesus to develop the theme of service, which was introduced in the Second Prediction of the Passion. This image of the servant reveals the true nature of Jesus and his ministry. He is God's suffering servant echoing the prophecy of *Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12*. This is the understanding of the Messiah that the disciples fail to grasp.

Table II
ORDER FOR GOSPEL READING
FOR SUNDAYS IN ORDINARY TIME

Mark's main interest is the person of Jesus himself. He follows Jesus through his public ministry in Galilee, outside Galilee and finally in Jerusalem itself immediately before the passion. The crisis is reached when the fundamental question is posed to the disciples: 'Who do you say I am?' Peter's confession of faith is, therefore, at the heart of Mark's Gospel. In the year of Mark the Lectionary

Unit I	The figure of Jesus the Messiah	Sundays 1-2
SUNDAY 1	The baptism of Jesus	Mk 1:6b-11
SUNDAY 2	The call of Andrew and his friend	Jn 1:35-42
Unit II	The Mystery progressively revealed	Sundays 3-23
<i>Stage I</i>	<i>Jesus with the Jewish crowds</i>	<i>Sundays 3-9</i>
SUNDAY 3	The call of the first apostles	Mk 1:14-20
SUNDAY 4	A day in Capernaum (1)	Mk 1:21-28
SUNDAY 5	A day in Capernaum (1)	Mk 1:29-39
SUNDAY 6	The cure of a leper	Mk 1:40-45
SUNDAY 7	The cure of a paralytic	Mk 2:1-12
SUNDAY 8	The question of fasting	Mk 2:18-22
SUNDAY 9	Violation of the Sabbath	Mk 2:23-3:6
<i>Stage II</i>	<i>Jesus with his disciples</i>	<i>Sundays 10-14</i>
SUNDAY 10	Serious criticism of Jesus	Mk 3:20-35
SUNDAY 11	The parables of the Kingdom	Mk 4:26-34
SUNDAY 12	The calming of the storm	Mk 4:35-41
SUNDAY 13	Jairus' daughter; the woman in the crowd	Mk 5:21-43
SUNDAY 14	Jesus rejected at Nazareth	Mk 6:1-6
<i>Stage III</i>	<i>Jesus manifests himself</i>	<i>Sundays 15-23</i>
SUNDAY 15	The mission of the twelve	Mk 6:7-13
SUNDAY 16	Compassion for the crowds	Mk 6:30-34
SUNDAY 17	The feeding of five thousand	Jn 6:1-15
SUNDAY 18	The bread of life (1)	Jn 6:24-35
SUNDAY 19	The bread of life (2)	Jn 6:41-52
SUNDAY 20	The eucharist	Jn 6:51-58
SUNDAY 21	Incredulity and faith	Jn 6:61-70
SUNDAY 22	Jewish customs	Mk 7:1-8, 14-15, 21
SUNDAY 23	The cure of a deaf-mute	Mk 7:31-37

YEAR B: YEAR OF MARK

observes faithfully the structure and message of the Gospel itself. One important peculiarity is that the Lectionary includes a major insert from the Gospel of John (Sundays 17-21: John 6 – the sermon on the 'Bread of Life'). This fits well into this part of Mark's Gospel, which is concerned with Jesus' revelation of himself, and is known as 'the Bread section'.

Unit III	The Mystery of the Son of Man	Sundays 24-34
<i>Stage I</i>	<i>The 'Way' of the Son of Man</i>	<i>Sundays 24-30</i>
SUNDAY 24	Peter's confession of faith	Mk 8:27-35
SUNDAY 25	Passion and resurrection prophesied	Mk 9:29-36
SUNDAY 26	Instructions for disciples	Mk 9:37-42, 44, 46-47
SUNDAY 27	Marriage and divorce	Mk 10:2-16
SUNDAY 28	The problem of wealth	Mk 10:17-30
SUNDAY 29	The sons of Zebedee	Mk 10:35-46
SUNDAY 30	The cure of Bartimaeus	Mk 10:46-52
<i>Stage II</i>	<i>Final revelation in Jerusalem</i>	<i>Sundays 31-33</i>
SUNDAY 31	The first commandment	Mk 12:28b-34
SUNDAY 32	The widow's mite	Mk 12:38-44
SUNDAY 33	The last things	Mk 13:24-32
<i>Stage III</i>	<i>The fulfilment of the mystery</i>	<i>Sunday 34</i>
SUNDAY 34	The solemnity of Christ the King	Jn 18:33b-37