

1) **THE HEALING OF THE BLIND MAN – MARK 8:22-26**

“And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. [23] And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" [24] And he looked up and said, "I see men, but they look like trees, walking." [25] Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. [26] And he sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village." As in the healing of the deaf man in 7:31-37, Jesus takes this man away from the hustle and stares of the crowded streets of the town (8:23). Also, this miracle is of interest because it is the only recorded miracle where the healing wasn't **totally instant in nature**. Consider the following points:

A) **JESUS RECOGNIZED THAT THE MAN WASN'T HEALED UNTIL HE COULD SEE COMPLETELY.**

He didn't ask the man to try to confess something into reality that hadn't actually happened yet. Jesus didn't view the man's honest admission of his ongoing deficiency after Jesus had touched him as some kind of lack of faith.

B) **JESUS DID NOTHING TO PUT BLAME OR CONDEMNATION ON THE MAN.**

Whether we like it or not, Jesus, in fact, makes *no attempt to explain the situation*. This is so very important. We should learn *not* to try to be more spiritual than Jesus. He didn't feel the need to offer any reasons as to why some healings come instantly while others develop in stages over time. Sometimes man's pride won't let him leave mysteries alone.

2) **PETER'S CONFESSION OF CHRIST – MARK 8:27-33**

“And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" [28] And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." [29] And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." [30] And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.[31] And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. [32] And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. [33] But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Here are some points that stand out as central and obvious:

A) **JESUS MADE HUMAN OPINION ABOUT HIMSELF THE CENTRAL CONCERN OF HIS MINISTRY – MARK 8:27**

“And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that I am?’” This was not driven by *ego*, but by the fact that people *had* to be right about who Jesus was to receive His life and grace. His question was not, "What do men think about my wonderful powers?", or, "How do you think people are receiving my teaching?" Rather, the issue was "*Who do the people say I am?*"

This was (and still is) the point on which everything in Christ's kingdom would hang. Matthew's account of Jesus' response to Peter makes this point even more vivid - **Matthew 16:17-19** - “And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. [18] And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. [19] I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’”

B) IT IS TOTALLY INADEQUATE TO LIST CHRIST ALONG SIDE OF EVEN THE BEST OF PROPHETS - MARK 8:28

"And they told him, 'John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.'" Clearly, Jesus was looking for a better answer than the people had been giving. Elsewhere, Jesus said that Moses and even Abraham were longing to "see His day." The prophets were looking forward to the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. They pointed to Someone else. Jesus pointed to Himself.

C) PETER SAID JESUS WAS "THE CHRIST" - MARK 8:29

"And he asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Christ.'" Christ" is not Jesus' second name. It's the Greek word for "Messiah" (which is the Hebrew word meaning "anointed" or "anointed one"). Prophets, Priests and Kings were all anointed in the OT to fill certain roles. Jesus fulfilled each of these offices in specific ways:

As **Prophet**, Jesus was the **final revelation to whom all the prophets pointed - Hebrews 1:1-3 - "Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, [2] who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. [3] For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself."**

As **Priest**, Jesus **accomplished the complete redemption for sins that the sacrifices of the Old Testament priests only dimly foreshadowed.** Their sacrifices could never cleanse the heart from the power of sin - **Hebrews 10:1-4 - "For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. [2] Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sin? [3] But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin every year. [4] For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."**

As **King** Jesus came from the lineage of David as the **final fulfillment of David's throne to set up a kingdom that would never end - Isaiah 9:7 - "Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."**

D) JESUS COMMANDED HIS DISCIPLES TO REMAIN SILENT ABOUT WHO HE WAS - MARK 8:30

The reason becomes clearer from the following verses. **In verses 31-33** Jesus outlines the **way in which His kingdom must come.** Peter (and probably the rest of the group as well) didn't even want to hear Jesus talking about His death and cross (32). Jesus told them to remain silent because **He was just "beginning" to teach them about His death and resurrection from the dead** (31 and knew they weren't ready to digest the full message of His coming redemptive death on the cross. Obviously, there was no point in spreading the gospel until this was firmly understood.

3) IN PERFECT SEQUENCE, JESUS TURNED FROM HIS CROSS TO THEIRS - MARK 8:34-38

"And he called to him the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [35] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. [36] For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? [37] For what can a man give in return for his life? [38] For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Jesus began to unfold just what His program of conversion and discipleship would actually entail. Here are some of His basic requirements:

A) NOBODY COULD FOLLOW JESUS ON HIS OR HER OWN TERMS - MARK 8:34

“And he called to him the crowd with his disciples and said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” I can't manage my own life, cater to my own tastes and desires and follow Jesus in any real way. A sharp and distinct denial of self is at the heart of everything in the Christian life.

B) THE PERSON WHO WILL DENY HIMSELF CAN'T ULTIMATELY LOSE - MARK 8:35

“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.” I can't find the life Jesus offers without a costly, painful self denial. But once that big commitment is made, life becomes much bigger and fuller than I could have ever achieved on my own terms. Many people who *claim* to be Christians never discover this point.

C) THE PERSON WHO DOESN'T FOLLOW JESUS ON HIS TERMS CANNOT WIN IN THE LONG RUN - MARK 8:36-37

“For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? [37] For what can a man give in return for his life?” All other "gains" will slip away soon enough. Every human passion leaves us emptier the more we try to satisfy it. And no earthly gain can buy salvation and eternal life.

D) THIS ISSUE OF FOLLOWING JESUS IS UNAVOIDABLE IN THE LONG RUN – MARK 8:38

“For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”You and I don't have to think about it yet. But Jesus reminds us that just because we refuse to study, doesn't mean there won't be a final exam. We are all on a one way street into judgment day.