

The Terminator
NT(IBS) 511 Mark
Module 8

Interpretation Mark 8:32b-38

1. What are the key elements of the disciples' misunderstanding of Jesus' passion prediction in 8:32b-38?

1. Peter's response – v. 32b
2. The disciples are included – v. 33

2. What does each of these key elements mean?

1. Peter's response – All v. 32b
 - a. Peter wants to speak to Jesus away from the others. It is unclear at this point whether Peter does not want the others to hear or whether, perhaps, Peter is being sent as the "spokesman" for the others.
 - b. It seems as if Peter did not want to "embarrass" Jesus in front of the other disciples. From this I infer that Peter feels that Jesus has said something upsetting that, at the very least, he feels has implications Jesus needs to consider.
 - c. Peter tells Jesus he's doing it wrong. It is unclear if Peter is objecting only to Jesus's prediction of his death and resurrection on the basis that he doesn't believe they will occur, or because he believes that those things *could not* occur if Jesus is the Messiah (as Peter has just declared him to be in 8:29).
 - i. Another possible motivation for Peter's objection could be that he fears the reaction of the other disciples and/or the rest of the following crowd if they overheard. This could also be a reason for him to take Jesus aside.
2. The disciples are included – v. 33
 - a. Though Jesus speaks to Peter, Mark is clear that the disciples are all included in Jesus's remarks.
 - i. This is conjecture, but it lends credence to the idea that Peter may have been speaking on behalf of the whole group of disciples who might either feel that Jesus has said something that:
 1. Doesn't square with their idea of what it is to be the "Messiah."

2. Isn't likely to be accurate, or if it is, isn't something that should be said aloud.
- ii. From this, I infer that **all the disciples, not just Peter, are to be understood as exhibiting misunderstanding.**

3. What are the key elements of Jesus' correction of this misunderstanding in 8:32b-38?

1. Jesus calls out the disciples and Peter – v. 33
2. Jesus instructs the crowd and the disciples – v. 34-38

4. What does each of the key elements mean?

1. Jesus calls out the disciples and Peter – All v. 33
 - a. Jesus turns from Peter and makes sure all the disciples know they are included in the rebuke that is coming.
 - i. “turning and looking at his disciples...” makes me think of nothing so much as “the look” that every parent has and every child understands.
 - b. Mark does not tell us if Jesus simply intuitively knows the other disciples' complicity, if Peter implicated them in his own “rebuke” of Jesus, or if Jesus knew in some other way: regardless, Mark mentions Jesus “look” to alert the reader that Peter is not the only one misunderstanding.
 - c. Jesus publicly calls out Peter.
 - i. This is an interesting detail given the detail Mark gives in the verse previous when Peter pulls Jesus away from the rest of the group for a private word of rebuke.
 - ii. We can infer from Mark's earlier statement in v. 32b, which clearly and intentionally includes the disciples in Jesus' *look* that these remarks are intended for *all* the disciples to hear.
 - d. Jesus invokes “Satan.”
 - i. It is unclear if Jesus is calling Peter “Satan,” or if he is rebuking ideas from Satan coming through Peter.
 - ii. This is the 6th time Mark has mentioned “Satan.” The first 5 are:
 1. Tempting Jesus in the wilderness (1:12)
 2. The name Jesus invokes as representative of demons in his argument with the Scribes from Jerusalem who have accused him of being possessed (3:23-26)
 3. The antagonist in Jesus's explanation Parable of the Sower (4:15)

- iii. From the other mentions of “Satan” in Mark we can infer that Jesus is, at the very least, accusing Peter and the disciples of tempting him away from his foretold course of action.
 - 1. It is notable that in Mark 4:15, the explanation Jesus provides of his parable is that Satan steals away the “word” from those who are “on the path.” “On the path/way/road” is such a meaningful phrase for Mark that it seems meaningful to include here. Though it is not definitive, it is possible to infer that Jesus is implying that Peter, and by extension, all the disciples are in danger of having “the word” stolen away from them, or perhaps of stealing it away from others through their misunderstanding.

e. Jesus tells Peter/the disciples that they are focused on the wrong things.

- i. From this I infer that Peter was, indeed, speaking in his rebuke to Jesus (for himself or for all the 12) of what they believed a Messiah to be: the promised ruler.
- ii. Jesus offers the corrective that Peter and the disciples are thinking of things that matter to “humans,” whereas Jesus is concerned with the “divine”/what matters to God.
 - 1. This is an interesting follow-up to v. 32a in which Mark states how “openly/plainly” (NRSV/NIV) Jesus has stated his prediction. He is essentially affirming his status as the “Son of Man/Son of God/Messiah” in these words.
- iii. Jesus is signaling openly to the disciples that his death and resurrection are of divine importance.

2. Jesus instructs the crowd and the disciples – v. 34-38

- a. Jesus makes sure “the crowd” *and* his disciples are listening. (v. 34)
 - i. We do not know if this was immediately following the conversation Jesus had in the previous 2 verses with Peter and the rest of the 12, however Mark writes this in such a way that we are to assume the ideas go together in any case.
 - ii. Mark does not specify who “the crowd” is, so we are left to conclude that they are either: (v. 34)
 - 1. The “crowd” of followers who are not the 12, but are seemingly regularly with Jesus by this point in Mark’s gospel.
 - 2. The crowd that Jesus seemed to attract wherever he went.
 - 3. Some mixture of both.
- b. **Jesus gives instructions for any who want to follow him. They should: (v. 34)**
 - i. **Turn away from themselves. (v. 34)**

1. The instruction to “deny” themselves is interesting in juxtaposition with v. 33 when Jesus calls out Peter and the disciples for being focused on human and not divine things. (v. 34)
- ii. Pick up their “cross” (v. 34)
 1. This is interesting from Jesus since, as Mark tells it, Jesus did not mention crucifixion in the foretelling of his death. If he did, Mark does not tell us so.
- iii. “Follow” Jesus (v. 34)
 1. Up until now, Mark has used “following” to denote disciples whom Jesus calls or crowds which seem to have a more “permanent” feel to them than the merely curious (1:16-20, 2:14-15, 3:7-8, 5:24, 5:37, and 6:1).
 2. Spoken as it is, this implies that “following” Jesus involves more than walking around with him. “To follow” also means to “deny” oneself and to “take up” one’s cross.
 3. This instruction is all the more striking for being spoken to those who are literally *following* Jesus. This seems like an important contrast to note in the passages between the healings of the blind men in the two inclusio brackets of 8:22-26 and 10:46-52.
- c. Jesus gives further explanation of what those who follow him can expect (v. 35-38)
 - i. Jesus makes another surprising and somewhat cryptic statement about valuing one’s life:
 1. Jesus states that those who care only for their life, will end up losing their life. However, those who are willing to die for Jesus (or for “the gospel”) will “save” their lives. (v. 35)
 - a. This statement is much in the style of the parables and teaching Mark has recounted in 3-6. It is both clear and opaque. (v. 35)
 - b. This is Mark’s first mention of the “gospel,” and as such seems notable. (v. 35)
 2. Jesus notes that it doesn’t make much sense to have wild earthly wealth, but to lose one’s life. (v. 36)
 - a. The upcoming events which the two healings of blind men in 8:22-26 and 10:46-52 bracket in their inclusio, will make this a more striking comparison, especially when contrasted with Jesus’s upcoming conversation with the disciples about who would be greatest (9:33-35), the rich man (10:17-31), and his conversation with James and John (10:35-45). (v. 36)
 - b. This serves to further highlight what one could infer Peter (and by extension, the disciples) were concerned with in v. 32b. (v. 36)

3. Jesus further notes that there is nothing worth so much as someone's "life/soul" (NRSV/NIV), and thus implies that one should his "followers" should focus on the things which *are* worthy. (v. 37)
4. **Jesus declares that any who are embarrassed by His teachings, whatever it may be, will find that He is also ashamed of them. (v. 38)**
 - a. **Jesus seems to clearly be referring to his earlier conversation with Peter, which he seems to have included the rest of the 12 in, at least in their spirits, when he refers to those who might be "ashamed" of "his words." (v. 38)**
 - i. It seems fair to intuit from Peter's action of taking Jesus apart from the crowd and the rest of the disciples that he was trying to spare Jesus any shame. (v. 32b)
 - ii. It is clear from the public nature of Jesus's statements now to all the disciples *and* the whole crowd, that he feels *no* shame over his foretelling of his death/resurrection, *nor does he want his followers to be ashamed.* (v. 38)
 - b. Jesus invokes the prophets (particularly Hosea) as he calls out an "adulterous" and "sinful" generation. (v. 38)
 - i. It could be interesting to dig back through the Psalms and prophets and look for other imagery that echoes this idea.
 - c. **Jesus calls himself the "Son of Man." (v. 38)**
 - i. This is only the third time Jesus has used this phrase (2:28, and just before this passage as he is foretelling his own death/resurrection in 8:31). (v. 38)
 - ii. This is a title specifically linked to the Messiah and would have been known as such to his disciples and the crowd. (v. 38)
 1. In effect this highlights his statement about not feeling shame over him not behaving as they believed a Messiah "should," when placed, as Mark does, in contrast with Peter's rebuke of Jesus's prediction in v. 31-32.
 - iii. Jesus references a time in the future when the "Son of Man" will be honored by the Father and be accompanied by angels. (v. 38)
 1. This is another doubling down on Jesus's identifying himself as the Messiah, while also proclaiming that this means something very different than what the disciples/crowd believe it to mean.

5. How does the disciples' misunderstanding and Jesus' correction of that misunderstanding help us understand what it means to recognize Jesus as the "Christ"?

Peter seems to rebuke Jesus, on behalf of all the disciples, for admitting vulnerability by foretelling his own death, and completely misses the point of the foretold resurrection. (v. 32b-33)

Jesus corrects his disciples and followers by telling them that they:

1. Do not understand what true power looks like: divine not human (v. 33)
2. Must be prepared to deny even their own lives (v. 34-37)
3. Must "follow" Jesus (v. 34)
4. Will be recognized by the Messiah only if they recognize him as such (v. 38).

Summary: Peter and the disciples believe that Jesus demeans himself and the title of Messiah by admitting the possibility of "defeat" in foretelling his own death, but completely miss the miracle of the resurrection that is being foretold. Jesus explains to them the upside-down nature of what it means to recognize Jesus as the "Christ" – namely that there is power and strength that is in weakness, obedience, and even death. What is required of all who acknowledge Jesus as Messiah is that they "follow" (v. 34).