

## Sample (Partial) Interpretation Mark 8:32-38

This document presents my *partial* Interpretation work on Mark 8:32-28. Its “partial” in that I limit its length so that you can observe the Interpretation process at work without working through a much longer document.

On the whole, IBS Interpretation involves

- a careful, cautious, patient process of listening to what’s in the biblical text,
- making observations and drawing basic inferences upon what’s there,
- recording those observations and inferences clearly,
- and reaching interpretive conclusions on the basis of that evidence that are stated succinctly and accurately.

With reference to my work in this study, also note

- how I organize my answers to the questions. I work to identify key points for each ID answer, then organize my gathering of observations around those points.
- I *always* state the verse numbers for each point.
- I don’t just repeat the text; I *describe* what’s in the text in my own words by making observations on the content and drawing basic inferences on the basis of those observations.
- *Observations consist of any safe, true statements you can make about material that could probably not be called into question by a cautious, thoughtful reader of the text. The same would be true of basic inferences you draw from your Observations.*
- *I avoid writing in paragraphs*, listing my statements in brief, bullet point fashion.
- I organize my work as clearly as possible so that the reader knows what I am doing at any given point.
- When I make what I believe to be an important observation or inference, I place that content in **bold print** so that I can locate it easily.
- I also work thoroughly, covering all the data in the biblical text.
- I did this work with the Greek text, approved English translations, and the cross-reference material in a concordance (= “Primary Sources”).
- Finally, note how I do not lose sight of the context in which these statements are made. I connect Jesus’ Passion Prediction to Peter’s rebuke of Jesus to Jesus’ response to Peter and the instructions that follow. I then work to incorporate all of this into the framework of Prediction-Misunderstand-Correction of Misunderstanding.

## **Questions 1) What are the key elements of the disciples' misunderstanding of Jesus' passion prediction in 8:32b-38 and 2) what does each mean?**

The statement of misunderstanding is so compact that I will forego identifying specific elements and simply list observations and draw inferences about the meaning of this brief statement.

### **Initial Observations/Inferences all 32b**

1. Mark only reports a response from Peter alone, not all the disciples
2. Whether this is Pete's response alone, or Pete as representative of the disciples as a whole, Mark does not say definitively.
  - a. The fact that Mark introduces Pete's words by saying that Pete "took Jesus aside" indicates that Pete at least acts privately.
3. This response follows directly after J's predictions about what will happen in Jerusalem in 8.31. **So it must be taken as a response to that statement.**
4. Mark report Peter's response in simple, abrupt, and pointed terms; in other words, without elaboration
5. Peter *begins* to rebuke Jesus
  - a. It is unclear if "begins" indicates
    - i. a simple change of activity (Pete was talking about something else, then changed to rebuking J) or
    - ii. indicates that Pete began something here that then became ongoing.
6. Pete begins to *rebuke* Jesus
  - a. Pete seeks to
    - i. sharply correct and/or ("that's not what will happen, *this* is what will happen")
    - ii. sharply contest Jesus' statement about what must happen to Jesus in Jerusalem and/or ("that won't happen")
    - iii. stop Jesus from talking in this manner ("you've got to stop talking crazy like this")
  - b. Whatever the precise nature of Pete's action, the verbal depiction of that action carries overtones of confrontation and disagreement
7. Mark provides no specifics about the content of Pete's rebuke. We may infer several possibilities (and they are *possibilities* only)
  - a. Jesus' words were felt out of line for one recognized as the "Christ"; the events predicted to happen to him and the identity of the one predicting them of himself did not match.
  - b. The "Christ" is a title of great honor, a royal title; what Jesus predicted were events of utmost shame. *Possible implied contrast.*
8. **I take it that Mark's emphasis therefore falls on the fact of the rebuke/ disagreement itself rather than the grounds of Pete's (and/or the disciples') disagreement with Jesus.**

9. I may possibly gather some evidence for the meaning of Pete's rebuke based on inferences drawn from J's correction that follows. But J's correction will need to be examined on its own first.

**SUMMARY:** Mark reports immediate, sharp disagreement to J's 1<sup>st</sup> Passion Prediction from Peter, though the specific basis of that disagreement isn't clear (at least initially).

### 3) What are the key elements of Jesus' correction of this misunderstanding in 8:33-38?

I see two basic components to Jesus' correction: in 33-38:

1. Correction #1: Counter-rebuke to Peter in the presence of J's disciples 33
2. Correction #2: Teaching to the disciples and to the crowds 34-38

In each case,

- Statement of audience (33a; 34a)
- Jesus presents a basic command (33b) or teaching (34b)
- that is then substantiated (33c; 35-38) using either
  - chiasmic statements (34b, 35, 38) and/or
  - conditional statements ("if . . . then . . ."; 34-38)

### 4) What does each mean?

#### 1. Correction #1 Counter-rebuke to Peter in the presence of J's disciples all 33

1. Audience for J's correction 33a
  - a. Jesus takes two actions
    - i. J turns (apparently from facing Peter)
    - ii. J see his disciples (at some place near by)
  - b. Implications of these actions
    - i. This marks a turn from just interacting with Pete
    - ii. Mark says these are *Jesus'* disciples; indicates personal attachment/relationship
    - iii. Pete's rebuke had been semi-private = with Jesus alone but within eye-range of the rest of the disciples
    - iv. By intro'ing Jesus' response in this manner, Mark turns the rebuke from one just to Pete and involves all the disciples within the scope of the rebuke and following instructions
2. Basic Command: Statement of rebuke 33b
  - a. Content = single word (in Greek) imperative "Go away!"
  - b. From "after me."
    - i. This same preposition "after" me (ὀπίσω μου) is used by Jesus for the basic demand of following "after" Jesus in 1:17 and 1:20

- ii. In their context in ch. 1, the issue of *following* also predominates as here (8:34c)
    - iii. Together, this makes me suspect that Jesus' rebuke gets to the heart of what it means to *follow* Jesus.
  - c. Appellation: Jesus addresses Pete as "Satan"
    - i. That name has been used already in Mark at
      - 1. 1:13; "Satan" tempts Jesus in the wilderness indicating this person = prime opponent of God's purposes in/through Jesus
      - 2. 3:23, 26; again, in a context that indicates a prime opponent of Jesus
      - 3. 4:15; one who takes away the word that has been sown; again, a prime opponent of the "word" indicating the message of the Kingdom of God
    - ii. I take this to mean that Jesus is characterizing Pete's rebuke as an expression of basic, central opposition to Jesus and God's purposes through him expressed in what J has just predicted will happen in Jerusalem
    - iii. **Taken together, these snippets of information highlight the serious threat of Pete's rebuke to the purposes of God through Jesus' prediction of what will happen to him in Jerusalem**
3. Substantiation for rebuke **33c** "for" in most translations; ὅτι in Greek
- a. Jesus accuses Pete, on the basis of Pete's rebuke of Jesus (and by implication the rest of the disciples as well?) of standing with Jesus' chief opponent (since Jesus characterizes Pete as "Satan") = revealing him to be on the mere human side rather than on God's side as it relates to Jesus' mission.
  - b. Peter's "thinking" (φρονεῖς) is misplaced or in error; as a result his rebuke of Jesus reveals where his loyalties and/or service actually lie
  - c. RSV "For you are not on the side of God, but of men." NRSV "you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things" TNIV "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."
  - d. The variations among translation indicate **the verb here (φρονεῖς) demands further investigation.**
  - e. Jesus' rebuke of Pete reveals a fundamental dichotomy in understandings of and responses to Jesus' ID expressed in his prediction of what will happen to him in Jerusalem

## 2. Correction #2 Teaching to the disciples and to the crowds 34-38

- 1. Initial observations on structure
  - a. As with J's rebuke of Pete, Jesus' teaching on the same subject begins with an identification of a change of audience 34a
  - b. J's basic teaching is then stated in chiasmic form 34b
  - c. This basic teaching is then supported/explained by four clauses beginning with "for" (γὰρ) 35, 36, 37, 38

- d. The first and last supporting/explanatory clauses are also stated in chiasm for 35, 38
- e. All four “for” clauses are stated as conditionals (“if . . . then . . .”)

## 2. Change of Audience 34a

- a. Jesus “summons” an undesigned “crowd” along with his disciples
- b. This indicates a second expansion of his audience from that of Pete (v. 33), to Pete and the rest of J’s disciples (34), and now to J’s disciples and a larger number of people gathered under the rubric of the “crowds”
- c. Jesus speaks “to them” indicating this entire group; the audience isn’t just the “disciples” but other followers as well.
- d. This expansion may indicate an emphasis on the importance of what J is about to say for the entire group of his followers; in other words, Mark is deliberately generalizing here.
- e. Earlier, when Jesus “summoned” (προσκαλέω) people (3:13, 23; 6:7; 7:14; 8:1), it signaled something important was about to happen, creating expectations of the same here.

## 3. Basic Teaching 34b

- a. This item is stated first with no qualifiers. The rest follow with introductory “for” (γὰρ) conjunctions. This indicate this first statement is primary with the other supporting and/or explaining it/
- b. Stated as a first class conditional (Don’t worry if you don’t know Greek. I wouldn’t expect you to identify this in your work.); that is, the structure in Greek **affirms the reality of the condition**: “If anyone wants to follow after me (and this assumes the person really does), then this is what will actually happen.”
- c. By rendering the subject impersonal here (and in the conditional sentences that follow) “anyone” **Jesus applies his statements universally, not just to a selected or limited group of people who want to follow him.**
- d. Basic structure of the chiasm
  - A if anyone wants to follow me
  - B let them deny themselves
  - B<sup>1</sup> let them take up their cross
  - A<sup>1</sup> let them follow me
- e. Observations on the framing statements of the chiasm (A, A<sup>1</sup>)
  - A. The primary subject is “following Jesus”, stated in both A and A<sup>1</sup>
  - B. “following Jesus” was the basic demand Jesus made of the first disciples *from the beginning* (1:17, 19; 2:14, 15; 6:1)
  - C. this person is to follow *after Jesus*; also a point highlight in the first calling of disciples (1:17, 19)
  - D. the deliberate recall of Jesus’ first call to disciples thus seems foundational and emphasized by 1) its place at the beginning of Mark’s narrative and 2) its repetition here within the framing sections of this universal basic teaching

- E. The internal activities (B, B<sup>1</sup>) *express* what it means to follow; the final line seems to be saying, “When you deny yourself and take up your cross, then you are following me.”
- f. Observations on the central statements of the chiasm (B, B<sup>1</sup>)
  - A. These appear to be synonymous parallels, each stating the same thing in slightly different ways
  - B. Each spells out a decision and manner of life that expresses or gives reality to the desire to follow Jesus (A, A<sup>1</sup>); in other words, denying the self and cross-carrying is what “wanting to follow Jesus” (A, A<sup>1</sup>) consists of
  - C. The first, denying the self, involves an orientation away from the self toward something or someone else.
  - D. The second, cross-carrying, like the first involves self-limitation (once you’ve sentenced to the cross, you have no other choices)
  - E. The cross is personal, *his or her* cross.
  - F. Carrying a cross (B<sup>1</sup>) is not something one chose to do; the dishonor (a chief ancient value) and pain associated with it must have made these instructions puzzling to the disciples and to the crowd;
  - G. If self-concern/orientation is a basic requirement, then that orientation seems to be traded for another, one oriented toward Jesus (stated in A, A<sup>1</sup>)

**SUMMARY BASIC TEACHING 34a: Jesus’ basic point involves the fundamental demand placed on anyone who would be his disciple: follow him. Jesus defines that indispensable core task, negatively, as the costly decision to turn away from a driving concern centered on the self and, positively, as an orientation toward Jesus-concern.**

At this point my examination would continue through the remaining Substantiation/Explanation statements. It would conclude with a summary statement that *succinctly* drew together the key findings of my interpretation work. I would state this summary in short statements of 1-2 sentences each (avoid paragraphs).

*Only after completing my own inductive work on primary sources*, I would then interact with approved secondary sources. That interaction would be listed at the end of my study, not integrated back into my own independent work.

Once I have completed answering the first four questions, I would then turn to Question #5.

So my work would continue under these headings based on my identification of key elements above.

The content falling under each of these headings would be recorded in the same fashion I did for those above.

4. Substantiation/Explanation for Basic Teaching **35-38**
  - a. First Substantiation/Explanation of basic teaching **35** “for”
  - b. Second Substantiation/Explanation **36** “for”
  - c. Third Substantiation/Explanation **37** “for”
  - d. Fourth Substantiation/Explanation **38** “for”

FINAL SUMMARY (this would be my last step for Questions 4)

**Question 5: How does the disciples’ misunderstanding and Jesus’ correction of that misunderstanding help us understand what it means to recognize Jesus as the “Christ”?**

1. KEY = Acknowledging that Jesus = “the Christ” involves a whole person turning away from self-orientation toward Jesus-orientation, an activity that Jesus describes as “following me.” *Anything short of that represents a failure to recognize what this claim means.*
2. This turning seems to be *the* crux of Peter’s (and the disciples’ misunderstanding of Jesus). They still understand Jesus in terms of what Jesus means for them rather than orienting their selves toward Jesus and his concerns/mission.