

Mark Chapter 9 Continued

Verses 30-32:

Jesus again foretells His death, See 8:31; 10:33-34.

The text implies that He ought to travel unnoticed in order to have undisturbed time to instill very difficult teaching in the disciples' hearts.

Mark 9:30 "And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know [it]."

“Passed through Galilee”:

Leaving the region around Caesarea Philippi, Jesus and the disciples began the journey to Jerusalem that would result in His crucifixion several months later.

Their immediate destination was Capernaum (verse 33).

“He would not that any man should know it”:

Jesus continued to seek seclusion so He could prepare the disciples for His death (7:24).

We see here, that Jesus left the area of Caesarea Philippi.

Jesus went through Galilee and also went aside with just the disciples, so that He could teach them alone.

Verses 31-32:

Jesus continued His teaching about His upcoming death and resurrection, a subject the disciples still did not understand (see notes on verse 10; 8:30-33).

Mark 9:31 "For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day."

Son of Man (see note of 2:10).

Jesus was telling them in detail about His death on the cross and was reminding them that He would rise from the grave.

He told them over and over that this would happen.

He wanted them to still believe that He was Messiah.

The disciples had forgotten everything He had told them when He died, and Peter denied he even knew Him.

Mark 9:32 "But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him."

They, for some reason, didn't understand that He was warning them that He would be crucified.

Verses 33-50:

Jesus teaches about true greatness (servant-hood), unity and judgment (in verses 33-35).

Contrary to normal human assumptions, greatness is not a matter of dominance but of service, of being dominated by the will of God.

Mark 9:33 "And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?"

“Capernaum”

See the note on 1:21.

“The house”:

The use of the definite article suggests this to be the house Jesus habitually stayed in when He was in Capernaum.

Whether it was Peter’s house (1:29), or someone else’s is not known.

This house was probably Peter's house, because Peter did have a house near the Sea of Galilee that was in Capernaum.

Jesus knew what they were talking about (they could keep no secrets from him).

Mark 9:34 "But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who [should be] the greatest."

“They held their peace”:

Convicted and embarrassed, the disciples were speechless.

They were afraid to tell Him, because they had been arguing about who would be the greatest in the Lord's kingdom.

“Who should be the greatest”:

A dispute possibly triggered by the privilege that was granted Peter, James and John to witness the Transfiguration.

The disciples’ quarrel highlights their failure to apply Jesus’ explicit teaching on humility (e.g., Matt. 5:3), and the example of His own suffering and death (verses 31-32; 8:30-33).

It also prompted them to ask Jesus to settle the issue, which He did, although it was not as they had expected.

Mark 9:35 "And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, [the same] shall be last of all, and servant of all."

“Sat down”:

Rabbis usually sat down to teach (Matt. 15:29; Luke 4:20; 5:3; John 8:2).

“If any man desire to be first”:

As the disciples undeniably did (verse 34; 10:35-37).

“The same shall be last of all, and servant of all”:

The disciples’ concept of greatness and leadership, drawn from their culture, needed to be completely reversed.

Not those who lord their position over others are great in God’s kingdom, but only those who humbly serve others (10:31, 43-45; Matthew 19:30 – 20:16; 23:11-12; Luke 13:30; 14:8-11; 18:14; 22:24-27).

You see from this that it was not necessary for them to tell Jesus, He already knew what they had been arguing about.

In an indirect way, Jesus shamed them for wanting to be first.

The Lord honors the humble, not the proud.

Verses 36-37:

“Child” may refer to just that; or Jesus may be anticipating John’s report in verse 38 by saying in effect, “You should be tolerant of those who show a measure of openness to Me, and thus to God, even if their faith lacks maturity.”

Mark 9:36 "And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,"

“A child”:

The Greek word indicates an infant or toddler.

If the house they were in was Peter’s house (see the note on verse 33), this may have been one of his children.

The child became in Jesus’ masterful teaching an example of believers who have humbled themselves and become like trusting children.

Mark 9:37 "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me."

“Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name”:

Not actual children, but true believers, those who have humbled themselves like little children (see note on verse 36).

We see here, Jesus held and hugged a child, perhaps Peter's child.

He was saying that you must become innocent as this little child to be great in God's kingdom.

Jesus was also saying, to receive children into the kingdom of God.

The innocence of the child was what appealed to Jesus.

We must be humble and not proud.

Jesus said an interesting thing about receiving Him.

You receive the Father who sent Jesus.

This could apply to ministers too.

If they receive his message, they receive the One who sent him.

If they reject him, they have rejected the Lord who sent him.

Mark 9:38 "And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us."

“John answered”:

The only recorded instance in the synoptic gospels in which he alone speaks.

Considering Jesus' rebuke (verses 35-37), John's conscience troubled him about an earlier incident he had been involved in.

It is clear that the unnamed exorcist was not a fraud because he was casting out demons.

He was apparently a true believer in Jesus.

John and the others opposed him because he was not openly and officially allied with Jesus, as they were.

Casting out devils was one of the things that Jesus had told the disciples to do as they went through the country ministering.

John was upset because this man was not one of the twelve and was using the name of the Lord to cast the evil spirits out.

Verses 39-40:

Jesus ordered them not to hinder the exorcist, making the logical point that someone sincerely acting in His name would not soon turn against Him.

There is no neutral ground regarding Jesus Christ.

Those who are "not against" Him are on His side, but by the same token, "He who is not with Me is against Me.

And he who does not gather with Me scatters" (Matt. 12:30).

Mark 9:39 "But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me."

This does not mean that every miracle-worker will be automatically blessed of God (see Matthew 7:22-23).

The disciples told him not to do this; but Jesus said that as long as he cast them out in the name of Jesus, the man was on Jesus' side.

Possibly, he was a convert of one of their meetings who had enough faith for it to work.

Jesus said it all in the next verse.

Mark 9:40 "For he that is not against us is on our part."

This does not contradict (Matthew 12:30).

The two verses address different situations.

When it comes to the critical point of accepting or rejecting Jesus (see the context of Matthew 12:30), not being for Jesus amounts to opposing Him (see John 3:18).

But in the case of someone attempting to work in Christ's name, but perhaps with less than a full knowledge of Him (see Acts 18:25), there is no need to quench the smoking wick (Matt. 12:20).

This tells me that one group should not be arguing with the other group, because they are not of the same denomination.

If they are doing good in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, leave them alone.

God does not overlook the slightest thing.

Mark 9:41 "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."

"In my name, because you belong to Christ":

Jesus considered acts of kindness done to His followers to have been done to Him (see Matthew 25:37-40).

"Verily I say unto you":

See note on 3:28.

"His reward":

That is, his unique place and service in the eternal kingdom.

Every good deed is noted, even if it is no more than giving a drink of water to the thirsty.

Verses 42-50:

The mention of reward in verse 41 causes Jesus to warn of the equally certain consequences of defying His words.

Mark 9:42 "And whosoever shall offend one of [these] little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea."

"Whosoever ... shall offend":

The word translated “to stumble” literally means “to cause to fall.”

To entice, trap, or lead a believer into sin is a very serious matter.

“Little ones that believe” (see note on verse 37).

“Millstone”:

This refers to a large, upper millstone so heavy that it had to be turned by a donkey (see note on Matthew 18:6).

Even such a horrifying death (a Gentile form of execution), is preferable to leading a Christian into sin.

These little children cannot fight their battles for themselves, and Jesus protects them.

It seems as though many little ones do believe in Jesus.

To have a millstone hung around your neck and to be thrown into the sea, you would have no chance of survival.

Now you can see how evil a sin it is in the Lord's sight for you to offend a little one who believes in Him.

Mark 9:43 "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:"

“Cut it off” (see note on Matt. 5:29).

Jesus’ words are to be taken figuratively; no amount of self-mutilation can deal with sin, which is an issue of the heart.

The Lord is emphasizing the seriousness of sin and the need to do whatever is necessary to deal with it.

“Life”:

The contrast of “life” with “hell” indicates that Jesus was referring to eternal life.

The Greek word for hell, which is the eternal state of the wicked, is Gehenna, a place of both torment and suffering.

With but one exception, every use of Gehenna in Scripture comes from the lips of Jesus.

It was probably used to describe hell because of its background in the minds of the Jews.

It had been associated with the valley of Hinnom that was outside of Jerusalem, the site of human sacrifices during the dark days of Israel's history; and a refuse dump at the time when Jesus spoke.

The term Gehenna in the New Testament confirms that it is more than an ancient valley outside of Jerusalem.

Gehenna is associated with fire, punishment, torment, the undying worm, the gnashing of teeth, and eternity without God.

All of the language stressing the repulsiveness of hell is a description of Gehenna.

The Scriptures incompletely describe Gehenna, because such a place is psychologically impossible to comprehend.

The existence of this place, where the unsaved will consciously suffer for eternity without God, ought to stir every Christian to win souls.

"The fire that never shall be quenched" (see note on Matt. 25:46).

That the punishment of hell lasts for eternity is the unmistakable teaching of Scripture (Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:41; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 14:10-11; 20:10).

This was just speaking of things that cause you to sin should be removed from your life.

It would seem drastic to cut your hand off, but anything you could do to keep from going to hell would be worth the loss.

This was possibly, speaking of the lake of fire.

Mark 9:44 "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

(9:44 and 46):

The better Greek manuscripts omit these verses, which merely repeat the quote for (Isaiah 66:24 found in verse 48).

This place is so terrible that it is actually beyond our wildest dreams.

Mark 9:45-46 "And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:"
"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Here again, we see that if our feet are taking us to the wrong places, we would be better off if we couldn't walk.

Whatever it takes to keep us from sinning and going to hell is what we must do.

Mark 9:47 "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:"

“Kingdom of God” (see note on 1:15).

Jesus said if you looked upon a woman to lust, you had committed adultery already in your heart.

The eye can get you into trouble.

Lust is carried out by first looking with the eye.

Mark 9:48 "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

The eye can be evil, if it is not controlled.

This is why the warning here.

Nothing is worse than going to hell.

Compared to hell, the loss of an eye would be minor.

Mark 9:49 "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt."

The meaning of this difficult verse seems to be that believers are purified through both suffering and persecution.

The link between salt and fire seems to lie in the Old Testament sacrifices, which were accompanied by salt (Lev. 2:13).

The first phrase has reference to the “fire” of testing that every believer undergoes see 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12).

The second refers to the salting of Old Testament sacrifices (Lev. 2:13).

Christians offer themselves to God as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1).

They must not seek to do so apart from the purging fire God sends for their purifying (see James 1:2; Romans 5:3).

Salting with fire in a spiritual sense could be purifying and preserving the Christian.

We know in the spiritual sense God purifies with His fire.

Perhaps, this means we shall be preserved (salted), with the fire of the Holy Ghost.

Each Christian is tried, as if with fire.

Mark 9:50 Salt [is] good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

"Salt is good":

Salt was an essential item in first-century Palestine.

In a hot climate, without refrigeration, salt was the practical means of preserving food.

"Have salt in yourselves":

The work of the Word (Col. 3:16), and the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), produce godly character, enabling a person to act as a preservative in society (Matt. 5:13).

"Have peace one with another" (Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:18; 2 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Thessalonians. 5:13; James 3:18).

Salt from the Dead Sea contains impurities and becomes easily stale and unpleasant in taste.

"Salt in yourselves" is the distinctive quality that marks the person devoted to God.

The reference to peace ties in with verse 33, which precipitated this whole discourse.

Salt, as I said before, is a preservative.

You must constantly walk in your saved condition.

How can you bring others to a saving knowledge of God, if you have lost your own salvation?

To know within yourself that you are saved; walking daily in that salvation brings peace.

Mark Chapter 9 Continued Questions

1. Why did Jesus not want anyone to know that He was going through Galilee?
2. What did Jesus tell the disciples?
3. Did they believe and understand what Jesus said?

4. Why did they not ask Him, if they didn't understand?
5. Where did Jesus go after Galilee?
6. Who had a home there?
7. What were they talking about along the way?
8. How did you know that Jesus knew without them telling Him what they had been talking about?
9. If you desire to be first, you shall be _____.
10. Who did Jesus take unto Him to teach a lesson with?
11. If you receive a little child in Jesus' name, you receive whom?
12. Who was the child, probably?
13. What was the Lord really saying about the child?
14. What had the disciples forbidden the man to do?
15. Why did Jesus say, "forbid him not"?
16. Who was the man, probably?
17. In verse 41, what small offering will Jesus not forget?
19. To offend a little child who follows Jesus is bad, and the punishment is compared to what in verse 42?
20. Who fights children's battles for them?
21. If your hand causes you to sin, what should you do?
22. Hell is so bad that the fire is never _____.
23. If your feet are taking you places to sin, it would be better if you were _____.
24. Jesus said, if you lust after a woman with your eyes, you have done what?
25. What does salting with fire mean in a spiritual sense?
26. What does salting do?

27. What is salt?

28. Walking daily in your salvation brings what?