

Bible Study 2023-2024

Class #8

11/7/23

Mark 8

- **Mark 8:27-28** *“And Jesus went on with his disciples, to the village of Caesarea Philippi;...and other one of the prophets”*
 - Father asked that we look at the differences between this story in Matthew and Mark
 - Mark does not refer to Jesus as the “Son of Man,” which according to Matthew is what Jesus called Himself
 - The term “Son of Man” would only have had meaning for a Jewish audience
 - When Peter was teaching in Rome (the basis for Mark’s gospel), he would not have used such a confusing term

Mark 8 (Cont)

- Jesus was not asking a question in the sense of an exegesis on **Daniel 7₁** (“The Son of Man coming on the clouds” and Ezekiel₂)
- He was asking who did men say that He was, and that is why we see a connection to John the Baptist in Mark’s gospel

Mark 8 (Cont)

- **Mark 8:27-30** *“And Jesus went on with his disciples...Then he charged them to tell no one about him”*
 - Another difference is that Mark does not mention Jesus giving the keys of the kingdom to Peter
 - Father said this is a classic example of how Mark’s gospel tends to contain a simplified version of the stories in Matthew
 - Sometimes Mark’s version is shorter than Matthew because it leaves out some very Jewish themes (especially from the Old Testament), and at other times, it is longer as it adds an explanation to clarify the story
 - Mark 7 is twice as long as Matthew 15 where the Pharisees criticize Jesus’ disciples for not washing their hands

Mark 8 (Cont)

- **Mark 8** is shorter than **Matthew 16** because Mark leaves out the Jewish stuff
- But, in the end, the same things happened and the differences were related to the different audiences
- This help to explain why the early church taught that Matthew wrote his gospel first to a thoroughly Jewish audience (most likely in *Aramaic*)
- Mark was reporting Peter's teaching to predominantly Hellenized Jewish and Gentile Christians
- Father gave a lengthy comparison of the biblical knowledge of modern Catholics to that of the Jews in Rome who were listening to Peter, to include:

Mark 8 (Cont)

- Literacy
- Availability of free time
- Understanding, and awareness of the Old Testament
- Biblical knowledge of most modern Catholic priests
- Knowledge of the New Testament among modern Catholics
- This should help us understand **Matthew 16** versus **Mark 8**, concerning such matters as the reference to *Jeremiah* in **2nd Maccabees**
- Only a serious, well-educated Jew would have read the Book of Maccabees
- Peter would not have expected someone in Rome to have any idea about Jeremiah handing Judas his sword

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- **Matthew 16:15** *“But who do you say that I am?”*
 - At this point, Jesus asked His apostles who they say that He is?
 - They had been with Him for three years during which
 - He taught and trained them
 - They had lived with Him, listened to Him, and had the best possible education concerning His ministry
 - Peter will thus give the response for the Apostles

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- **Matthew 16:16** *“Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the son of the living God”*
 - It is interesting that Matthew (at this point) calls the leader of the Apostles *“Peter,”* even though Jesus has not as yet identified *Simon son of Jonah* as *“Peter”*
 - This does not make much sense unless you are a Christian audience who already knew the story of *Peter’s* name being changed
 - Again, Father pointed out that the Bible was not designed to cause a *“Come to Jesus”* moment in a Best Western

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- In fact, the New Testament only came about after many years of the “oral tradition” during which these stories were told over and over in the early church
- Matthew (an Apostolic figure) wrote down these stories for his Jewish Christian audience in the mid to late first century, for use during the weekly Sunday liturgy
- Father suggested that many of these people had kept these stories secret (but not like the *Gnostics*) due to the persecutions against the church that began in the 60s
- They were very careful to whom these stories were told
- Most members came through a period of initiation and instruction (catechesis), before they were allowed to participate in the liturgy and hear these stories

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- This was all part of the security and safety of the early church, designed to avoid someone spying on the community and then turning them over to the authorities
- We still use these gospels today, in our liturgy of the Mass
- These passages were often used as an exhortation and encouragement within the early Christian community
- Thus, Matthew was telling his audience this story about *Simon Peter* which most pagans would not have been able to comprehend (especially his response to Jesus' question)
- The early church already knew that Jesus had given *Simon* a second name, *Peter* (rock)

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- **Matthew 16:16** *“Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the son of the living God”*
 - This statement would have meant to the 1st century Jew that the long awaited Messiah (King of Jerusalem) had come
 - The first time the word “Christ” was used was in **1st Samuel 2:1-10**,³ where *Hannah* was looking forward to the Lord (God) providing His Christ
 - Looking at the books of Samuel, Judges, and Ruth, it was clear that these authors were explaining to the people the need for a king (this was before the time of Saul, David, and Solomon)

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- It is believed that **1st and 2nd Samuel**, and **1st and 2nd Kings**, were written by the same author, who ended his story when the people of Israel have been taken captive to Babylon
- He knew the entire story, and most likely was writing it down during the Babylonian exile
- He would have seen Hannah's hymn as a prophecy of the coming king (thus, the first use of the word Messiah, Christ)
- It was used for the second time in **1st Samuel 12** ⁴ after some very important texts

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- In **1st Samuel 8**,⁵ the people asked for a human king like all the other nations
- In **1st Samuel 10**,⁶ God called Samuel to anoint Saul as their king
- This is where we get the Hebrew word “Messiah” (Christ)
- Christ (mentioned twice) is the anointed one, the name for the King of Jerusalem (Israel), the King of God’s people

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- He was to be a human king who was anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit through the pouring on of oil
- He was to rule over and fight for God's people against their enemies
- That was the Old Testament background, and context of the anointed king
- By the time we get to the New Testament, it had been 500 years since their last king (Messiah) Zedekiah (who was in the line of David) lived (**2nd Kings 25**)₇
- The last thing King Zedekiah saw was the murder of his sons, just before the Babylonians poked out his eyes and took him in chains to Babylon (this appeared to be the end of the Davidic line)

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- When the prophets talked about the “restoration of the Kingdom,” they were referencing the return of the people of God from Babylon to Israel
- The prophecies indicated that they would rebuild the temple, and witness the return of the Messiah and the Ark of the Covenant
- But, when the people actually returned (538, 444, 525-457 BC) and rebuilt the temple (516 BC), the Messiah, Glory Cloud, and Ark did not return
- Thus, neither the human king nor the divine king appeared

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- At this point, the Post-Exilic prophets (Zachariah, Haggai, Malachi, and possibly Joel) were trying to help the people figure out how to resolve these problems
- Thus, when we witness the coming of the New Testament we see the people question: where was the Glory Cloud and the Messiah?
- Father pointed out that a summary of this can be seen in **Malachi 3₈** where it says: *“The Lord in whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple”*
- He also said that before this happens, God will send Elijah ₉ the prophet to prepare the way

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- This should help us to understand what was going on at the outset of the New Testament
- When we look at the infancy narratives, we can see evidence (a hint) of the return of the Glory Cloud and the Messiah
- The two kings (human and divine) have come back in Jesus!
- It will not be until a bit later in the gospels that the divinity of Christ appears as the main theme
- The first half of the synoptic gospels proves the point that this has just happened

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- The gospel of Jesus, as told by the Apostles, begins with the baptism of Jesus and ends with His death and resurrection
- Peter preached this truth in the house of Cornelius in **Acts 10**, where he proclaimed the Christ as the anointed one, with the power of the Holy Spirit, as He went out preaching, until the Jews killed Him, followed by God raising Him from the dead, and His promised return in the future
- Further, we know from **Acts 1** that Peter oversaw the selection of the replacement for Judas by someone who had been with them from the moment of Jesus' baptism until he ascended

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- Father pointed out that for most Christians today, they see the baptism story as either irrelevant or an uncomfortable detail
- Many see Jesus' participating in John's Baptism of Repentance as unnecessary since He was without sin
- Jesus was baptized in the Jordan as the mark of the beginning of His ministry
- Father suggested that a first century Christian would have understood that Jesus had just been revealed as the Christ
- The purpose of the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth was to proclaim Him as the long-awaited Christ

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- Not only was Jesus the human king, but He was also a part of the Trinity (a New Testament concept)
- This means that the human and divine king has returned
- Although His divinity is not clearly shown, there was much that the 1st century Christian might hope for
- If He was in fact the Messiah, He was also the divine king, and this marked the beginning of the revelation of the Trinity
- We see at His baptism, the descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus (in the form of a dove), and God's revelation that Jesus is His son
- This means that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- There were two titles for the king in the line of David in the Old Testament – the anointed one, (the one who has the spirit), and the “son of God”
- The anointing comes from **1st Samuel 16**, which described King David as the one upon whom the spirit came mightily upon him
- The son of God, was a reference from **2nd Samuel 7**, as they began to build the 1st temple
- Both titles were given to a king in the line of David
- The anointed one (the Christ) is the one who has the spirit descend upon him, and the one who was then called son of David and son of God

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- God has adopted Him and will take care of Him as His own son
- When we go back and look at the baptism of Jesus we can clearly see that Jesus was revealed in these two images (the spirit descends upon Him and the voice of God says: *“Behold my son”*)

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- Father stressed that this was not an Arian adoption ceremony in which the spirit of God indwells in Jesus causing Him to go from a regular to a divine man
- It is not when Jesus suddenly became the “Son of God” (He has been the “Son of God” from all eternity within His divinity)
- Jesus’ baptism was the moment when He was revealed as “the Christ”
- Looking back to the infancy narratives, we see that it was the “spirit” that caused the conception of Jesus, as the spirit was within Mary because Jesus was there

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- Thus, Jesus was the “anointed one” from the very beginning
- He is the eternal “Son of God”
- Father asked us to forget the adoptionism as identified by Arius, because Jesus had been revealed as the Christ from the outset
- Father asked that we turn to:
- **Acts 10:34-38** *“And Peter opened his mouth and said: truly I perceive that God show no partiality, ...For God was with him”*

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- Peter understood that the baptism of Jesus was the moment when He was revealed as the Christ (the title for the King of Israel)
- In addition to that, due to 2nd Samuel 7, He is also called “Son of God”
- Looking back at the Baptism of Jesus, we see the spirit descend upon Him, and then we hear the voice saying “behold my son” (both titles were revealed)
- Turning back to the end of Jesus’ Galilean ministry, in **Matthew 16**, we see Him ask the Apostles, “who do you say that I am?”

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- Peter responded: “*you are the Christ, the son of the living God*” (the same two titles that were identified at His baptism)
- Thus, this story at *Caesarea Philippi* is either parallel to or the conclusion of the baptismal story
- To some, this is an obvious redundancy
- But, what is happening is that God has spoken, and now man has answered!
- God revealed Jesus as the Christ at His baptism, and now 12 men have accepted this, after three years of boot camp

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- They now have enough education, seen enough, and heard enough to know that Jesus is the Christ
- They now have reason to have faith in Him
- Father pointed out that it is very rare that someone, after being invited to become a Christian, drops everything and gets baptized
- For most, it is a process by which they come to believe in Jesus, and then they reach that point for baptism

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- The apostles had given up everything to follow Jesus for three years, and now are able to say in faith, “you are the Christ, you are the son of God”
- Boot camp is now over and it is time to go to war
- **This is the beginning of the next part of the story**
- Father said that at this point, Jesus had his soldiers well-trained
- They have accepted what He has taught and are going to follow Him into the battle in Jerusalem (even though it was not the kind of battle they were expecting)

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- Father offered one more example of the difference between Matthew and Mark
- Mark does not say “the living God,” but only the “son of God”
- Father said that in the Jewish way of speaking, there is only the one God who lives (the rest of the pagan gods were dead and nonsensical)
- You had the living God versus the rest of the pagan gods
- So, Matthew’s use of son of the living God was a classic example of the Semitic flavor in Matthew’s gospel

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- All that Jewish flavor is absent from Mark's gospel
- Anything that could be misunderstood, distracting, or required extra explanation, was left out
- This was what Peter was doing when he was preaching the gospel to Hellenized Jewish Christians, and other Christians in Rome who did not have the Jewish background that Matthew's audience had
- Peter limited his teaching to the essential information that could be easily understood

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- In a moment, we will look at how Jesus responds to Peter
- Father said that to most people His response is shocking
- Most do not see any relationship between what Peter just declared and what Jesus will say to Peter
- Most Catholics know two passages in the Bible: **Matthew 16** and **John 6** (both often used in debates with their Protestant friends)
 - **John 6** presents presence, the real presence of Jesus, *“This is my body and it is real food”*
 - **Matthew 16** presents the authority given to Peter (vs. the authority of a Protestant minister)

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- We Catholics believe that Christianity has historically had a hierarchy (even among the Apostles)
- We often ask our Protestant friends if their pastor has “the keys of the kingdom of God”
- Father said, unfortunately, most Catholics do not actually understand what this passage means
- They do not know the relationship between this story (**Matthew 16:16**) and what Jesus is going to say to Peter
- Father asked if we know of the relationship of this story with the story of Jesus’ baptism, as well as everything in between?

Matthew 16 (Cont)

- He asked what Jesus' reply meant to Matthew's audience?
- Since there were no Protestants living at the time of the 1st century, this passage was not written to challenge Protestant beliefs
- Father suggested that we can figure out its meaning by reading it in its context