

Study of the Gospel of Mark

Chapter 9 (Part 2)

Background

Jesus has been in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi spending time with His disciples and preparing them for His coming death and resurrection. Now they return to the region of Galilee and back into Capernaum where they will stay for only a short time before beginning what was to be Jesus' final trip to Jerusalem.

1. Read Mark 9:30. Mark tells us that Jesus didn't want people to know that He was present. Although Jesus returns with His disciples to Galilee, He still wants to keep a "low-profile." Why do you think Jesus wanted to stay out of the public eye at this point in His ministry?

2. Read Mark 9:31-32. This is now the second time Jesus speaks about His coming death (see Mark 8:31). What is the difference in the reaction of the disciples in these two accounts? What had they learned? What hadn't they learned?

3. In verses 33-37 Jesus teaches His disciples about humility. This is an essential part of being a Christian, and something Jesus' disciples struggled with (just as we do). There are some differences in Mark's account and Matthew's account (see Matthew 18:1-5). Some have seen these sections as contradictory. What are the differences? What are the similarities?

Matthew

Mark

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4. How can we see the harmony in these two accounts?

5. In His teaching on humility, Jesus uses a child as an illustration. This section is an important proof passage for infant baptism in connection with the ability for the spirit to work faith in the hearts of children (see Mark 9:42, Matthew 18:6). Jesus is clearly using a small child as an example here, one that he is able to hold in his arms (Mark 9:36). What do we learn about faith from these verses?

The Greek word used for child here is paidion (παῖδιον). It is a unique word in that it is used for a wide age of children. It is used in John 16:21 to describe a newborn; it is used for both John the Baptist and Jesus when they were 8 days old (Luke 1:59, 2:21); it is used to describe Jesus when the wise men came to visit Him in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:8,9,11,13,14,20,21); it is used of the daughter of Jairus who was 12 years old (Mark 5:41 - see also 42); and Jesus even uses this term to speak of His disciples (John 21:5).

6. The words of Jesus recorded in Mark 9:43-47 have often been misunderstood and taken out of context. What is Jesus teaching us with these words? How can and should we apply the lesson that Jesus is teaching in our own lives?

7. These verses are also a teaching on the reality of hell. We live in a time when many people have been taught that hell is symbolic and is not real. The word Jesus uses here (which is translated "hell") is "gehenna" which referred to a fire pit south of Jerusalem where garbage and dead animals were burned. This was a vivid illustration that the people of His time could relate to. In addition, Jesus refers to the words of the prophet Isaiah where hell is also described in a related way. Where else in Scripture do we find the doctrine of hell confirmed? List several passages or sections:

8. Verses 49-50 have posed a challenge for Bible students over the years. Jesus uses another illustration, this time of salt. In the context, Jesus is dealing with the temptations we face in this world and how we respond to those temptations. Everyone faces temptation. If temptation and sin are allowed to rule, nothing will be gained, and all will be lost. How can we apply this to our own lives?
