

Mark: The Mysterious Messiah

Week 16: Mark 8:11-8:33

Introductory Exercise: What does it mean to confess Christ?

As today's reading opens, which group of Jesus's rivals confronts him, what do they demand, and how does Jesus respond? Why is Jesus reluctant to do now what he's done throughout the gospel?

In the boat-ride sequence in Mark 8:14-21, remember that the sea and the wilderness were, for the ancient world, very different images from how they stand for a modern reader. What crisis rises during this journey through deadly territory? To what events does Jesus point as an answer to the crisis? What's the connection? What do these numbers mean?

What's the most important difference between the healings that have gone before and the healing in Mark 8:22-26? What analogical or symbolic point does the healing seem to anticipate? (Hint: Look at the next couple paragraphs of Mark.) What humorous bit does the book of Mark put on the end of this episode?

Where are Jesus and his disciples when Jesus asks them about himself? Whose city is this? How does Jesus react when Peter does speak his final line? If this account of this scene differs from what you remember, what is present or absent that your memory omits or supplies?

What title does Jesus use to refer to himself in Mark 8:31, and what Old Testament echo does he start here? What Old Testament echo does Jesus switch to when Peter opposes him? Why might Jesus have pulled out this word at this moment, and what happens when contemporary uses of the word "Satan" come into contact with the more ancient uses of the Hebrew word?