

The heart of Mark's gospel

3. The next stage - hearing about the cross

• *The Son of Man*

• *Isaiah's suffering servant becomes Daniel's glorious Son of Man.*

4. The necessity of the cross

5. The cross is the route to glory and honour

• *Following Jesus to glory and honour*

Mark 8:31 to 9:13 is the heart of the Gospel of Mark. It is about half-way through and it is the point where the disciples at last begin to make progress in grasping the marvel of Jesus' person and Jesus' work upon the cross.

3. When they come to see who He is, they must then be ready to see what He will do. When the apostles can state clearly who Jesus is they are ready for the next stage of Jesus' revelation; He now proceeds to tell them of His cross.

We also have a strong hint here that 'Son of Man' has a higher meaning than its use as an equivalent to 'I' or 'This man here...'. Jesus has referred to Himself as 'Son of Man' ^{□1}. Now it becomes clear that He must mean more in this than simply 'I' or 'This human being here...'. 'Son of Man' was a title taken from the glorious vision of Daniel 7:13. In Daniel chapter 7 a human-like figure comes to God and receives a kingdom. 'Son of Man' in Daniel 7:13 is not a title but simply a description of the human figure seen in vision in Daniel chapter 7.

The phrase means 'a human being'. It was not a phrase that was used in Jesus' day to refer to the expected Messiah. Jesus used it as the title for Himself. He implies that the Son of God, the Messiah of Mark 8:29 is also the 'Son of Man', the fulfilment of Daniel 7.

Jesus calls himself 'Son of Man' and then makes it clear what He means by the term. Picking up from what Peter has said He now implies that 'Son of Man' and 'Christ' refer to the same person.

It is an amazing statement. *'The Son of Man must suffer!'* In Daniel 7:13 the son of man rides upon the clouds of heaven in great glory and comes to God to receive a kingdom. But Jesus says *'The Son of Man must suffer...'* ^{□1}. There was nothing about suffering in Daniel 7. What Jesus has done is put together the glorious figure of Daniel 7 and the suffering figure of Isaiah 53. The One who gets to the glory of Daniel 7 will do so via the suffering of Isaiah 53!

4. Jesus insists upon the necessity of the cross. Peter thinks this is just depression in Jesus and presumes to rebuke Jesus for being so depressed ^{□1}. But any suggestion that Jesus should avoid the cross can come only from Satan ^{□2}. Peter is the tool of Satan in saying such things and is thinking in typically worldly terms ^{□3}.

5. Jesus insists upon the cross for those who want to get to glory as He is getting to glory. He gives an invitation. *'If anyone wishes to come after me...'* It is an invitation to get to resurrection-glory-and-honour via the cross, just as Jesus will get to resurrection-glory-and-honour via the cross.

It is a personal matter: 'If anyone...'

It is a voluntary matter: 'If anyone wishes...'

Such glory and honour requires:

- (i) self-denial, a repudiation of the sinfulness that is very instinctive to the human heart,
- (ii) acceptance of the cross – a willingness to accept Jesus' cross (unlike Peter in 8:32) – and a willingness to accept any crucifying

□1 2:10, 28

□1 8:3 1

□1 8:32

□2 8:33

□3 8:33

chastening that Jesus puts upon the would-be disciple, and (iii) involvement in 'following' Jesus, travelling with Him and becoming part of His ministry-team.

In modern language, it involves:

- (i) serious amendment of life,
- (ii) submission to God's discipline, and
- (iii) involvement in the work of God's kingdom.

• **The coming of the Kingdom**

Jesus presses the demand on His disciples. It is the only way of really getting 'life' from God^{□1}. It is the only way of rightly valuing our lives^{□2}. Only those who acknowledge Jesus will themselves be acknowledged in the day of reward^{□3}. And the coming of God's kingdom might be sooner than one thinks^{□4}. Some of those standing there would still be alive some decades later when the Romans marched on Jerusalem. Mark 9:1 refers to the fulfilment of Daniel 7:13 (which has been implicitly mentioned because Jesus has used the term 'Son of Man'). In Daniel 7 the human figure comes **to** (not **from**) the Father to receive a kingdom. In the events that followed Jesus' death, things would happen that would reveal that Jesus had come to the Father and had received His kingdom. The resurrection, the scattering of the apostles, and especially the fall of Jerusalem – would all be forms of '*the coming of the kingdom*'. (It is a mistake to tie this language to the coming of Jesus **to earth**. The coming of Jesus in final judgement is only **one** way in which it is seen that Jesus has come **to** the Father and has received His kingdom. 'Coming' refers to more than one direction in biblical language. The later language of the Christian church when it speaks of Jesus' 'coming' must not confuse us. Jesus 'coming' to the Father took place within a generation. His 'coming' to earth was always totally undated; '*of that hour no one knows...*'. But the coming to the Father and the revelation of the kingdom would start soon, within a generation.)

- 1 8:35
- 2 8:36–37
- 3 8:38
- 4 9:1

• **Nearer than we think**

Jesus' point is that a day of judgement might be nearer than we think. Some of those standing listening to Jesus' voice in the AD 30s would go through tumultuous days.

Some would be present when the Romans marched on Jerusalem. At such a time Jesus' words would come back to them: '*what can a person give in exchange for his life?*' He who loses his life will find it; he who holds on to his life might lose it – especially in the turbulent days that would be ahead for the people of Israel. The point is: a day of reckoning might be nearer than we think.

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