

**CRISIS WEEK**  
**How To Study The Bible**  
**Part 9**  
**Dr. George O. Wood**

Our last time in the sequence of studies from the gospel of Mark. I've been using the gospel of Mark hopefully as a vehicle that you can get a handle for in terms of personal study that you're doing in the Bible. One of the things we've been doing each time is to just sit down and remember where we've been in the gospel of Mark. At this point we've had 8 major segments of the gospel of Mark.

If you had a moment to refresh your memory like I've been refreshing mine perhaps these would roll as easily off your lips as they do mine. But as you go through the gospel of Mark the shorthand for it is the first four paragraphs deal with Preparation for the Lord's ministry. We simply called it Preparation. Then Opening Events. Opening events is where he's beginning his teaching ministry, his healing ministry and his disciple-making ministry. Then the third section is Opposition. We see that opposition against Jesus arose first over the issue of whether or not he had the authority to forgive sins. Then over his violation of tradition. Then Counter Opposition where Jesus goes on the offensive. He calls his disciples, accuses his accusers of potentially committing the unpardonable sin. Then that Counter Opposition is followed by chapter 4 with Kingdom Parables where Jesus in a series of stories lays out what the essence of his kingdom is. That it is the reign of God voluntarily received within the human heart. Not externally imposed but internally grown. Then from 4:35 to the end of chapter 5 the next section in Mark, Selected Miracles. Mark takes us through four great miracles of the Lord which demonstrate his authority in each of the four realms in which he exercised miraculous power – his authority over nature, his authority over illness, his authority over demons and his authority over death.

Then in chapter 6 we come to Discipleship Training where the Lord is primarily spending time with his disciples through Galilee and on the parameter of Galilee, leading them into a deeper understanding of his mission and himself. Chapter 7 the first three paragraphs, 7:1-7:27 was a theme that dealt with inner versus outer defilement where Jesus laid down the principles of his kingdom as compared to that of the externality of the legalists – the scribes and the Pharisees. Then from 7:28 on through 8:30 was a section that we simply called Ministry Outside Galilee. Jesus is in political danger. He is skirting the parameter of Galilee staying outside Herod's jurisdiction. Herod had killed John the Baptist. He was already perceiving or thinking because these great works were being done by Jesus and his disciples that John the Baptist had come again from the dead. So Jesus is very much protecting himself in terms of not wanting to be subject to arrest.

That outside Galilee ministry culminates in the northeast corner of Galilee up at Caesarea-Philippi. The disciples are asked by Jesus "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, the son of the living God."

So it's pointed out very well that the beginnings of the Old and the New Testaments have a couple of profound questions. Actually the second question asked in the Old Testament and the first question asked by God profoundly renders the whole interpretation of the Old Testament. The question which God asks is a question asked of man and it is the question "Where art thou?"

## **CRISIS WEEK**

### **How To Study The Bible – Part 9**

It presumes that man is in hiding from God. The Old Testament shows that in spite of God's covenants, promises, prophets, priests and kings man stayed away from God – Where art thou?

But the New Testament begins its first question, the very first question in the New Testament, is a question not from God to man but it is the question asked by man of God. It is this: Where is he? Where is he that is born king of the Jews? And the whole New Testament is an interpretation of this one is who is from God. Where may we find him and thereby come out of our hiding so that God is no longer saying, Where are you? Instead we are saying, Where is he?

This first half of the gospel of Mark which we have been in up until this moment has been seeking to bring us to an understanding of who Jesus is. So we left off at the paragraph that begins with chapter 8:27 and goes through verse 30. A paragraph we called Who am I? If you were to identify this paragraph structurally in the gospel of Mark it would easily be identifiable as the hinge paragraph. Everything prior to that paragraph flows into it and everything after that paragraph in Mark flows out of it. It is the pivot on which the whole book swings. Up until that moment Jesus has been for two years inculcating in the disciples his vision and understanding of who he is and what his kingdom is. Now they have come to believe. Once they have come to believe he's ready to dive them into deeper truth. As is always the case we will not learn much about Jesus by a passive kind of knowledge. We must come to a profound commitment of our hearts to him and then as we do he reveals more of himself to us.

Tonight we look at the ninth section of the gospel of Mark. There are about 15 distinct units in all. We're going to get to number 9. I'll violate one of my study rules and give you the title for the section first lest I get into the paragraph by paragraph examination and by the time we're in it I've forgotten to discuss what the title was. This is Crisis Week. That's the appropriate title for the paragraphs that begin in 8:31 through 9:29. Why is it called Crisis Week? And actually you can include the, Who am I? paragraph as belonging to Crisis Week also. It fits both Crisis Week and Ministry Outside Galilee. Everything leads up to it and everything flows out of it.

It's Crisis Week because in one moment the disciples are confessing Jesus as Lord. Then he turns around and announces to them for the first time his forthcoming death in Jerusalem. Then he gives to them additional and deeper terms of discipleship – deny self, take up cross, follow me. Then six days after that he goes up to the Mount of Transfiguration and three of the disciples see his transcendent glory. Then the day after that he's back down in the valley where there is a boy thrashing around that is beset by a demon and Jesus brings deliverance to him. So the events from 8:27-9:29 take up seven or eight days of time. It is a crisis week in the Lord's ministry and in the disciple's lives as well coming perhaps within a year of his Passion or crucifixion in Jerusalem.

With that in mind we have seven paragraphs tonight, let's sort of mosey through them a little bit.

Verse 31. Remember for those of us who are joining us new I'm using the Revised Standard Version because that's the Bible I cut my eye teeth on and I'm most familiar with and I like their paragraphing better anyway.

“He began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and killed and after three days rise again. He said this

## **CRISIS WEEK**

### **How To Study The Bible – Part 9**

plainly. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples he rebuked Peter and said ‘Get behind me Satan for you are not on the side of God but of men.’”

We’re going to reach for a paragraph title for this paragraph that is outside the paragraph. I’m going to do that because if you were to thumb on through the gospel of Mark you would find that there are three specific times that Jesus forecasts his death. A second time he indicates he is going to go to the cross – chapter 9:30. Then again in chapter 10 as we approach verse 32 and following. So there are three specific announcements of his death, each announcement gives a little bit more detail. Jesus is gradually revealing himself and the manner of his death as he moves along on the way through Galilee to Jerusalem.

This paragraph we can call therefore the First Announcement. The paragraphs if we were continuing in our walk through the gospel of Mark we would call the Second and Third Announcement.

The First Announcement. “Jesus began to teach that the Son of man must suffer many things.” In other words here from 9:31-33 is material that Jesus in the two years his disciples had been with him had not been given. Explicitly. Mark says he said this plainly. Meaning that he was not now talking in parables or proverbs. Only once before in the gospel of Mark have we even seen Jesus hint at the prospect of his death. That is all the way back to chapter 2 when he talks about the disciples will one day fast when the bridegroom is no longer with them. But up until now it had not been a reference to his death. I’m sure from the disciples point of view the very idea that Messiah would suffer and die would be anathema to them. They thought they were in for something more splendid than this. But it is on the basis of their confession of faith in him once that is locked in secure he is ready to reveal more of himself to them.

So he indicates not the manner by which he is going to be killed. That will come later. And he does not in this first announcement indicate either that he is going to be betrayed which he is going to do in a later announcement. But he simply says here that he will be indeed rejected by the leadership of the nation. He will be killed and rise after three days. And he said this plainly.

Peter didn’t like this word. So he rebuked him, “No Lord you can’t do that.” Isn’t it great to see the ups and downs of Peter’s personality? One moment he’s coming through in great shining splendor – “You’re the Christ. The Son of the blessed. I know who you are.” And the next moment he’s saying, “Jesus, you’re all wrong. You’re designed for great things, Lord.”

“Get thee behind me, Satan.” The man whom the Lord called Rock is now called adversary – Satan. Why is he called that? Because it was in the temptation of Jesus that there had been an attempt by the devil to short circuit Jesus so that he avoided the cross all together. On the one hand Satan offers Jesus “Jump from the pinnacle and save yourself,” which is a temptation that will be repeated in the crucifixion for Jesus to do something to save himself. It seems like Satan is goading him to do this action. But then you turn right around later in the gospel and Satan seems to be pushing him to the cross and possessing Judas to portray him. We get this feeling as we look at the gospels exactly what methodology is Satan behind here? Is he indeed for the crucifixion of Jesus or against it? Which is the case?

## **CRISIS WEEK**

### **How To Study The Bible – Part 9**

I never understood this. To me this whole inability of Satan to get his act together on which he wanted. Whether he wanted Christ to go to the cross or not to go to the cross. It seemed to me a confusion.

The minute Jesus hears the words out of Peter, “Don’t go to the cross,” Jesus says I know where that’s coming from. That’s not coming from God. Following this the Lord goes into some of the deepest teaching on discipleship and his ministry.

“If any person [a generic word – if any person] would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it. Whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life. For what can a man give in return for his life. For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.’ And he said to them, ‘Truly I say to you there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.’”

We’re simply going to call this paragraph Take Up Cross. It has tremendous teaching on discipleship. For one thing, one of the things we often do in looking at this particular segment of scripture is to interpret it in light of Jesus’ own cross. But remember when he first teaches this he has not yet gone to the cross. The idea of taking up your cross they would be familiar with not from the vantage point of his taking his cross but from the vantage point of watching a person dragging a piece of lumber down the road heading out to the place where he himself will be executed. So Jesus is telling his disciples, If you are going to follow me, you’re going to come to a place of personal death. You must deny yourself.

There is a difference I think between denial of self and self denial. Maybe a subtle distinction. Jesus is saying I don’t want you following people and denying something that’s a part of you. I want you to deny you whole self. I want you to lay aside your plans, your goals, your dreams, your ambitions, everything you want to do for yourself and first of all ask yourself what does the Lord want out of your life and reorder your life in the light of the priorities, which the Lord will establish for you. It is a fundamental re-alteration. Jesus is telling us that we must do this at times when his orders conflict with our feelings. That’s where we really get into a great deal of trouble and conflict, when our feelings are in contradiction to what he is telling us to do. Part of the life of discipleship is to lay aside those feelings and go with the orders that he brings to us. Take up your cross, follow me.

Then in a series of tremendous paradoxes he reminds us that it is the eternal values by which we live. It is not the return on our investment in this moment. It is the return of the investment in the long run.

He closes this segment with a verse that has caused some misunderstanding. We’ve dealt with this same kind of language when we looked at the gospel of Luke. After Jesus promises his disciples if they’ll be faithful they’ll have a great reward he’ll confess them before the glory of his Father with all the holy angels. Then he says “Truly I say to you, some are here who will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.” That has led some to suspect that here Jesus was mistaken about his second coming. That he was in effect making a promise to the first generation of disciples that they would be alive when he returned.

## **CRISIS WEEK**

### **How To Study The Bible – Part 9**

But that is actually reading more into this verse than what the Lord himself said. One of the things we do as we move along in interpreting the scripture is that you must always interpret the scripture in light of the context. Not in light of your idea of what a word means but in light of how that word has been to this point developed. The key word is the word “kingdom.” To this point in the gospel of Mark the word “kingdom” has never meant something that was end time. Later in Jesus’ teaching it will. Mark 13 explicitly. But up till this time the “kingdom” has been seed that has been sown in a field. It has been mustard seed growing up. It therefore has been something which is potentially within us which is designed to come to maturation – growth, fruition. It is the inward kingdom of God. The reign of God in our heart now. Jesus is saying, Truly I say to you, some of you will not taste death until you’ve seen that kingdom come with power.

There are possibilities of several interpretations of what that could have been. Some people think that what the Lord is saying is that he’s telling his disciples that there is going to be a phenomenal growth of the kingdom of God with power associated with the church that is formed at Pentecost and expands from them. Some of them are going to drop out in the early years, not by their own choice (Judas by his own choice) but James, for example one of the inner three will be executed shortly into this and he will not really have lived to see the kingdom of God go worldwide with power.

When you think of it, the expansion of Christianity in the first thirty years without television, without radio, without newsprint, without communication, without jet airplanes – the explosion worldwide was the most phenomenal social development just as a social phenomenon. One of the most phenomenal social developments that has ever taken place. The kingdom of God came with power so that within thirty years after his resurrection in Jerusalem, he was believed on in Britain, far, far away. Believed on in the East and the West and down in North Africa. That was the kingdom of God some say, coming with power and there would be some disciples who would live long enough to see the kingdom come with that kind of extensive authority and power.

There is another view that is equally commendatory and that is the view that Jesus knows that within a short period of time he is going to go up to this Mount of Transfiguration and his eternal weight of glory is going to shine through his humanity. And some of them – that is Peter, James and John – are going to see a side of him that none of the other disciples see. The power and the splendor of his kingdom revealed on the mount of transfiguration.

I think I like the first interpretation a little bit better. But I think it’s fair to say either could be a possibility.

This is followed by the paragraph beginning with 9:2 “After six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up to a high mountain apart by themselves and he was transfigured before them. His garments became glistening, intensely white as no fuller on earth could bleach them. There appeared to them Elijah with Moses and they were talking to Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, ‘Master it is well that we are here. Let us make three booths [overnight shelters]. One for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ For he did not know what to say for they were exceedingly afraid. A cloud overshadowed them and a voice came out of the

## CRISIS WEEK

### How To Study The Bible – Part 9

cloud, ‘This is my beloved Son, listen to him.’ And suddenly looking around they saw no longer anyone with them but Jesus only.”

This paragraph could be easily titled Transfiguration. So we have Who am I? First Announcement. Take up Cross. Transfiguration.

Jesus went up to a high mountain apart. If you’re in the Holy land and try to see the Mount of Transfiguration you’re caught because nobody knows for sure. The gospels don’t tell us what specific mountain it was. The traditional place that the pilgrims established from about the fourth century on was Mount Tabor in Galilee. It’s easy to understand. It’s the high hill that’s sort of set apart by itself in the middle of Galilee at the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley, the Valley of Armageddon. Since pilgrims didn’t have the time to walk all the way up to Lebanon to Mount Hermon it was easier to just move the sight down in their path so they could say *that’s* the spot. Remember they didn’t have bibles to read and stuff like that so they needed places and pictures to remember things. So some think it’s Mount Tabor.

But most likely it was up north of Caesarea-Philippi in the Mount Hermon range, the high mountain apart. It would better fit the locality that is being described here.

He takes three of his disciples. His principle “To him who has more will be given.” These disciples had been the ones asking him the most questions all along. They had been drawing nearer to him. They had been with him when he heals Jairus’ daughter and raised her from the dead they’ll be with him on three significant occasions in his ministry – Jairus’ daughter, the Transfiguration and Gethsemane when they are together with him in a special inner circle. They’ve been growing. He takes them up because they’re ready for a greater revelation of himself. He, it says, is transfigured before them.

If we take the Greek word that is involved and carry it directly over into the English language it is the word *metamorphosis*. So if we read this technically it should read “He was metamorphosized before them.”

What is metamorphosis? Let me talk a moment about two words *morphe* and *schema*. They’re both Greek words and they’re used in the scripture. For example, Paul in Romans 12 tells us “Do not be conformed to this world.” The word for “conformed” is the word *schema* out of which we derive “scheme” which means fashion. “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed [metamorphosized] by the renewing of your mind.” What’s he mean?

In life science there is morphology which is the study of form and structure. *Morphe* refers to basic structure. *Schema* is the current moment. It is the fashion.

The *schema* is changing but the *morphe* stays. Paul says to us in the letter to the Philippians that Jesus was in the *morphe* the form of God – unalterable structure. And he came in the *morphe* of a servant. A slave. The transfiguration is saying to us that in his human life he had the *morphe* the structure of man but there was one privileged moment in his ministry where he went aside to a lonely high place and his disciples – three disciples of them were with him, for a moment he metamorphosized. His divine nature, his unalterable divine nature shown through his humanity. When it shown through he became radiant. Even his clothes were affected so that it as a bright blaze of white associated with him.

## CRISIS WEEK

### How To Study The Bible – Part 9

Peter never forgot the event. Writing years later he would say “We were with him on the mount and we were eyewitnesses to his majesty.” It as a powerful moment. No one else but the inner three saw that in him. But having just confessed him as Messiah they had that privileged moment. That unique moment of seeing him as God, not simply man but as God.

In that period of time, it’s evidently nighttime by the fact that his whiteness is seen especially silhouetted by the dark sky, and also the fact that it’s night is evident in Peter’s desire to build some booths which would be an overnight shelter. Moses and Elijah appear talking with Jesus. Luke is the only gospel writer to tell us what they were talking about. Luke says they were talking about his exodus. Who else in that group had had an exodus? Moses. So what would be natural for Moses to talk about to Jesus? The exodus. He was talking about his exodus which he would accomplish at Jerusalem. That is at Jerusalem in the cross Jesus was going to bring his people out of bondage. Moses and Elijah. Representing the law and the prophets. The charge against Jesus by his religious opposition had been that he threw the law of Moses aside. Remember the conflict? That again and again he violated tradition. He disgraced the teaching of the rabbis. Throwing out Moses’ authority. Here’s Moses – the authority of the law, stands behind Jesus. The authority of the prophets – the head of the prophets, Elijah, the stream from which all the prophets came, the prophetic tradition beginning with Elijah, that Elijah stands with him. Elijah and Moses. Both of whom by the way had unique ends. Elijah being caught up and translated. And Moses being buried on Mount Nebo.

By the way, if Jesus is on a high mount in the Promised Land and if he’s up in Hermon, part of Hermon is in Israel and certainly Mount Tabor is smack in the middle of Galilee. But it would have been the first time Moses’ feet had ever stood in the Promised Land. I think that should be noted. When we leave him in the Old Testament we feel so sorry for him, out there on Mount Nebo. He’d led the people all those years and God buried him on Nebo. If God does something like that to us, he’s going to make it up. I cannot think of a better way for Moses to get to the Promised Land than to stand there with the Messiah as an introduction into the Promised Land. And there they are talking about Jesus’ exodus.

If Peter, James and John were there, they were obviously looking on, kind of frightened to death. There’s a genuine funny moment in the gospel where the text of Mark says, “Peter spoke out, ‘Let’s build three shelters.’” At least give him credit for being humble here. There were after all six people up on the mountain but Peter was saying, Me and the guys – we know our place. We’ll do the three for you. After Peter said this there’s an interpretation: “For he did not know what to say.” What should you do when you don’t know what to say? Shut up! Don’t say anything.

I love this with Peter “When he did not know what to say, he said...” I identify with that. I have gotten into more trouble with my mouth than I can tell you.

“A cloud overshadowed them and a voice came out of the cloud.” We’re going to all have that moment of meeting these people. The church of Jesus Christ goes all the way back to Adam. All those who looked forward to Christ in faith and all those who looked back upon Christ in faith. It’s a marvelous family. It’s not just the people in your lifetime. There’s going to be a day when we’re going to be able to trace our family tree all the way back to Adam. The whole body of Christ will be there. This event with Peter, James, and John with Moses and Elijah is kind of

## **CRISIS WEEK**

### **How To Study The Bible – Part 9**

a foreshadowing of an event we will all one day have when we are in his glory. God has called us to be an eternal people. We've got something to look forward to! Someday you're going to set down and talk with Moses and Elijah, Peter, James and John. Not to mention our time with the Lord.

The cloud overshadowed them and a voice came out of the cloud. The second time that the voice has spoken in Jesus' ministry. There's only three times in Jesus' ministry that the Father speaks. Once at his baptism. Here at his transfiguration. And then in John 12, a third time, when he is in Jerusalem, shortly before his death. Here it is so critical because Jesus has just announced to the disciples that he's on the way to be killed. This is now the voice of the Father saying "I've approved this. I've approved my Son. Everything he's done up till now has pleased me greatly. There is no fault in him. No fault in his character. No failure in his plans. He is exactly in my will." It's Mark's way of letting us know as Jesus proceeds to the cross that that's not an accident. Nor is he doing something on his own but it is with the father's approval. The transfiguration. Suddenly they looked around and saw no one with them but Jesus only

One other thing that might be pointed out as a real minor point in this but I think one of the real arguments against reincarnation is right here in this paragraph. Moses and Elijah has independent personalities which did not pass into somebody else's psyche. They didn't come back and live as a rat or a cockroach or a dog or another human being. It was Moses and Elijah – clearly identifiable life spans present in clearly identifiable people.

Verse 9 "As they were coming down from the mountain he charged them to tell no one what they had seen until the Son of man should have risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. They asked him, 'Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?' he said to them, 'Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written that the Son of man should suffer many things and be treated with contempt. But I tell you that Elijah has come and they did to him whatever they pleased as it is written of him.'"

This paragraph could simply be called Elijah Must Come. They were going down the mountain and the first order he lays upon them is this strange thing that we've seen throughout the gospel of Mark, Jesus telling somebody not to say anything. How many times have we seen that? He heals the leper cleansed – don't say anything. After the disciples confess him as Messiah – don't tell anybody about this. Now he's saying to the three – Don't tell anybody what you've seen for now.

I think there's a good reason why he told them not to tell. Two good reasons. One, he did not want the rest of the disciples or the mass of people to whom he was ministering to base their belief in him on the manifestation of his divine nature at transfiguration. He had a greater plan in mind of having that faith rooted in his death and resurrection.

But I think here is probably a more specific reason why he tells them not to tell. That is to be in on something can create an insufferable pride. We know from reading on past the passage we're going to be at tonight that after they got down from the mountain and after the demon possessed boy was healed then the disciples got into an argument while they were sitting in the house as to whom the greatest was. I think I know exactly how that happened. Peter, James and John came down from the mountain and when they got alone with the other nine guys they said, "Did we

## **CRISIS WEEK**

### **How To Study The Bible – Part 9**

ever have an experience up there with Jesus! Just the four of us! We sure wish we could tell you about it. He told us not to tell, I know. I guess you must not be in the same position we are. But it was wonderful. Sure wish we could tell you. We must be the greatest.”

I’m amazed when I read Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians where he talks about “Fourteen years ago I know a man who is caught up into the third heaven, whether he was in the body or out of the body I don’t know.” What’s so incredible about that is that Paul in describing himself is talking to the Corinthians, “I’ve never told you I had this incredible experience with the Lord which was so absolutely overpowering that I actually didn’t know if I was in my body or I had slipped out of my body. It was so incredible.” But Paul never shared the testimony. Why didn’t he share the testimony? Because he didn’t want to make other people feel like they hadn’t met God if they didn’t have his same experience.

Sometimes the Lord can give you a private revelation of himself that you actually and prematurely in sharing that revelation trivialize what you’ve experienced and you in effect give a subtle put down to other people.

Maybe there are some revelations as Paul found out that are so super abundant that maybe other people if they don’t have that same revelation will feel left out or even depressed.

The three could share this after Christ rose from the dead – then everybody’s got something in common that’s even greater than the transfiguration: the resurrection. But the disciples have got to have a bit of theology cleared up and that’s why this question arises. “Why do the scribes [the scribes were the experts in the text. The seminary professors. The people who actually teach the Bible. They have the theological order in which the messiah is going to come. Elijah was supposed to come first. Malachi did say that. The Old Testament closes with that. Before the great and terrible day of the Lord Elijah will come and he’ll turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their parents. Elijah must come. Evidently the scribes, the legal experts were saying to the disciples “We see you inching toward believing that this one you’re following is Messiah. But before you commit all the way remember that before Messiah can come Elijah must come and Elijah hasn’t showed up yet.

This tradition is strong in Jewish circles even today. Every orthodox synagogue has an Elijah chair. It’s often the chair where a child is brought for circumcision but it is an empty chair during synagogue service so that if Elijah chooses to come to announce the coming of Messiah he might at that moment take the chair and announce it. In every synagogue that chair is available. At the Passover the four cups of wine there’s always a fifth cup on the table un-drunk set there in case Elijah the prophet showed up at the table, he could take the cup. This is a strong teaching in Judaism. Before Messiah comes Elijah must come first.

So the disciples are troubled by this. They’ve already said to Jesus “You’re the Messiah.” But where had Elijah been? So Jesus says to them “I tell you that Elijah has come and they did to him whatever they pleased as is written of him.” I think in Matthew 15 Jesus went on and further said that John the Baptist was Elijah, not that he was Elijah reincarnated literally but Jesus says that which was prophesied of Elijah is meant to have a spiritual fulfillment and not a physical, literal fulfillment and before the great day of the Lord – the day which he was ushering in – Elijah the prophet indeed had appeared in the form of John the Baptist. The message of

## CRISIS WEEK

### How To Study The Bible – Part 9

John, the garb, the dress, the wilderness experience had all been in the character and the power of Elijah. Jesus says I have been announced. My forerunner has appeared.

That then passes into a scene with which we close our examination of the gospel of Mark for this time. Beginning with verse 14 and extending all the way through verse 29. “When they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd about them and the scribes arguing with them. Yet immediately when all the crowd when they saw him were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. He asked them ‘What are you discussing?’ One in the crowd answered him, ‘Teacher, I brought my son to you for he has a dumb spirit and whenever it seizes him it dashes him down and he moans and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to cast it out and they were not able.’ He answered them, ‘Oh, faithless generation. How long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to be.’ And they brought the boy to him and when the spirit saw him immediately it convulsed the boy and he fell on the ground and rolled about foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked his father, ‘How long has he had this?’ and he said, ‘From childhood and it has often cast him into the fire and into the water to destroy him. If you can do anything have pity upon us and help.’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you can? All things are possible to him who believes.’ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, ‘I believe. Help my unbelief.’ And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together he rebuked the unclean spirit saying to it, ‘You deaf and dumb spirit. I command you. Come out of him and never enter him again.’ After crying out and convulsing him terribly I came out and the boy was like a corpse so that most of them said, ‘He is dead.’ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up and he arose. When he had entered the house his disciples asked him privately ‘Why could we not cast it out?’ [there was a reason they asked it privately. They were embarrassed to ask publicly.] He said to them, ‘This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer [some manuscripts add “and fasting.”]”

Just a word or two on this. This paragraph could be called Deaf and Dumb Demoniac. It was a demon that manifested physical characteristics and there were not too many instances of demon possession that manifested physical characteristics such as this.

The question was raised after the service last week about the Syrophenecian woman’s daughter who had demon. How is it that a child can be demon possessed? Isn’t demon possession something that you voluntarily open yourself up to. For adults, yes. As a normal rule that’s the case. But where there is a cultic household it is possible that familiar spirits can enter children. Here is the case where it happens in this particular instance. We’re not given the background of how he got to be demon possessed. But we do know that the man knew where to get help. He had brought him to the disciples of Jesus.

Throughout the gospel of Mark if you watch the miracles you will find that in the beginning the miracles appear to be spontaneously generating. Jesus with his sovereign power steps in. But as his ministry becomes more and more known he increasingly looks for people who have faith. He almost seems at times to withhold his power until there is an element of faith that is present. With the disciples he lets them know that his casting out of demons does not simply come because he is that divine metamorphosed Son of God. But that he himself in the flesh must be a man of prayer. So he’s saying to them there is no automatic way to do exorcisms. I myself rely upon prayer and he’s saying to the disciples if you want to do the works of God you must also be people of prayer. Some thing cannot be driven out except by prayer.

## **CRISIS WEEK**

### **How To Study The Bible – Part 9**

That's true in our own lives. In your own life, if you're wrestling with something that's bigger than yourself if it's not demon possession if it's something else have you tried praying about it? Really, seriously, intensively praying about it. And asking other people if necessary to join you. Some things are not driven out except by prayer. Prayer is a foundational key to life.

The last thing I want to note as we leave this passage is the act that from the great high of the transfiguration Jesus comes down to the great low in the valley of human need with a boy who was demon possessed and out of control. I suggest to you I see in this kind of a pattern for spirituality. You see it in the baptism and temptation of the Lord. The baptism is his great high and the temptation is his great low. Highs and lows often appear to be compacted together. The reason why they are compacted together is that you need the strength of the high in order to get through the valley of the low.

I remind myself of those gospel texts when I have a great inner experience with the Lord. There's going to be a lot of interesting things taking place. I'm going to need to go on the strength of this for a little while.

That's the case with Jesus here. From the mountain meeting with God to the valley of human need. High times are often followed by low and intense times of struggle. The reason why the Lord has given you the great high is to give you the strength to get through the great low. And to bring you out of that on to other good things.

I hope you can take the rest of the gospel of Mark and beginning with 9:30 and walk right through it on your own. You know how to paragraph title. You know how to take a paragraph together now and create a section. Just go ahead a finish the book.

Lord, we think of the words that Luke gave at the beginning of his second volume. How he said that he had written a former book about all the things Jesus began to do and teach. In that statement he is assuming that Acts is only a continuation of what Jesus is doing and teaching. That is Jesus, you the living Lord, are alive today and you're still teaching and you're still doing your acts of power among your people. Lord, your life is not past tense. It's not something that happened a long time ago. It's ever present and it's ongoing. You are alive today. You're ministering in our hearts today. You're present here with us this evening. Your words and your power are still with us. We thank you. Let us discover, Lord, as we serve you and follow you continually the good news of Jesus Christ, that good news which Mark has announced – the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Always be to us as it was to Mark an unfinished sentence. Because Lord your work is not finished in us. It is still ongoing. It's always the beginning. May that be a hope for us this evening. If we've come to a cul d sac in our life, if we feel like we've come to the end of our rope, or the end of our way, it's not. It's just the beginning. You're at work, Lord. And you will prevail. All manner of things are subject unto you. Whether it be demons or illness or adverse winds and waves whatever it is. You're the Lord. And you have power over it and we place our lives in your hands. We ask Lord that you would help us develop the kind of discipleship, which truly looks at denying self and taking up the cross and following you. We serve you, not necessarily because it feels good. But because it is right. It's the right thing to do. Because you're the Lord and in you is all truth and all power. So we follow you gladly and joyfully. We want to take up our cross and follow after you. For we know

## **CRISIS WEEK**

### **How To Study The Bible – Part 9**

that where you're going and we want to be with you in that great procession. Through Jesus Christ our, Lord. Amen.