

(2) The people expected a prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15), Israel's first deliverer, to liberate them once and for all. Elijah was supposed to appear at the dawning of the end time and God's ultimate redemption of Israel. According to *4 Ezra* 6:25–26, one of the signs of the end of the age is that those who are left will “see those who were taken up, who from their birth have not tasted death; and the heart of the earth's inhabitants shall be changed and converted to a different spirit.” According to a later rabbinic midrash, God swore to Moses, “in the time to come when I send Elijah, the prophet, unto them [Israel], the two of you shall come together.” Their return here denotes the debut of the final age (Deut. 18:15; Mal. 4:5–6)

(3) Their presence with Jesus accredits him for his role as the deliverer sent by God. The voice from heaven (9:7) clinches it   ARNOLD

### **Read Mark 9: 9-13**

5.(a). What do the disciples make of what they have seen?

What does Jesus tell them to do? Why?

(b). To what events is Jesus referring when he says, "Elijah has come and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him?"

(c). Elijah's return was expected to immediately precede the inauguration of the glorious messianic kingdom (Mal. 4:5). Yet how is what happened to him (v.13) a pattern for what must also happen to Jesus (vv.9,12) and to us ?

**NB** Speculation about Elijah's return and his task of restoration appears to have been diffuse in Judaism. The later rabbis mostly assume that Elijah will solve legal disputes. Others imagine that he will revive the dead, bring back Moses and the desert generation, recover the lost sacred temple vessels, crush mountains like straw, and reveal the great mystery. The disciples' question assumes that some connection between Elijah and the coming of the Messiah existed in Jesus' day, which seems to have faded in later rabbinic literature. Christian literature preserves the conviction that Elijah will identify and anoint the Messiah. Contrary to any current expectation, Jesus announces that Elijah has come and was mistreated.

Jesus rejects any personal identification with Elijah (8:28) and can only have in mind John the Baptizer, who came in the garb of Elijah. Clearly his coming does not herald imminent messianic splendour for Israel. “Restor[ing] all things” has to do with repentance, which was fulfilled when all Judea and Jerusalem came to John to be baptized, confessing their sins (1:5).

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

## SESSION 10: CHAPTER 8:14 - 9:13 "WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?"



### Read Mark 8: 14 - 21

- 1.(a). What is the "yeast" of the Pharisees and Herod?  
(cf. 6:14-29; 7:1-23).
- (b). What do the disciples fail to understand in these verses and why?
- (c). Do the numbers themselves have any importance?

**NB** "Yeast" connotes to moderns something fresh and wholesome that makes dough rise and gives bread a pleasing light texture. "Leaven," the word used, was far more dangerous. It was produced by keeping back a piece of the previous week's dough, storing it in suitable conditions, and adding juices to promote the process of fermentation, much like sourdough. This homemade rising agent was fraught with health hazards because it could easily become tainted and infect the next batch. In the Old Testament, leaven symbolizes corruption and the infectious power of evil.     ARNOLD

### Read Mark 8: 22 - 30

- 2.(a). What unusual thing happens while Jesus is curing the blind man?
- (b) In response to Jesus' question of v. 27, why do you think that people had so many different ideas about his identity?  
Why those particular people?





- (c). The blind man needs two touches to restore his physical sight. What two touches did the disciples need to have the spiritual sight that Peter articulates?
- (d). What is Jesus' response to Peter's answer?

**Read Mark 8: 31 - 38**

- 3. (a). Right after Peter acknowledges Jesus to be the Christ, Jesus begins to explain what must happen to him. Why do you suppose Peter reacts so strongly to what Jesus has said?
- (b). Why does Jesus respond to Peter so harshly?
- (c). How is Peter like the blind man in vv. 22-26?
- (d). What does Jesus say it means to acknowledge him as the Christ and to follow him?
- (e). Jesus asks us the same question he asked his disciples: "Who do you say that I am?" What is your answer to who Jesus is and what he is actually doing in the world?
- (f). Have you seen in your life or in the lives of others, the truth that "if you want to save your life, you'll lose it; but if you lose your life because of me and the Message you'll save it?"



**NB** Mark records three instances when Jesus informs his disciples that the Son of Man must suffer, die, and then be raised (8:31; 9:30-31; 10:32-34). Significantly, he speaks about this suffering *plainly* (8:32), not in parables.

Each time, however, the disciples demonstrate in some way that they fail to grasp his meaning. They may have shared the expectations of most Jews, who hoped for a Messiah. He would be a kingly figure who would reign triumphantly as David had. No wonder the disciples have trouble assimilating Jesus' announcements about his suffering if they believe he is the Messiah. It runs counter to their every expectation about the Messiah. ARNOLD

## Read Mark 9: 1 - 8

4.(a). The first verse of this chapter seems to act as a link between the two chapters.

What do you think it means?

(b). The Transfiguration occurs six days after Jesus' statement in v1.

What connection do you see

between this event and Jesus' promise?

Can Exodus 24:15-18 help our understanding of this event?

(c). Why do you think Jesus went up the mountain?

Why did he take only three of his disciples?

(d). What is the significance of the presence of Elijah and Moses with Jesus on the mount?

(e). What do you make of Peter's reaction?

(f). In this account, God's voice is heard for a second time in Mark's Gospel, the first being in 1:11.

What purposes are accomplished by God's affirmation?

(g). The statement: "Listen to him!" probably alludes to Deut.18:15-22. What did it mean then?

What might it mean for us today?

How can we more clearly listen out for Jesus' voice?



**NB** Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven (2 Kings 2:11). Later rabbinic interpretations combined the reference to Moses' death, "no one knows ... his grave" (Deut. 34:6), with the passage "and [he] was there with the LORD" (Ex. 34:28) to conclude that Moses was taken to heaven without death, like Enoch and Elijah. This may have been a popular belief in Jesus' time. Their translation to heaven meant that they were believed able to return to earth. What does their presence signify?

(1) Both were faithful servants who suffered because of their obedience, were rejected by the people of God, and were vindicated by God. The same thing will happen to Jesus.