

## Mark 8:22-30

### “The Hinge”

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#### I. **Introduction**

Having left the section on Jesus warnings against seeking a sign and how such things can dull our comprehension towards seeing our Lord, we come to a perfect illustration of this in the strange miracle of the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida. **Again there is a link in this illustration as it relates to the three events that follow it it:**

- **Peter’s confession**
- **Jesus’ words on His death and resurrection**
- And finally as we move into the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter, **Jesus’ transfiguration**

Mark sets this link in place with simple geographical tags when he writes: “*Then He came to **Bethsaida**” and follows that with verse 27, “*Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of **Caesarea Philippi**”’. Then finally in chapter 9 verse 2 we read, “*...Jesus took Peter, James and John, and led them up on **a high mountain** apart by themselves; and was transfigured before them”’. These geographical tags are like bread crumbs on a trail, if we follow the locations on a map we see clearly that from the first bread crumb to the last Jesus was leading His disciples to mount Hermon where He was transfigured. **Mark wants his readers to understand that this was an orchestrated march and that the events along the way were meant to prepare them to see Jesus as He truly is.** This section fits right next to the warning of not looking for validating Jesus***

in supernatural signs but rather looking to the continual signs that He places along our roads in life. Eight months earlier in chapter 4 verse 41 Jesus was with his frightened disciples as they were astonished at Jesus calming the wind and the waves. There they questioned, “*Who can this be, that even the wind and sea obey Him!*” I suggest to you that the last 8 months of their lives had been about answering that very question. This fact can be seen as we note the similarities to the disciples question of, “*Who can this be*” with Jesus’ question in chapter 8 verse 29 of “*But who do you say that I am?*” This unveiling is what John would say in his gospel in the first chapter verse 14 was the event in which “*we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*” We are going to take these two stories found in verse 22-30 of the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mark together as that is how I believe Jesus meant them to be viewed and why Mark writes them the way he does.

## II. Vs. 22-23 Bread crumbs

Vs. 22 We are now prepared for this strange miracle that happened at our first location on the map, Bethsaida. First, we have the timing of this event is in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter which just so happens to be the mid point of this gospel and the turning point in Mark’s narrative as Mark’s view of Jesus begins to take a new direction. That would make this section of the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida for all practical purposes the “*hinge*” of the gospel. And as we begin to examine this “*hinge*” we have the most peculiar of all of Jesus’ recorded miracles. I suppose to call any miracle which by nature is peculiar the “*most peculiar*” is odd. By way of explanation I offer three points as to why I find that it stands out among all the miracles.

1. First, it is unique as it is only recorded by Mark. As already noted Mark was not an eyewitness of this event but as Peter’s disciple received most of the contents of this

gospel directly from him. Thus as the Holy Spirit directed Peter and Mark recorded it for his Roman readers it only found print in this gospel. That ought to cause us to ask the question, why? ***What is it about this miracle as it relates to the gentile Roman reader that makes it essential for their comprehension of who Jesus is?***

2. Second, it is unique in that it is the only recorded miracle that is a ***process*** and ***not an instantaneous completion***. There is a sense in which no two miracles were alike and the fact that this one is not like the others is not what causes it to be unique. Jesus did miracles in accordance to what the situation demanded and this one stands out not because of that but rather that ***it took a process to complete it*** and no other miracle has that element in it. Again this ought to cause us to ask the question of “*Why is this miracle a **PROCESS**, and what does that have to do with the events of this journey to the mount of transfiguration?*”
3. The third and final reason that this miracle is unique is in the prohibition that Jesus tells the now healed blind man from Bethsaida. Prohibitions from Jesus are not entirely unique as we see them a few times but with the other two things it adds to making this miracle stand out among all others. This also ought to cause us to ask the question as to, “*Why did Jesus prohibit this man from not only telling anyone but from even going into the town?*” Again this relates to the journey Jesus has His disciples on.

Vs. 23 We have seen the method of spit being used in the healing of the deaf and mute gentile man at the end of chapter 7 and though it seems to be unhygienic as a treatment remedy it is interesting to note that most people if they cut or burn their finger immediately put it into their mouth to soothe it. The healing of the blind man in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of John’s gospel also records the use of Jesus’ spit this time it was mixed with dirt making mud in which Jesus anointed the mans eyes before telling him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. Although the method of using spit isn’t unique in light of this miracle I can’t help but wonder if it wasn’t meant as a sort of parable in action. I suggest to you that, ***spit is like words as both come from the mouth*** (*and in my case sometimes comes out as words are spoken*). As such this action was meant to convey that ***the work was being accomplished through the agency of the Word of God***. I believe that this view is supported in the text by what follows this healing as Jesus asks His disciples after they had moved on to Caesarea Philippi “*Who do you say that I am?*” And although neither

Mark's or Luke's account records this statement Matthew's does as Jesus follows up on Peter's confession of "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" with, "*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*" In other words, Jesus was telling Peter and the other's that this revelation as to the true identity of "*Who Jesus is*" was *not something that was attainable* through *natural observations* and *detailed analysis*. Instead they could have only come to this conclusion as a direct revelation through the teaching of the Word of God, which Jesus had been actively working into their lives. It is my opinion that the method of spitting in the eyes of the blind man from Bethsaida had more to do with Jesus' disciples than as a necessity in the healing of the blind man.

This takes us into the vital question as to, "*Why was this miracle done in a two stage process?*" There have been some commentators who in light of the fact that in every other miracle the healing was instantaneous, suggests that this two-stage process was either:

- *A weakening in Jesus' powers*
- *Or that by this stage in His ministry the opposition had become so intense as to limit His ability*
- *Or perhaps this case of blindness so difficult that it required two stages*

I personally find *none of these explanations satisfactory* as they are not consistent to *who Jesus is*. Having eliminated those explanations, I can only come to the reason for this two stage process being employed by Jesus as *a deliberate act done not for the benefit of the blind man from Bethsaida but rather for His disciples*. Healing this man in this manner offered nothing that I can determine for the blind man but it did serve as a personal illustration for His disciples. They were like this blind man in their development as to the comprehension of the true identity of Jesus. Their blindness would be healed in a

two stage process: The first part of which enabled them to view Jesus partially, seen in the man from Bethsaida seeing only “*Men like trees walking*” which indicates that **their vision was true but not clear** which is why we have the 2<sup>nd</sup> touch by Jesus on his eyes and their vision of Him would be completely restored as they would see “*everyone clearly*”.

### III. Vs. 24-25, 27-29 Two stage process

Vs. 24-25, 27-29 I can't help but notice that as Jesus employed a two stage process in healing the blind man from Bethsaida so too did He ask two questions of His disciples at Caesarea Philippi:

1. The first question was “*Who do men say that I am?*”: The disciples answer reveals that the view of the people was that they held Him in very high regard. They came up with three possibilities that demonstrated this:

- **John the Baptist**: *This reveals that the people saw Jesus as pure in character*
- **Elijah**: *This reveals that the people recognized Jesus as having the power of God*
- **One of the Prophets**: *This reveals that the people saw Jesus was proclaiming the truth*

Through out Jesus' ministry amongst the people they could see “*men like trees, walking*”. They weren't completely blind they thought perhaps that He was John the Baptist come back to life, maybe Elijah or one of the other prophets. The people weren't speaking of “*reincarnation*” they had no such superstition. No they saw the similarities in His ministry to those that had gone before Him and thought of Him as a “*reappearance*” in type of ministry. In the people's estimation Jesus was not the messiah He was speaking about the messiah paving the way. These people knew their bibles and they knew that the Old Testament was full of men who spoke of the coming One and they purposed that Jesus was another man “*like trees, walking around doing just as those had before Him.*”

2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> question was “*But who do you say that I am?*”: This is a 2<sup>nd</sup> touch question as this was the disciples own view of Jesus. The populace held Jesus in very high regard but there was not one time that they had the slightest inkling that He was indeed the Messiah. So when Peter answered “*You are the Christ*” he became the first to utter the truth. His words were immediate and definite albeit based upon Jesus' response in Matthew's account he didn't fully comprehend just what he had said. Christ is the Greek form of the Hebrew word, Messiah and it means the same. It's not

a name, it is a title speaking of the office Jesus holds as it means the “*anointed one*”. In the Old Testament there were only two offices where a person would be anointed “*King and High Priest*” and Jesus is the only one that was both. The Holy Spirit had clearly spoken to them that Jesus was far more than John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets. *He was the One who all others had been looking for and all the scriptures had been point too.*

#### IV. Vs. 26, 30 Prohibition

Vs. 26, 30 This leaves only the two prohibitions both to this man and the disciples after they had given the correct answer. First note that Jesus told this man to go back to his house and to neither go to Bethsaida nor tell anyone there about his healing. Jesus had done many miracles in Bethsaida none of which do we have this injunction. I believe as Jesus didn't want the man to even go into the city suggests a greater concern than just asking the man to not say anything. There are multiple times in the Bible where the healed person was told to not say anything and went ahead and did so anyways. This tells me that Jesus didn't want even the possibility of this happening so he sends him back to his house and orders him not to go into the city. Jesus didn't want this particular miracle to be a distraction and get in way of the larger illustration to the disciples to which it was intended to be a demonstration of. Notice that after Peter's confession Jesus “*strictly warns*” them that they should tell no one. You would think that Jesus would have them shout it from the roof tops. Instead He tells them to remain silent which again goes back to the two stage process in healing the blind man.

1. The first touch opened their eyes to a part of the truth, they saw Him enough to make a confession of the truth, seeing Him as a tree walking, but they had not yet seen Him clearly in His glory which will be.
2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> touch which Jesus will speak of in detail in verse 31-38 before they see Him in His glorified state on the mount of transfiguration. So when will the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage be completed for these disciples? Well at the cross and

resurrection that is when their eyes will be completely open. That is why speaking of this confession now though true wasn't one they could clearly see.

I conclude with the realization that there are many today, that are wondering around that are either blind or are able to communicate a true vision just not a clear one. In either case what is needed is a touch from Jesus. It is my sincere earnest prayer that they will be opened to just such a touch. I also notice that the key to clear spiritual vision of Christ has to do with comprehending His sacrifice. Simply put we will neither appreciate or comprehend Jesus' glory if we can not come to personal terms with the reason for His sacrifice!