

What to Expect [Mark 8]
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INTRODUCTION

1. Earlier this year, there was a movie released called, *What to Expect when you're Expecting*.
 - a. The movie was named for a popular parenting book originally published in 1984.
 - b. The cover has changed [it's still ugly] but the book is just as popular.
 - c. It was one of *USA Today's* "25 Most Influential Books" of the past 25 years.
 - d. But it's also criticized for promoting paranoia & fear among pregnant women.
 - e. Yet it retained its popularity because people like to know about the unknown.
2. Our text in Mark this week is fascinating, as it is chalk full of expectations.
 - a. We're now looking at the final year of Jesus' ministry; the cross is near.
 - b. The way we view Jesus and how we follow him is sometime beyond expectations.

Verses 27-29

²⁷ Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" ²⁸ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah." ³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

**This small section of the text contains a wealth of background info we must know.*

1. ABOUT CAESAREA PHILIPPI

- a. They journeyed about 25 miles out their way [a 1700ft change in elevation]
 - 1) It was a 10-11 hour walk from where they were, a considerable distance in this day.
- b. Caesarea was in northern Israel; on the current border with Syria, near the Golan Heights.
 - 1) Even in Jesus' day, this was not friendly territory—it was a Gentile area.
 - 2) It was populated because it was at the foot of Mt Hermon; source of water/springs.
- c. Enlarged by Herod Philip (4 BC–AD 34), renamed it Caesarea.
- d. The town was probably destroyed by an earthquake in 363 A.D.

2. ABOUT PAN

- a. The polytheistic paganism of the ancient world is somewhat foreign to us.
 - 1) The Hellenism of Alexander the Great exported gods throughout the region.
 - 2) Pan originated from Greece's Mount Lycaeum, among the shepherding people.
 - a) He was an ancient goat-man, uncivilized compared to newer gods.
 - b) Believed to be the lovechild of the Greek god Hermes and a nymph.
 - c) Mythology depicted him with a reed pipe (a pan flute).
 - 3) Understand this peculiar fact: Pan is a highly sexual god:
 - a) a god of fertility, unbridled male sexuality and carnal desire.
 - b) Almost a sexual predator, he chased nymphs through forests and mountains.
 - c) A statue has him pictured with a young teen, used for sexual purposes.
 - d) The noise of his carousing would throw people into PANic

3. ABOUT PAN WORSHIP IN CAESAREA PHILIPPI

- a. Caesarea Phillippi was the center of Pan worship in northern Israel.
 - 1) The original name of the town was Banias (derivative of PANias)
 - 2) In pictures, you can see the rocky mountain slope, making it a water source.
 - a) In the ancient world, they would build religious centers around such places.
 - b) A spring flowed from the bottom of the cliff at the mouth of a cave.
 - c) This was an incredibly fertile stream where you could get fresh water.
 - 3) Look at this artist's rendition (based on archaeology) of what area looked like.

- a) The focal point was the cave, believed to be a gate to the underworld.
 - 1) The ancients saw water as a symbol of the underworld.
 - 2) They believed their gods traveled to and from that world through caves.
- b) Pagans believed that fertility gods lived in the underworld during the winter.
- c) Each spring they needed to be enticed in order to return.
- 4) To bring Pan back each year, the people of Caesarea engaged in “worship.”
 - a) It featured absolutely horrible deeds: temple prostitution and bestiality
 - b) Here’s an X-rated statue depicting Pan raping a goat.
 - c) To the right of the map, archeologists found massive collections of goat bones.

4. ABOUT THE BIBLE STUDY

- a. Now was this location really necessary for Jesus to take his young disciples?
 - 1) A parallel Bible text implies a higher vantage point for Jesus and his disciples.
 - 2) So standing above this disturbing scene of worship, Jesus busts out a question:

b. **Who do people say am I?**

- 1) If you’ve been reading Mark, it’s odd that the disciples still seem confused.
- 2) Not just the disciples were talking about this topic. Earlier in **Mark 6:14-16**

¹⁴ King Herod heard about this, for Jesus’ name had become well known. Some were saying,^[b] “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.” ¹⁵ Others said, “He is Elijah.” And still others claimed, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.” ¹⁶ But when Herod heard this, he said, “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!”

- 3) They came to the same answers as here: John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets

c. But Jesus poses a follow-up question: who do YOU think I am?

- 1) They’re His disciples. They live with Him. They watch his every move.
- 2) Here, Peter is quickest to respond: You are the Messiah. The anointed One.
 - 1) This is where the WHERE comes back into play.
 - 2) He brought them to Caesarea Philippi in order to bring out Peter’s declaration.
 - a) In a city named after an emperor and king, Jesus was superior to all.

d. An interesting aside of this narrative that is found in Matthew’s account:

1) **Matthew 16:18,19**

¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

- 2) A few things: Peter named after Rock, they were on a rock.
- 3) Remember the cave of the water? The Caesarea had another name: GATES OF HELL
 - a) So the take away: Jesus would reign also over places like Caesarea.
 - b) The kingdom over which Jesus reigned would never be overcome by this.
 - c) The church would be set up even in most “Godforsaken” places.
 - d) Jesus is King over all the things, even kings, even sin, even hell.

Verses 31-33

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

- 1. This is the first of the three Passion Predictions in the book of Mark
 - a. These are incidents when Jesus actually predicts his pending death.
 - b. In many of his interactions, Jesus is cryptic. Here he speaks “plainly.”
 - c. Jesus had come to earth to die.
 - d. As Jesus tells them what to expect, it isn’t received well.
- 2. In his response here, Peter’s declaration of faith is deconstructed.

- a. While Peter knew Jesus' position (Messiah), he did not comprehend Jesus' ROLE.
 - b. In light of Caesarea, Peter assumed Jesus would clear out the pagans from the land.
 - c. In response, Peter rebukes Jesus. He tells him that he has no idea.
3. **Peter's expectations** of Jesus as a conquering king were misguided. Jesus calls him out.
- a. In case you're confused, being called Satan is not a complement.
 - b. Recall Jesus tempted by Satan in the wilderness, from **Mark 1:12,13**
"At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan."
 - c. Satan was trying to get Jesus away from his mission toward the cross.
 - d. In essence, Peter here does the exact same thing.
4. **The are only two choices: either follow Jesus or oppose him.**
- a. When you choose to follow, you don't get to thrust expectations upon him.
 - b. Among the promises of God, physical blessings are not guaranteed.
 - c. Peter's anger was rooted in unrealized expectations of his own creation.

Verses 34-37

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"

- 1. I believe this to be one of the most overlooked texts in the New Testament.
 - a. American Christianity would be remarkably different if we lived according to this.
 - 1) Outlined here is the cost of following Jesus.
 - 2) **Followers of Jesus are expected to choose self-denial.**
 - a) A popular saying for when something happens: "my cross to bear."
 - b) When stated like this, it actually defies what the gospels describe.
 - c) The cross was an instrument of death with an added insult: you carry it.
 - d) When you follow Jesus, you choose death. You decide to bear the cross.
 - e) Baptist theologian Frank Stagg: *"To take up one's cross for the gospel is to tread a lonely road and to bear men's hatred."*
 - 3) The universal principle is displayed here: life comes through death.
 - a) In nature, death begets life. It's not what we expect, so we act defensively.
 - b) Friends, while life is valuable, eternal life makes it incomparable.
 - 4) As followers of Jesus, we need to think long term:
 - a) Gains & losses aren't measured in short term but in an eternal context.

CONCLUSION

- 1. Because there's so much in these texts, we skipped over a healing story just before this.
 - a. There are many healing stories, but the one preceding it actually carries thru. **Mark 8:25**
"Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly."
- 2. If we take this text in these three sections, the scene plays out unexpectedly.
 - a. First, Jesus takes his disciples out of the way for an object lesson.
 - b. In Caesarea, w/pagan worship, there's no condemnation of what happens there.
 - c. It's in this "dark" place that he chooses to have them affirm his anointment.
 - d. When Jesus finally gets tough, but it's with those closest to Him.
 - e. This is insane. But then, perhaps this illustrates the Christian life.
- 3. **YOU MUST REALIZE: LIFE WILL NEVER DELIVER WHAT YOU EXPECT.**
 - a. Our plans and perceptions are many times thrust upon God like Peter's opinion.
 - b. Truly submitting to the Anointed One is trusting for better or for worse.

4. In your Christian life, you will do things you don't expect:
 - a. You will dwell among sin that absolutely disgusts you.
 - b. You will mess up, even when you're trying to excel.
 - c. You will fearlessly live for God when others abuse you.
 - d. You will embrace death in the name of life.
5. But in the midst of unexpected life: he is King of Kings.
 - a. He died, so that you may live.