

A Teachings in two phases:

❖ Basic instruction. Mark 8:22-30.

- In the first phase, man is able to see blurred. In the second phase, finally see clearly.
- This miracle serves as a parable of the way in which Jesus was going to instruct his disciples, preparing them to grasp as best as possible the reality of His saving mission.
- In the first phase, the disciples had come to the conclusion that Jesus was the Christ. To secure that truth in their minds, Jesus led them to declare it by asking them an indirect question and a direct question (Mark 8:27-29).
- But they were to remain silent regarding this statement, for they had not yet understood its full implications (Mark 8:30).

❖ Full knowledge. Mark 8:31-38.

- In the second phase of his teaching, Jesus' words were very clear: rejection, death and resurrection (Mark 8:31-32a). But something exploded in Peter's head (Mk. 8:32b; Mt. 16:22).
- Unknowingly, Peter was using the same tactic that Satan used in the wilderness (Mt. 4:8-9; Mark 8:33). The easy path led Jesus to an earthly kingdom; the difficult one, led him to achieve salvation on our behalf.
- And that was not all. His followers had to be willing to tread the same path: take up the cross, and live or die for the precious gift of salvation, helping others achieve it (Mark 8:34-38).

B Teachings about the Kingdom:

❖ The future and present Kingdom. Mark 9:1-13.

- Peter, James and John were not fully aware that they were glimpsing on the mountain the Kingdom of glory, a miniature representation of the Second Coming of Jesus. What they were clear about was that they wanted to stay there (Mark 9:5-6). But at that moment they did not perceive the true meaning of the words that Moses and Elijah spoke to Jesus.
- So that the dead in Christ – represented by Moses – and the living faithful of the last generation – represented by Elijah – could enter glory, Jesus had to die in Jerusalem (Luke 9:30-31).
- Upon descending from the mountain, the present state of the Kingdom became evident. The lack of faith endangered its very structure. The apostles lacked faith, and a desperate father had lost confidence (Mark 9:14-22).
- With faith everything is possible. But, if you lack faith, cry out like that father: “I believe; help my unbelief” (Mark 9:24).

❖ The largest in the Kingdom. Mark 9:30-41.

- Jesus begins his way down to Jerusalem from Caesarea, stopping at Capernaum . He takes advantage of this period to instruct and prepare his disciples (Mark 9:30-33).
- But they, far from understanding what Jesus wanted to teach them, disputed who would be the greatest when Jesus proclaimed himself king in Jerusalem (Mark 9:34).
- To try to explain to them who was the greatest in the kingdom, he gave them two teachings:
 - (1) First teaching (Mark 9:35-37): Taking a child, he staged greatness in the Kingdom: the first are the last; the greatest is the servant; The smallest and humbler must be treated as if he were Jesus himself.
 - (2) Second teaching (Mark 9:38-41): Everyone has their part to do, and no one should be rejected when doing God's work, no matter how small it may be.

❖ How to enter the Kingdom. Mark 9:42-50.

- Tie a huge stone around your neck and throw yourself into the sea; cutting off a hand, a foot, or gouging out an eye. Strange ways to save yourself, right? (Mark 9:42-48).
- If we take these words literally – as many do with the phrase “the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44, 46, 48) –, we have to reach the following conclusions:
 - (1) The redeemed will live eternally with a mutilated body.
 - (2) The wicked will suffer eternally, but at least their body will be whole.
- The lesson from this exaggeration is obvious: sin is so terrible that you must flee from it immediately.
- Abandoning sin is hard and costs sacrifice, but the result is worth it and gives us peace (Mark 9:49-50).