

# APPLYING METHODS (Session Two)

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# Exploring Two Texts

- **General Narrative**
  - Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative
- **A Miracle Story**
  - Matthew 8:5-13 – discerning the Galilean, first-century context.

# General Narrative

## Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative

1. Use an ordered set of questions to guide your work of interpretation.
  - a. It keeps you focused and ensures that you do not omit a critical stage in the exegetical process.
  - b. You develop a disciplined approach to your work and you know where to start and when you are finished.
  - c. You also accumulate over time a deeper knowledge and appreciation of this part of God's word.
2. Keep notes of each exegetical exploration.
  - a. Logos has an application that makes this very easy.
  - b. You will develop over time ideas on each passage that will enrich your understanding of other passages and the entire canon.

# General Narrative

## Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative

**Question 1: What is the text-segment that we are dealing with and why?**

**In this case we have selected Mark 8:27-9:1. What reasons might be proposed for selecting this part of Mark's narrative as our text-segment for study and preaching?**

- **8:27 – change of geography.**
- **In v. 26 we have the conclusion of the previous miracle story.**
- **Jesus focuses his attention about his “disciples” rather than the crowd in general (v. 27). In v. 34 Jesus addresses the “crowd,” which continues until 9:1.**
- **9:1 contains an “amen” saying which often concludes a narrative segment as a concluding ascertain.**
- **At 9:2 we have a time indicator and a geographical change, as well as a shift from the crowd and the twelve to three of the disciples.**

# General Narrative

## Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative

**Question 2: What gives this text-segment coherence which deserves and encourages a unified exegetical approach:**

Jesus discourses with the disciples about his identity and mission (vv. 27-33) and then segues into a discussion about the nature of discipleship for followers of the Messiah (vv. 34- 9:1).

We have part one – Jesus as Messiah, and part two – the disciples as followers of this Messiah.

Jesus prophesies what will be his course as Messiah and also what the journey of his followers will entail, because he is Messiah.

These messages of realism are then concluded by the revelation of Jesus' deity in the Transfiguration, at least in Mark's telling of the story.

# General Narrative

## Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative

**Question 3: What is the text which Mark wrote in this section of his narrative?**

**Here we engage what is called “textual criticism.”**

- **There are not too many significant variants in this section of Mark.**
- **Consider v. 34 – did Mark write “wish to come after me” or “wish to follow after me”? Not a great difference, but it should be noted. Matthew and Luke read “come.”**
- **Fortunately the other variants in these verses do not materially affect the meaning. So we have stable text (not like Mark 1:4 or 1:41).**

# General Narrative

## Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative

**Question 4:** How does this segment fit into the larger narrative of Mark?

- We want to discern why Mark has included this segment in his narrative and why has he placed it here in the account (in addition to reasons of historical authenticity)?
- We note:
  - This story is midpoint in the narrative.
  - It follows a very stern interchange between Jesus and the Twelve (8:14-20 where he warns them about hard-heartedness and the need to see and hear with spiritual perception).
  - It begins a series of prophecies by Jesus about how his mission will end. The Son of Man will be rejected, will suffer, die and rise again.
  - It precedes the second declaration from God that Jesus is his son and that the disciples must listen to him (Transfiguration).
  - It begins a series of teaching sessions about the nature of discipleship.
  - Jesus moves from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem (chapters 8-10) – he is “on the way”

# General Narrative

## Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative

**Question 5: What does the literary structure, along with the literary details and language of this segment reveal about Mark's purpose and message?**

### **1. Literary Structure**

- scene of dialogue and disclosure – theme of comprehension vv. 27-30
- scene of revelation and confrontation – lack of comprehension vv. 31-33
- specific teaching about discipleship using a series of rhetorical questions vv. 34-38, ending with a statement of implication and consequence

**2. Literary Details – note Jesus' use of questions as a teaching method; his use of prophecy; the authoritative affirmation in the concluding "amen" statement; the use of the term "rebuke" in vv. 32 – 33. Note the role of Peter.**

**3. Mark's Language here – Messiah (29), Son of Man (31, 38), denying (34), shame (38), kingdom of God has come in power (9:1).**

# General Narrative

## Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative

**Question 6: What historical/social factors must we understand in order to interpret this passage?**

**We have to remember that there is the social context of Jesus, the social context of the author and the social context of his intended audience. Each shapes the narrative segment in some way.**

**1. The social context of Jesus – why does Jesus ask this question of his disciples at this point in his mission and at Caesarea Philippi? What does Jesus understand by the term ‘Messiah’? How does this revelation fit with the revelation that comes at the Mount of Transfiguration? Jesus seems to be pressing his authority. Why? What does Jesus expect from his followers? How would they perceive these requirements? What are they perceiving about Jesus’ identity as Messiah? Why does Jesus keep referring to himself as “the Son of Man”?**

## General Narrative

### Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative

**2. The Social Context of the writer – when is this narrative being written? What are the major historical forces at work in his context and time? How does this text reflect these historical realities? What would the proclamation of Jesus as Messiah mean in that historical setting? What is the writer’s relationship to the historical Jesus and the events that he is narrating? How does he express his particular understanding of what they meant by the way he tells the story? For example Matthew does not have the saying about “shame” at this point (Mark 8:38; Matt. 16: 26). Luke does not have exchange with Peter (Mark 8:32-33; Luke 9:22). Matthew adds a significant piece about Peter’s role in the Messiah’s assembly (Matt. 16:17-19). So what does this tell us about Mark’s message?**

# General Narrative

## Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative

### 3. The social context of Mark's intended audience (first century) –

All that we know about Mark's audience comes from inferences derived from the text itself.

If Mark's narrative is written sometime in the 60's of the first century, he could be writing to a non-Jewish Christian or non-Christian audience or a Jewish Christian or non-Christian audience, or an audience that included some or all of the above.

Discerning the key question that Mark is addressing in his narrative may give us some direction.

If they are believers (whether Jewish or non-Jewish), relating the person and mission of Jesus to the tragic political and religious events involved in the Jewish-Roman War 66 – 72 AD and the destruction of Jerusalem might be key. How does this fulfill God's covenant promises?

If they are non-believers (whether Jewish or non-Jewish) then he might be addressing the question how such a person as Jesus could indeed be Messiah and what this means for people living in the first century, i.e., what is God doing in the world and how does this relate to Israelite history and sacred text.

# General Narrative

## Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative

**Question 7: What is the writer talking about in this section?**

**We need to separate two things – what Jesus said and did historically and what the writer is seeking to say through his narrative of what Jesus said and did. These two things, while different, are not necessarily dissimilar.**

**1. What was Jesus saying and doing and what message was he intending to communicate to the various characters in the story – and why, i.e., Jesus' theology and its significance for his audience.**

**2. What message was Mark communicating to his audience through his narrative about Jesus, i.e., Mark's theology and its significance for his audience.**

# General Narrative

## Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative

**1. What was Jesus saying and doing and what message was he intending to communicate to the various characters in the story – and why, i.e., i.e., Jesus' theology and its significance for his audience.**

- Jesus' acceptance of the designation "Messiah" (v. 29) and its connection with the title "The Son of Man." What does the category of "prophet" mean and why is it inadequate? What Jewish ideas about "Messiah" is Jesus affirming and rejecting?
- Jesus' role as teacher (v. 31). Link with role of Messiah and the nature of his authority (cf. 9:7). What is the significance of the term "plainly" in v. 32?
- Why does Jesus identify Peter with "Satan"? Who is this figure and why does he oppose Jesus? What has this do with Jesus' kingdom message?
- Why does Jesus address "the crowd with his disciples" about discipleship in vv. 34 – 9:1? Are people in the crowd believers? What does Jesus teach them about discipleship and why does he want them to know these things?
- What is Jesus' key message about discipleship in this section? How does it relate to the confession of the disciples and Jesus' prophecy (v.31)?

# General Narrative

## Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative

2. What message was Mark communicating to his audience through his narrative about Jesus, i.e., Mark's theology and its significance for his audience.

- Why does he place this segment at the centre of his narrative? What does this say about its importance?
- Note the various witnesses to Jesus – the disciples, Peter, God. How would an audience respond to these witnesses?
- Would they understand these terms “messiah” and “son of man”? How does Mark provide understanding?
- As his audience reflected on the information in this section of his narrative (8:27-9:1), what did he want them understand about Jesus and their response to him?
- What would life as a follower of Jesus be like?
- Why does he introduce the theme of shame in v. 38?
- Why does he compare discipleship to commercial profit and loss?
- Mark sets Jesus as the most important figure in anyone's life – with eternal implications.
- What is this “kingdom” that is mentioned in 9:1? What happens when it comes?

# General Narrative

## Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative

**Question 8: What is the significance of Jesus' actions and teaching and Mark's presentation of them for 21<sup>st</sup> century Canadians? What are the questions and what are the answers?**

- What is the most important decision in a human's life?
- What does Jesus' view of human history and society mean for humans today? Can we adopt his "worldview"?
- Can "discipleship" as defined by Jesus be the organizing principle and key purpose for human life?
- What forces are at work in human life and culture to prevent people from responding to Jesus as God intends?
- Given the metaphors about discipleship that Jesus uses in vv. 34-38, what kind of life should a follower of Jesus expect in this age, but also in the coming age? What is this "kingdom" referred to in 9:1? Can I be a Christian and Canadian at the same time?

# General Narrative

## Mark 8:27-9:1 – discerning the bigger context of the narrative

**Question 9: developing my outline and my presentation.**

**What is the key issue that connects my audience with this passage? How do I present the primary ideas from this passage related to this key issue in such a way that my audience is encouraged and motivated to embrace Jesus' response to this issue and experience spiritual transformation?**

- **What decision do I want people in my audience to make as a result of my sermon on this passage?**
- **What can people learn about God and Jesus' relationship with God from this segment?**
- **Given the eschatological nature of this segment, what does it reveal about the "place" of human culture, its transience, the goal of history, etc.?**
- **If suffering as a follower of Jesus is such a big part of discipleship, what does this look like in 21<sup>st</sup> century Canada? Who or what generates opposition?**

# A Miracle Story

## Matthew 8:5-13 – discerning the Galilean, first century context.

Within the gospel narratives we have to be aware of Jewish and Greco-Roman realities. This miracle story is a good example of how these elements intertwine in first century Galilee and affect how we understand a story.

- It is considered that Matthew shapes his narrative for a Jewish/Jewish-Christian audience primarily.
- Matthew 8:5-13 is the first explicit miracle story in Matthew (cf. 4:24-25). Discourse sections alternate with activity sections in Matthew's Gospel. This story introduces an activity section (chapters 8-19) which lies between two discourse segments (5-7 and 10).
- The primary character in the story, in addition to Jesus, is a "centurion," a military officer living in the vicinity of Capernaum. What do we need to know about military installations in Galilee? Would this person belong to Roman military or could he be part of Herod Antipas' military forces?
- Does Jesus' evaluation of this man's request in v. 10 mean that he is a non-Jewish person? What the man's concern about Jesus entering his house (8) contribute to resolving this question?

# A Miracle Story

## Matthew 8:5-13 – discerning the Galilean, first century context. [Parallel in Luke 7:1-10]

- What leads this man to ask Jesus to heal his servant (v.6)? Note how Jesus analyzes it as a response of “faith” (v. 10). What does “faith” mean here, prior to the cross and in application to a non-Jewish, Roman military officer? How does the centurion define his “faith” in vv. 8-9? What is the linkage with authority? What is Matthew saying about the nature of faith?
- What does this man’s request and understanding about Jesus’ authority tell us about Jesus’ identity? Is the man understanding Jesus as a military Messianic figure?
- Jesus uses this man as an example of many humans (vv. 11-12) who will respond to Jesus and his message throughout the world, in contrast to many in Israel who will not. How does this statement help us understand part of Matthew’s message about Jesus and his mission in Israel?
- What does it mean “to recline with the patriarchs in the kingdom of heaven” (v.11)? What is Jesus promising here? Who are the “sons of the kingdom” and why are they excluded (v.12)? What does this suggest about the composition of the “Messiah’s assembly”? This section is not in Luke’s account (see Luke 13:28-30).

# A Miracle Story

## Matthew 8:5-13 – discerning the Galilean, first century context.

- Some potential questions related to modern applications;
  - What is our working definition of a “miracle”?
  - Why are miracles such an intrinsic and central part of Jesus’ activity?
  - What should be our stance regarding miracles and their possible occurrence in our time?
  - Jesus did as the centurion asked and healed the servant without going to his house. What categories did people in the first century have in which to place Jesus, when he does things like this? Do we have any cultural categories today in which to place a person who does such things? How does this story challenge the dominance of science today as the foundation for truth?
  - Jesus assumes that there is existence after death and a person’s response to Jesus in some way defines what that existence will be (vv. 11-12). What does this mean for people today?

**Discussion**

**Questions**