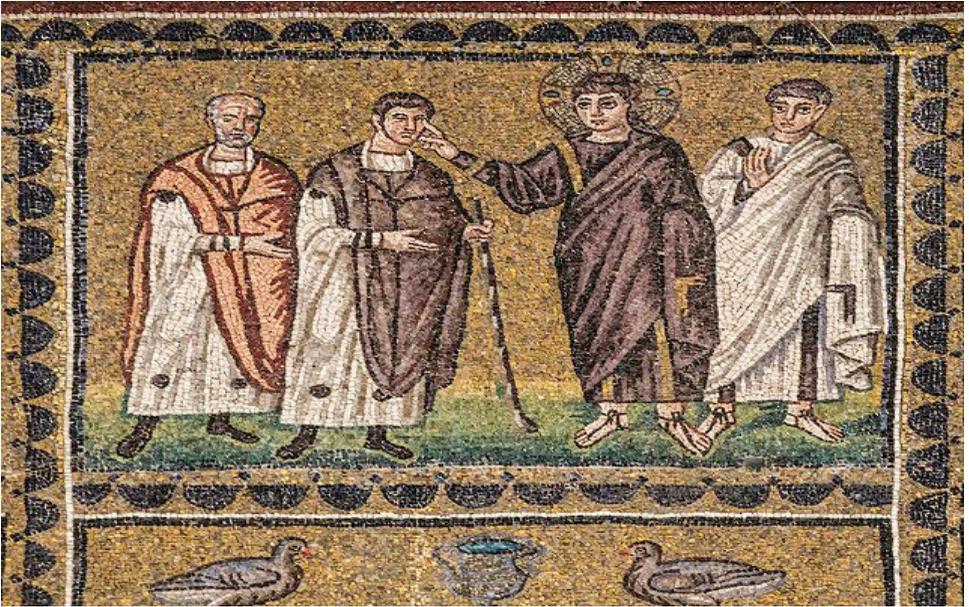


The Gospel of Mark

Session 2: The Messianic Secret

I. The Messianic Secret



Unknown artist, Christ heals the two blind men on the road to Jericho. Basilica di Santa Pollinare, Nuovo Ravenna, Italy 6th century

There are several occasions in Mark when Jesus imposes secrecy on his disciples.

For example, at Caesarea Philippi, and then after the Transfiguration. But in many other places as well.

The explanation of the Parable of the Sower (ch. 4) is only given to the disciples. To them has been given the “secret of the Kingdom of God”.

2. Why the Messianic Secret?

The command to secrecy seems to be theological rather than narratologically plausible. After all, there are often many witnesses to the miracles which he wants kept quiet (e.g. after raising of Jairus’ daughter at 5.43. On the other hand, there are other times when he is ‘identified’ but does not try and hide it, such as at his baptism, and then later before the High Priest at Mark 14.62.

It would seem that the main force of the secret is about who Jesus is.

Although the reader is told at the beginning in the Prologue, the characters in the story are shielded from the information. Why? Well, perhaps because knowing Jesus' real identity is reserved for those who believe. E.g. Caesarea Philippi. Perhaps Jesus only wanted the whole picture seen: so identification should wait until after the resurrection. In his ministry he was a teacher (and healer). In his death and resurrection he revealed the rest. Note the role of the centurion by the cross in being the gentile who identifies him.

3. Bible Study

Mark 7.31-37

The healing of a deaf man

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

- What does this passage tell us about the power of Jesus?
- Why did Jesus heal the man if he didn't want anyone to hear of it? The crowd's reaction was surely predictable?
- Do we hear much of healing by Jesus in our society/community? Do people talk/not talk about it?

Mark 8.27-33

Peter's Declaration about Jesus

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

The confession at Caesarea Philippi, this seems to be a pivotal moment in the Gospel.

- What do you think Peter feels in this encounter?
- Is the teaching which Jesus gives related to the messianic secret?
- Have we made a public confession of Jesus? What has been the reaction?