

VOC – August 2015: In the gospel according to Mark we also address this question:

4. Do you believe in Jesus?

Dear Listeners,

As we continue our journey through the gospel according to Mark, today we enter upon the 2nd part of Mark. In it we can observe some serious changes. The Lord Jesus and His disciples are on their way to *Jerusalem*, and Jesus has told them about the things that are awaiting Him there. It didn't sound too good! The message had been *unsettling* to the disciples and the other followers. Yet, though they're worried about what's coming, in the meantime the disciples don't understand much of what's going on at all, but *they argue* about the place, the status, they will have in His *kingdom*. And so we read in chapter 10:32, "They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with *Jesus leading the way...*" Since chapter 8:27 they have been on their way to Jerusalem, from Caesarea Philippi via Capernaum, from Galilee to Judea, and they end up in Jericho (10:46). Yet, everyone who has *followed Jesus* (and we, who have journeyed with Him through Mark's account) sense that things are becoming tensed: they're heading for *trouble*, or so it seems, after the attacks by the leaders earlier!

In this 2nd part of Mark the Lord Jesus becomes much more outspoken about the *purpose* of His life; that is also the *purpose* of His journey to *Jerusalem*. In chapter 8:31 it says, "He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again." In chapter 9:31 He repeats the same message, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." That sounds a lot *different*, doesn't it, from the way He spoke at first and acted with power and majesty in all His words and works?! Then in 10: 33-34, He elaborates on it even more, showing how the leaders "will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise." So Jesus announced His own *death*, which makes it understandable that His *disciples* became anxious and confused! They'd seen so many miracles and powerful wonders, in nature, in healings, and in Him raising some from death, showing the power of God, and *now this?*

No wonder the people who hear this start to ask themselves, "*Why* does Jesus have to *die*? We thought He was going to establish the kingdom of God on earth? And is He now going to *leave them* in this terrible way?" They don't seem to catch, however, the special note in the message about His *resurrection*! Whatever, though, they're *confused*, because everything seems to turn out different from what they'd anticipated! They're heading for trouble, that's for sure! And why? The disciples were *astonished*, Mark writes, and His followers were *afraid*! They were confused in their *faith*! Was their faith good enough? That's the question, and we recognize that question, when we're confused when God is going a different way with our life than we anticipated! You see, dear listeners, then you have to see that *Jesus went ahead of*

them, Jesus leading the way. He doesn't depend on how great the disciples' faith is, for He knows He will have to *lead the way* and show them later on why it had to go this way. Jesus doesn't depend on our faith or on our understanding of His way! Jesus was leading the way to make their *faith stronger*, to open their eyes for His way *through suffering to glory!*

Jesus will be handed over to the *Gentiles!* God's *judgment* will be poured out over Him! That's why He has to go to Jerusalem; that's what He had come for! He had to suffer God's *wrath* for us and in our place, because *we* had sinned, *we* had rebelled against God, and *we* had earned the judgment of God over our life! That's why Jesus was *leading the way*, and He wanted His disciples to *follow Him* and eventually to accept this from Him! That's what *faith* is all about! That's why Jesus repeated this message every time. The first time He mentioned His death and resurrection, Peter strongly opposed Him, and Jesus rebuked him, "Get behind me, Satan! You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men!" That's when Jesus explained to His disciples that not only *He* would have to *suffer* but that *they too* had to take up their cross and follow Him! After His 2nd announcement the disciples, in ignorance, started to *argue* about who would be the first in His kingdom. That's when Jesus held up a child to them as an example of the *humbleness* His disciples should be showing if they wanted to be in His kingdom! After the 3rd announcement something similar happened and He said, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your *servant*, the *slave* of all!" Then He added, "For even the Son of Man did not come *to be served*, but *to serve*, and to give his life as a ransom for many!"

So this is what *faith* is all about, dear listeners, and this is the *attitude of faith* Jesus was instilling in His disciples and in us! His disciples need to *follow Him*, take up their *cross* and *suffer* for His sake. Jesus had been *leading* His disciples, not only on their way to *Jerusalem* but also on the way of *salvation* by faith in Him! That's *faith*, when you look up to Him, follow Him; with hesitation, perhaps, or anxious, unsure about the outcome of it, or happy, excited, surprised and encouraged. That's all possible very much; yet, that doesn't determine whether your faith is *good enough*. Faith is good enough when you *look to Him and trust in Him*, and when you *follow Him* in your life, to *live for Him!* He determines everything in your life when you know Him, know that He leads you, and that He knows what is best for you and what you need through Him: a *new life*, a *justified life*, and a life that's lived again *for God*, doing the will of our heavenly Father as Jesus did! Are *you* living that way, living for Jesus and anticipating His return, dear listener? Well, that will be our focal point next week! Stay tuned!

Thank you for listening