

Mark 9:30-10:31

THEME SENTENCE:

What matters is greatness in heaven; sinners like us can only be there if God gets us there.

This section is Jesus' second prediction of the cross (cf 8:31; 10:33). After each of them, his disciples show that they do not understand what he has come to do (namely, to save people for his next-worldly kingdom). It is Satanic (cf 8:33) to be taken up with 'the things of men', as they are.

Greatness ... and what really matters

9:30-35	Jesus will be the greatest in heaven	Jesus again makes time to teach his disciples, but Mark explicitly says that they just cannot 'understand' this talk of the cross. In 35, Jesus is really talking about himself (not about 'discipleship') and explaining why he will die. He talks about two different worlds: 'first' must mean first-in-heaven and 'last' must mean last-on-earth (similar to 8:35). Jesus' 'lastness' and servant-ing in this world is for the sake of his heavenly kingdom where he will be 'first'. The disciples' concern for their own greatness on earth is clear evidence that they completely misunderstand all that Jesus came to do. So neither do they understand that ...
9:36-42	greatness comes from belonging to Jesus	37, 41 and 42 are all about the same type of person, the disciple of Jesus. Consider the worth of someone who is a disciple of Jesus: whoever receives the most insignificant disciple, receives God himself (37) whoever does the most insignificant act for a disciple receives a certain reward (41) whoever causes even an insignificant disciple to sin would be better off dead (42).
9:43-49	greatness is useless if you end up in hell	Hell is so awful (44, 46, 48) that even mutilating our own bodies is preferable to going there. But Jesus has said already that sin comes from our hearts (7:21-23), and you can't cut that out! In other words, we all face the fire of judgement (49). This prospect for all is a problem beyond us (cf 9:14-29). What can be done?

Salvation ... and how it is obtained

10:17-31	I cannot save myself	No-one can 'inherit eternal life' (17) / 'enter the kingdom of God' (23) / 'be saved' (26) because no-one is good (18). The evidence for this is provided by an apparently good man: but even if he's kept the second half of the ten commandments (19-20), his unwillingness to let go of his wealth shows that he has a rival 'god', and that he has not kept even the first commandment (Exodus 20:3). It is impossible for this man to be saved (and so experience the greatness of heaven) unless God does what it is impossible for him/us to do for ourselves (27).
10:13-16	Salvation is for those who will 'receive' it	In contrast to all the rest of this section, Jesus explains here how salvation <u>is</u> obtained. It's not that heaven is for children (and not adults), nor for those who behave childish (!), nor for those who are innocent/humble. Heaven is for those who 'receive' it. First-century children had no rights, so they knew that anything they received was an undeserved gift.
10:1-12	OT law is not the solution to my sin	Clearly this passage teaches us something of Jesus' view of marriage etc: his answer to the question posed is in 6-9. But how does it fit into the section flowing from 9:33 to 10:31? Verses 3-5 are not really there to answer the question, but to tell us about the purpose of the law. The law does not forbid divorce (4), yet clearly (in 6-9) God does not intend there should be divorce. As 12 says, it is still sin. So a person can divorce legally, so be keeping the Law, and yet be sinning. In other words (5), the Law is not given <i>to stop someone from doing wrong</i> , but <i>because we do do wrong</i> and therefore are not right with God. This fits with the end of ch 9 (- the law agrees that we're all sinners and therefore hell-bound), and with what follows in ch 10 (- the law shows that no-one is good and therefore that salvation is something that must be done for us and which we must receive).