

In light of Jesus as the Messiah (as defined so far by Jesus, i.e., the Son of Man... {8:31; 9:31}), discipleship involves:

- 1st Cycle (8:31-9:29)
- Perspective: **humanity's** or **God's** (8:33)
 - Disciples must:
 - Re-orient away from **our** (selfish) ways
 - Take up our cross
 - Follow me [Jesus] (orient toward **Jesus**)
 - Discipleship is always within the context of communion with, and reliance on, God (9:29)
 - Kingdom of God & salvation depend on identification with the Son of Man [Jesus] (8:35-9:1)
- 2nd Cycle (9:30-10:31)
- **Ranking & personal greatness** (9:34)
 - **Servant of all (even of the last)** (9:35-37)
 - **Do** Serve (even the last, with apparently a trivial act) (9:41)
 - **Don't be a cause of sin** (even to the last) (9:42)
 - Remove all causes/sources of sin
 - Sin prevents entrance into the Kingdom of God/eternal life, i.e., hell
 - *Everyone* will be (lit. salted) tested (purified/preserved/refined) with fire (difficulties/trials/persecutions/costs), i.e., like sacrifices, disciples must be seasoned with salt—this will take place through fiery trials (tests) (cf. 1 Peter, esp. 4:12); disciples must allow the sacrifices inherent with following Jesus to purify their lives. In Paul's words: disciples are to be *living sacrifices* to God (cf. Rom 12).
 - **Must have the qualities of salt (qualities of a disciple as outlined by Jesus)**
 - & live in peace with each other. How?
 - Life defined by parameters of:
 - **what God permits (graciously & mercifully) because of sin, e.g., divorce**
 - **God's intention, e.g., marriage**
 - Eternal union effected by God → marriage as analogy of God & humanity (individually & corporately)
 - Kingdom of God/eternal life/heaven/salvation: entrance into
 - Requires it to be received like a child:
 - Without clout/merit/standing/ranking/worthiness/deservedness, i.e., the last, e.g., a child
 - Receive with trust/acceptance/empty handed/as a gift
 - **Impossible** for humanity (even the rich)
 - **Possible** (only) with God
 - ****follow me [Jesus]** (10:21, 29-30)
 - The state of existence and relationships within the Kingdom of God is (thankfully) upside-down relative to the state of existence and relationships within the kingdom¹ of man (10:31).

**Food for thought, assignment for the week (or beyond):

- 1) Recall Jesus' discussion with the Pharisees and scribes in Ch. 7:1-23; his discussion about divorce and marriage in Ch. 10:1-12; and his dialogue with the rich (young ruler) that we just looked at. Reflecting on these passages, contemplate and evaluate Jesus' answer: "*you know the commandments... There is still one thing you haven't done... Then come, follow me.*" to the man's initial question: "*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*"
- 2) Review 8:31-10:31, and note all that Mark has presented (explicitly & implicitly) about (1) Jesus, (2) discipleship, (3) the Kingdom of God, and (4) how they relate to each other. How does this section (8:31-10:31) compare to what Mark has already presented about these themes (Jesus, discipleship, and the Kingdom of God) thus far in the Gospel? How have they developed? If we are unfamiliar with the remainder of Mark [the Gospel], based upon what we have covered thus far, what can we anticipate, regarding these themes, for the remainder of the narrative? If we are familiar with Mark, how do these themes, as developed up to this point in the narrative, anticipate what is to come, and are there unexpected developments ahead?
- 3) If we are a disciple of Jesus the Messiah, in-light-of Mark 8:31-10:31—individually as disciples, how are we doing, where can we do better, and how can we do better?

¹ Kingdom=domain/realm of the king: **God** or **man**