

Men as Trees Walking
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There are stages of understanding. The mind must go through these for the sake of comprehension. Jesus performed a miracle that demonstrates this. There was a blind man brought to Jesus at Bethsaida, recorded in **Mark 8:22-26**. Jesus led the man out of town, spat on his eyes, and put His hands on him. Then He asked the man if he saw anything. The response – “*I see men as trees walking.*” Here we have sight, but with confused comprehension. Again, Jesus put His hands on the eyes of the blind man. The result was coherent vision. This gives us insight into the power of our Lord. Often, it has been pointed out that when Peter healed the lame man at the temple, the man was not only healed of his atrophied legs, but coordination was also restored. He leapt for joy. So too, we see the Lord gave sight to the blind, but also comprehension of what he saw. Unlike the atrophied man at the Beautiful Gate, Jesus broke it down with two demonstrations. There is a similar pattern for all as we learn about Jesus.

The very next event recorded in Mark demonstrates this pattern of development. Jesus asked the disciples what people were saying about Him. The people said He was John the Baptist, or Elijah, or one of the prophets. So, Jesus asked, “*But who do you say that I am?*” Peter answered, “*You are the Christ.*” They were “*strictly warned*” not to tell anyone about Him. The reason becomes apparent. His disciples saw Jesus like the blind man who was coming to sight. They had sight, but confused comprehension. The disciples were persuaded that Jesus was the Christ, but did not yet understand what He would accomplish. It was as if they were saying “... men as trees walking” when they saw Jesus as the Christ.

This in no way diminishes the disciples. They were men of faith. Jesus was their teacher. As such He guided them through a process of examples and verbal tutelage. No one could have been more right than Peter when he said, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*” (**John 6:68**). All who loved and followed Jesus shared in the same rightness. They were not deterred by things they did not understand. Because they needed instruction, they sometimes had to learn the hard way about a hard-to-comprehend truth.

Let us continue with the eighth chapter of Mark. Right after Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about Himself, He told them a difficult thing. Jesus spoke of His coming death at the hands of men and His resurrection. “*He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’*” (**Mk.8:32-33**) This was a little like Jesus putting His hands on the blind man’s eyes. Jesus’ harsh rebuke was to stimulate comprehension. This type of vision is much more profound than the sight of the eye. The process of understanding the Christ took more time and work. Thus, He repeated many times things about His death. Peter and the disciples had an impediment (remember, He was looking at His disciples when He rebuked Peter). It appears they saw Jesus as some kind of super David, a prophet who could bring fire down on the opposition, and who would raise Israel to the height of power as a conquering hero. And so He was, but not in the sense they had supposed.

It begs the question – Do we see men as trees walking? Is our comprehension of the Christ confused? It is blessed to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. However, it is fleshly nature to superimpose our values on Him. This is an easy thing to do. The remedy is to love Him more than ourselves. “. . . *If*

anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” (John 14:23) By so doing, the Father and Jesus become our teachers. Their word gives soundness to our understanding. Just as the disciples were corrected by Jesus, we too must be corrected. Our development depends on this, otherwise we fail. *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2Tim.3:16-17)*

The impediments to understanding are similar in our day as they were for the disciples. The big difference is that we are on the other side of the day of Pentecost. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been made known, and repentance has been commanded to “all people everywhere”. However, the biases we have are similar to those of the past. They tend to reflect our expectations of Christ toward people and the governing of people. We must empty ourselves of our cherished values in favor of God’s values. The problem in Jesus’ day is the same as today’s problem – the desire to subsume Jesus to our own point of view. True values will prevail. They can only come from what God has revealed. He knows how to correct and shape us.