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Mark and Matthew Caesarea Philippi Comparison

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Mark 8:27 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?” 28 And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” 29 He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” 30 And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

31 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. 32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 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.”

34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

9:1 And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.”

Mark 8:27 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?*" 28 And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." 29 He asked them, "*But who do you say that I am?*" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah."

30 And he *sternly ordered [lit. "rebuked"**] them not to tell anyone about him.

31 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.

32 *He said all this quite openly.*

And Peter took him aside and *began to rebuke* him.*

33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he *rebuked** Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan!

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Matthew 16:13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say *that the Son of Man is?*" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "*But who do you say that I am?*" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, *the Son of the living God.*" 17 *And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."* 20 Then he *sternly ordered [lit. "commanded"]* the disciples not to tell anyone *that he was the Messiah.*

21 *From that time on,* Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

22 And Peter took him aside and *began to rebuke* him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you."*

23 But he turned and *said to* Peter, "Get behind me, Satan!

You are a stumbling block to me;

for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For those who want to

<p>save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, <i>and for the sake of the gospel</i>, will save it. 36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <i>38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed</i> when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”</p> <p>9:1 And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that <i>the kingdom of God</i> has come with power.”</p>	<p>save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.</p> <p>26 For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?</p> <p>27 “For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, <i>and then he will repay everyone for what has been done.</i></p> <p>28 Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see <i>the Son of Man</i> coming in his kingdom.”</p>
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[Words in **red** indicate interesting differences between Matthew and Mark; in a few places I have used a **blue** font to highlight wording that is strikingly identical.

* Mark uses the sharp, stern verb, "to rebuke," three times, in Mark 8:30,32,33. "To rebuke" is standard vocabulary used in exorcism stories: demons are "rebuked" by the exorcist before being "cast out." Matthew retains only the second of the three uses of "rebuke" in Mark (Matthew 16:22). Matthew softens considerably the language he found in Mark.]

- In Mark, when Peter calls Jesus "Messiah," he does not understand what he is saying, because as soon as Jesus starts talking about suffering and death, Peter gets in Jesus' face and "rebukes" him. In fact, in Mark's version of the story, Jesus and Peter "rebuke" each other a total of three times. "Rebuke" is standard vocabulary from the practice of exorcism, which means that in Mark, Jesus and Peter are engaged in spiritual battle, exchanging verbal blows, back and forth. (Imagine Harry Potter wizards dueling, hurling magical spells at each other.)
- Matthew softens considerably the "rebuke" language he inherited from Mark, but he also inserts the gloriously positive words of Jesus to "The Rock" in Matt 16:17-19. Can you see how Matthew is rescuing Peter's reputation, which was tarnished in Mark? Doesn't Matthew's revision of Mark's passage forever change for the positive how we understand this episode?
- Both gospels agree in calling Peter "Satan." (Imagine: the First Bishop of Rome was Satan!) Would you agree that most of the sting of that identification in Mark has been removed by Matthew's glorious "You are The Rock!" moment? After all, in Matthew, before being called "Satan," Peter has already been praised for

receiving a divine revelation, he has given the nickname, "Rock," and he has been given the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

- If Matthew is trying hard to rescue Peter's reputation, do you see how it might also make sense for him to erase most of Mark 8:38? (Mark does not say so explicitly, but those words could easily be referring to Peter. What do you think about that possibility? Does it make sense to you or not?)

- Sometimes Matthew's embellishments change drastically what he has inherited from Mark. But sometimes his small insertions deftly clarify or make explicit what was only implied in Mark. For example, in Matt 16:22, Matthew tells us precisely what Peter said in response to Jesus' prediction of suffering and death: "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." That might have been what Mark wanted us imagine Peter saying. Or again, in Matt 16:23 Matthew keeps Mark's infamous "get behind me, Satan," but adds the helpful clarification, "you are a stumbling block to me." A stumbling block is an object that lies ahead in one's path, over which one is likely to stumble as one walks. By ordering Peter to "get behind me," Jesus is ordering him not to be 'in his face,' so to speak, but rather to go back and take a position behind him, where a disciple is supposed to be as he/she follows the teacher down the path. Teachers walk ahead, while pupils follow along behind. Peter has 'gotten out of line,' and is being sent back to the rear, where he belongs.

- Which portrayal of Simon Peter, Mark's or Matthew's, is closer to your own perception of Peter? Which version of Peter can you identify with more easily? Any chance you would prefer Matthew's portrayal over Mark's? Why?