

Mark 8 Progressive Revelation

Revelation is the idea that some information is told to you that was not previously known. Progressive means that it happens over time. So progressive revelation is where you know some truth, and later, you know more truth, and later still, even greater truth and clarity.

Progressive Revelation is the theological concept that God reveals Himself progressively. Progressive Revelation is a way of understanding the Bible as you notice how God unfolds His great plan for mankind's salvation and relationship to Himself in stages, over time.

Progressive Revelation of the Messiah is all throughout the Scriptures. In Mark 8, we can see three instances of progressive revelation at play.

First, we have Jesus revealing more and more of who He is to the world. He is the One to follow. In Mark 6, He performed a miracle of feeding the 5000 with a few fish and loaves, having 12 baskets leftover, revealing and symbolizing His power and sufficiency to all Israel. In Mark 8, here Jesus feeds the 4000 with 7 baskets left over, revealing and symbolizing that His power and sufficiency is enough, complete, and all that is needed for the world. Jesus reveals that He is indeed the Messiah. The world says He is a prophet, or Elijah, or John the Baptist – they don't quite understand. But the disciples do grasp this truth; the disciples do understand that Jesus is the Messiah, because God has progressively revealed it to them.

Now that the Messiah has been identified as Jesus by the disciples, there is need for a second progressive revelation. Jesus shares that his purpose is to die. He teaches that He will suffer many things, be rejected and killed, adding that after three days He would rise again. This information was not yet understood in its fullness, and Peter, who had just professed, "You are the Christ," now rebukes Jesus. The disciples' understanding was not yet complete and clear, for why would the Messiah suffer and die at the hands of men?

In the middle of these two stories in Mark 8, we have the story of a blind man being healed. There is progressive healing for this man. Jesus chooses to not heal this man instantly, but rather in stages, paralleling the other truths which are being revealed progressively. The blind man could not see, then he could partially see, then he could clearly see. Jesus had led him out of the town and the blind man followed him. This is mirroring the fact that Jesus is leading the disciples and they are following Him. This is emphasizing the truth that as you follow Jesus, you begin to see clearly. The chapter ends with our third example of progressive revelation about those who chose to come after Him. The disciples see clearly and understand fully the revelation of truth in front of them, which is in order to follow Him, if they desired to come after Jesus still, they too would suffer, deny themselves, take up their own crosses and die and lose their life for His sake and the sake of the Gospel.

1. Read Mark 8:1-21 focusing on verses 17-21. What is it that they did not understand?
2. Read Mark 8:27-30. Focus on verse 29. What truth has been unfolded in this progressive revelation? Who did the disciples say Jesus was?
3. Read Mark 8:31-33. Focus on verse 31. What truth has been unfolded in this progressive revelation? What did Jesus say was going to happen to him?
4. Read Mark 8:22-26. This is the parallel. What is the message of this story?
5. Read Mark 8:31, 34-38. Focus on verses 31 and 34. What truth has been unfolded in this progressive revelation?
6. Optional: For more scriptural support about progressive revelation, look up the following verses:
 - a. Genesis 3:15
 - b. Isaiah 7:14
 - c. Isaiah 9:6-7
 - d. Micah 5:2
 - e. Matthew 5:17
 - f. Luke 24:27
 - g. John 4:25-25
 - h. Colossians 1:15-20
 - i. Ephesians 3:1-7
 - j. Hebrews 1:1-2
 - k. Galatians 3:23-25
 - l. Revelation 1:1