

Yesterday I pointed out all the passages in the Gospel of Mark that repeat, time and again, the idea that Jesus tried to keep his messiahship a secret. He doesn't allow the demons to identify him when he casts them out; when he heals people he strictly instructs them not to tell anyone; he teaches his disciples the "secret of the Kingdom" privately when no one else is around; he teaches the crowds only using parables precisely (Mark indicates) so no one can understand what he means. And he never publicly teaches about his own identity.

This last point should be emphasized. Unlike other Gospels (see John 4:25-26!) Jesus never tells anyone publicly that he is the messiah. When he is acknowledged as the messiah by Peter in a private conversation with the disciples in Mark 8:29-30, Jesus orders them not to let anyone know. And then he starts teaching that as the messiah he has to be rejected and executed. That seems to be a complete contradiction of terms for Peter, who has just made the acknowledgment; Peter rebukes him for thinking so. Obviously the messiah doesn't face rejection and execution - the messiah is supposed to rule Israel as the powerful leader sent from God! Jesus in turn rebukes Peter and calls him Satan. For Jesus (and Mark) Peter understands only in part. Yes Jesus is the messiah, but not the one anyone expects. So he keeps it secret.

But William Wrede, in his classic [The Messianic Secret](#), did not think that this could be a historical reality. It's not really what happened in the life of Jesus. As I pointed out yesterday, the "secrecy" actually doesn't make any good sense in a number of ways, even in Mark's Gospel, as a plausible historical event. So what's going on?

Wrede devised the idea ...

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