

The Gospel of Mark

Introduction

(Much of this Introduction information was taken from “The Gospel of Mark” study book by David DeWitt, published by Relational Concepts, Inc., 2016, with minor formatting changes.)

1. Who Wrote the Gospel of Mark?

Technically, the Gospel is anonymous, because the name of the author does not occur on or anywhere in the book. The title *Kata» Maðrkon* (*Kata Markon*) “According to Mark” was added by some unknown scribe, writing around the year A.D. 125. But the unanimous testimony of the apostolic fathers of the second century is that John Mark composed and wrote the book. The earliest known statement about the authorship of Mark comes from a man named Papias (ca. A.D. 110). Papias quoted someone he called “John the elder,” which is probably a designation for the Apostle John. The quotation from Papias named Mark as author with the following comments (my wording, not direct quotes):

- (1) Mark was not an eyewitness follower of Jesus.
- (2) Mark accompanied the Apostle Peter and heard his preaching.
- (3) Mark wrote down accurately all that Peter remembered of Jesus’ words and works but not necessarily in chronological order.
- (4) Mark was Peter’s “interpreter.” This probably means he translated Peter’s messages into Latin. It is likely Peter spoke Aramaic and Greek, but not Latin.
- (5) Mark’s account is wholly reliable.

[This information is confirmed by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15), Justin Martyr (*Dialogue* 106. 3; ca. A.D. 160), Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 3.1.1-2; ca. A.D. 180), Tertullian (*Against Marcion* 4.5; ca. A.D. 200), Clement of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 195) and Origen (ca. A.D. 230). So the evidence for the above five comments is confirmed by various sources of early Christianity from Alexandria, Asia Minor, and Rome.]

We can conclude that the majority of the content of the book came from the Apostle Peter. In a sense, it may be more of a gospel according to Peter than a gospel according to Mark. But even if that is the case, it was Mark who took the information from Peter’s teaching, composed it, and wrote it in the text we know as the *Gospel of Mark*.

2. Who Was Mark?

There is no reason to suppose there is more than one Mark in the New Testament. Mark was John Mark, the son of a woman named Mary, who lived in Jerusalem, and cousin of Barnabas (Col 4:10).

The first mention of Mark in the Bible is some years after the death of Christ. When Peter was released from prison by an angel, we are told *he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying* (Acts 12:12).

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Cover design and book assembling by Sarah Currie.

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Apparently, Mark's mother Mary hosted a gathering of the church in her home. This event took place in A.D. 44 because it is the year of Herod's death (Acts 12:1, 23). [This Herod is not the one before whom Jesus appeared. This is his brother, known as Herod Agrippa (both sons of Herod the Great, who tried to kill the baby Jesus), and the father of the Herod before whom Paul will later appear.] If Jesus was crucified in A.D. 33, then this took place 11 or 12 years later. At this time, there seems to be a connection between Peter and Mark's family. Mark has also been listening to the messages of the apostles, which tell about the life of Christ. So Mark would have probably heard the accounts, he later wrote about, many times during these 11 or 12 years.

The next we hear of John Mark is two years later, in A.D. 46, when he accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey to Cyprus and Galatia. But, for some unrecorded reason, Mark turned back when they went to Perga in Pamphilia. Because of this, Paul refused to take him on the second journey, so Mark went with Barnabas to Cyprus in about A.D. 50 (Acts 15:38-40). This is the last time Luke mentions Mark in the book of Acts.

3. When Was the Gospel of Mark Written

After Mark traveled with Barnabas to Cyprus, the chronology of Mark is not so clear. He is mentioned four more times in the New Testament:

- **Colossians 4:10**, *Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin **Mark** (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him).*
- **2 Timothy 4:11**, *Only Luke is with me. Pick up **Mark** and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.*
- **Philemon 24**, *as do **Mark**, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.*
- **1 Peter 5:13**, *She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, **Mark**.*

Most likely, after the journey to Cyprus, Mark returned home to Jerusalem in the mid-A.D. 50s. But we know nothing about Mark from the mid-A.D. 50s to the early A.D. 60s. It is likely that this is the time in which Mark composed and wrote his gospel, possibly while traveling with Peter.

There is much discussion about which gospel came first—Matthew or Mark? Clearly, both came before The Gospel of Luke (written in the 60s) and the Gospel of John (written around A.D. 70). But it is not necessary to assume Matthew or Mark were based on each other or were even aware of the composition of the other's gospel. Mark is more of a chronological account, and Matthew is more of a topical account, often grouping together Jesus' teaching into units. The similarities are more easily explained by the fact that Matthew and Peter were both eyewitnesses of the same events. They were both inspired by the Holy Spirit to remember what happened and write it down accurately (John 14:26). There is no need to assume one gospel was based on the other.

After that, Mark seems to be ministering with Paul in the first part of the 60s and Peter in the last part of the 60s, or possibly with both of them off-and-on. Both Peter and Paul mention Mark as being a fellow worker. In Colossians 4:10 (which was written about A.D. 62) and in Philemon 24 (which was written about A.D. 63), Paul says Mark was with him. At the end of his first letter (written between 64 and 68), Peter said: “*She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark*” (1 Peter 5:13). So Peter was writing from *Babylon* when Mark was with him. This could be the city on the Euphrates (about half as far from Jerusalem as Rome) or the word *Babylon* was a metaphor for Rome (which is what most commentators believe). At any rate, there is much evidence that Mark received most of the information for his gospel from Peter.

Jack Wellman writes,

There is extremely reliable evidence through church tradition and early church historians that the Gospel of Mark is actually the gospel of Peter. Peter is said to have dictated his discipleship with Jesus to John Mark, who was a companion of his for many of the later years of his life. If you read the Gospel of Mark you can see the extremely fine details of what appears to be an eyewitness from the perspective of Peter... This is testified by the fact that Mark was not present for Jesus’ ministry and the extremely intimate details that are described in Mark. Some of the events where Peter, John, and James who were often alone with Jesus, like the Transfiguration, are like a first-person retelling of the story. [whatchristianswanttoknow.com/apostle-peter-biography-timeline-life-and-death/#ixzz3u7dRaXnm]

4. Why Does Mark Persistently Use the Word *Immediately*

The word *eujqu/ß (euthus) immediately, or suddenly*, occurs 59 times in the New Testament and 42 of them (71% of them) are in the Gospel of Mark. Mark’s obsession with this word is strange, if not confusing. For example, recording the call of James and John, Mark writes:

Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him (Mark 1:20).

This sounds like Jesus was walking by one day and, out-of-the-blue, He called James and John, and immediately, they left their occupation and started following Jesus. In reality, we learn from the Gospel of John that they knew Jesus and traveled with Jesus for over a year before He called them in Mark 1:20.

Most of the uses of *eujqu/ß (euthus)* add nothing to the meaning of the account. For example, in the following passage no meaning would be lost if you left out the word *immediately*.

Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee. And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her (Mark 1:28-30).

So why use the word *eujqu/ß (euthus) immediately* 42 times? Several suggestions have been made:

- Mark’s style keeps the narration moving along. It is a gospel which focuses on Jesus’ actions, rather than His words.
- It is consistent with the rapid pace of the gospel. Episodes are usually brief, scenes change often, and minor characters appear and quickly disappear. It draws the audience quickly into the story and maintains their attention.
- It communicates the urgency of Christ’s ministry.
- It is his style. That is just the way he writes.

I suspect the last suggestion is the best. At any rate, the dominance of the word *eujqu/ß* (*euthus*) *immediately* confirms that the gospel was all written by the same author. Whatever accounts, messages, and sermons Mark may have heard from Peter or the other apostles, it was only Mark who composed it and wrote it down. [By the way, the word *eujqu/ß* (*euthus*) *immediately* does not occur in the questionable passage at the end of the gospel (Mark 16:9-20).]

5. Some Further Thoughts

- There are no competitors for the Gospels, claiming to write of the life of Christ.
- Mark does not record the birth and early life of Jesus. In the ancient world, biographies were not about every period of a one's life (as they usually are today). The Gospels wrote about things that were exemplary to the author's, to help and motivate a person's life. For example, John's purpose, he wrote, "*These things have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name*" (John 20:31). Writing many years later, John has a different perspective of the events in Christ's life, as to their purpose, etc.
- Nearly half of Mark's narrative is about the last week of Christ's life.
- The Gospels record many people who were hostile to Jesus. They disagreed with Jesus that He was God, but they did not disagree that Jesus claimed to be God. In fact, they clearly understood His claim, which caused their hostility.
- The Gospels were written mostly after Paul's epistles were written, and early on Paul wrote about the "*gospel which I preached to you...in which also you stand*" (1 Cor 15:1). This gospel was already, in the earliest time of the church age, clearly described: "*I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to... If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain...you are still in your sins*" (vv 1-19). He wrote that Jesus appeared to various individuals and then to "*more than 500 brethren at one time*" (v. 6). And he said that many of them were still alive, so go ask them for verification!! Religious creeds (doctrines) usually take many, many years to develop, yet here we have the clear Gospel in the first epistles, written within a few years of the events—and it has not changed in over 2000 years!!! [Of course, later, Luke investigated and wrote of Peter proclaiming the Gospel soon after the Day of Pentecost, in Acts 2, soon after Christ's ascension.]

Chapter 1

1:1—The beginning—At first, it would remind us of Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1, but the content is different. Genesis and John refer to a time before creation. Acts 1:22 states that the starting point of the gospel was the ministry of John the Baptist. So Mark could have that in mind here (1:4), rather than the beginning of his book.

— **of the gospel**—The word *eujagge÷lion* (*euaggelion*) "gospel" is used 99 times in the New Testament, and six of them are in Mark's gospel. Interestingly, it is in the three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) but not in the gospel of John. The word "gospel" is a combination of "good" and "message," usually thought of as "glad tidings" or "good news." After Christ's death and resurrection, it is equated with the plan of salvation. But in the synoptics, it seems to have a broader meaning. Matthew, Mark, and Luke connect it to the good news that *the Kingdom of God is at hand*. In Revelation 14:6-7, the "gospel" is, "*Fear God, and give Him glory, because*

the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth.” So it seems the word “gospel” refers to “good news,” not to some particular message.

- **of Jesus** (Heb. *Joshua*, “salvation of Yahweh”) **Christ** (Gk. *masiah*, English, *Messiah*, “anointed”)—His earthly name.
- **the Son of God**—His heavenly name, in a unique relationship to God. As the Son, He depends on and obeys God the Father (Heb 5:8).
- The gospel [good news] which Jesus proclaims is, in fact, the good news about Himself!
- Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark has no nativity narrative. He gets right to the message of the proclamation of the gospel, begun by John the Baptist. Peter says, “*You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached*” (Acts 10:37).

The Ministry of John the Baptist

1:2-3— *As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.’”*

- *As it is written in Isaiah the prophet*—any true understanding of the ministry of Jesus must be grounded in prophecy, what is written. It is the perfect tense, meaning completed action in the past with continuing results. “It was written and still is...”
- Because of the prophecy of Malachi 3:1, the Jewish scribes thought John the Baptist may be Elijah. They sent someone to ask John, “*Are you Elijah?*” And he said, “*I am not*” (John 1:21). The Malachi messenger whom God will send is before the “*just and terrible day of the Lord*” (Malachi 4:5), which is Christ’s Second Coming.
- But John did say, “*I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as Isaiah the prophet said*” (John 1:23). Mark also says, “***Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way; The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight’***” (Isaiah 41:3). John’s assignment was to prepare the Jewish hearts spiritually for the first coming of Jesus. A repentance baptism. They had to change their mind, that just being a Jew made them acceptable to God, to hear Christ’s message.

An Application: This is also an assignment for us. Maybe call it pre-evangelism. What we say and how we behave around unbelievers is to clear the way for them to hear the Gospel of salvation. A person accepts truths about Jesus before accepting Him as their Savior. For example, that He is God, that He became human, that He died and rose again.

1:4—*John the Baptist* [lit. “the Baptizer”] ***appeared in the wilderness*** [uninhabited territory, away from villages]. The vagueness of the description shows Mark cared more for the reason of the baptism than for the place of the baptism.

- ***preaching a baptism of repentance for*** [purpose, Gk. preposition *eis* “leading to” not “on account of”] ***the forgiveness of sins***—the Jews would baptize proselytes into Judaism (in Qumran’s records), but John’s baptism was different. Baptism and repentance were together. A person could not have one without the other. It was separate from the baptism, but its purpose was to lead to the forgiveness of sins. Baptism was a visible witness that one had changed their mind back to God and received God’s forgiveness.

An Application—Keep in mind what time we are talking about. It is under the Law, in Israel, to the Jews, before Christ even came on the scene. These Jews were not living according to God’s Law.

They had to realize they needed forgiveness for their sin, and to turn back to God, in preparation for recognizing Jesus as their Messiah.

1:5—*And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem* [~20 miles away]; *and they were being baptized by him*—obviously it means that the people who came were all from the country of Judea and Jerusalem.

- *in the Jordan River*—The lower Jordan Valley (at the north end of the Dead Sea and near Jericho) belongs to the wilderness area. The Jordan River is usually deepest there, as creeks (Jabbok, Yarmuk) flow into it along the way from the Sea of Galilee.
- *confessing their sins*—great numbers came to hear John, but he only baptized those who would confess their sins.

1:6—*John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist*—similar to Elijah (2 Kings 1:8) and OT prophets (Zech 13:4), but mostly clothing worn in the desert.

- *and his diet was locusts and wild honey*—locusts are eaten in Mexico and other places today, and are high in protein (and a “clean” food in Lev 11:21-22).

An Application: Both John's father Zacharias and his mother Elizabeth were of the lineage of Aaron, with his father serving as a priest (Luke 1:5). Therefore, John would also qualify as a priest. But he did not exercise that position in the temple in Jerusalem, among the rich priests. Instead, he chose to be a prophet in the wilderness. Yet Jesus said of John, “*among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John*” (Matt 11:11), because he came to prepare for and announce “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). Sometimes we may seem to have a lesser role, but it may be because Jesus has something bigger planned, that gives Him more glory.

1:7-8—*And he was preaching* [“*a voice in the wilderness*” (1:3, 4)], *and saying*, (1) “*After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and* (2) *I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals.* (3) *I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit*”—we know he is talking about Jesus, but how does John know that? Although Mark does not say this, John wrote that the Baptist said, “*I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit*” (John 1:33). God had spoken to the Baptist, and gave him information ahead of time about both Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Then Jesus Came

1:9—*In those days*—a “seam” that Mark uses frequently to tie together stories about Jesus.

- *Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee*—Nazareth (a village on the northern cliff overlooking the Jezreel Valley) was never mentioned in the Old Testament, the Jewish Talmud, or the writings of Josephus (the first-century Jewish historian). This identified Him as *the son of Joseph* (John 1:45), as it was the hometown of Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:4). After fleeing to Egypt to escape Herod, God warned Joseph in a dream, so *he left for the regions of Galilee, and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: He shall be called a 'Nazarene'”* (Matt 2:22-23). [Matthew quoting words not found written in the OT, but it could be some “spoken” words handed down.] It was mostly a Roman city, with the reputation, “*Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?*” (John 1:46).
- This would be in contrast to those coming to John from Jerusalem and Judea (1:5), where the Jewish “elite” lived.
- *and was baptized by John in the Jordan*—Why did Jesus submit Himself to a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins? In Matthew 3:14, John is reluctant to baptize Jesus, but

Jesus said to him, “*It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness*” (Matt 3:15). He had no sins of His own to confess, but He did show He identified with John’s message that repentance (to change their minds) was needed for the forgiveness of sins.

1:10—*immediately coming up out of the water*—this completes the Baptist’s preparatory ministry that sets Jesus apart as the “mightier” One. But John continues to preach his message of repentance.

- *he saw the heavens opening*—lit. “to split or to tear an object, to rend,” possibly the physical heaven splitting open in the spiritual dimension, like when Jacob saw the ladder (Gen 28:12).
- *and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him*—Jesus came up out of the water, and the Holy Spirit came down from heaven. So the baptism was the occasion rather than the means of the Spirit’s coming to Jesus. Some think it is Jesus who “saw,” but John clearly says that John the Baptist testified, “*I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven*” (John 1:32). Then the Baptist says, “*...He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending...’*” (John 1:33).
- The Spirit was not a dove, but *like a dove*, i.e., a localized visible dovelike form. It is unusual to find a visual example of the localized presence of the Holy Spirit. For example, the indwelling, baptizing, sealing, regenerating, filling of the Spirit during this age is a work of the Spirit, part of His omnipresence but not His localized presence. In Acts 2:3-4, *there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit*, once again, a localized visible presence of the Holy Spirit.

An Application: Jesus said that “*the Spirit will glorify Me*” (John 16:14). The Spirit does not glorify Himself!! So if someone or a group is glorifying the Spirit, you can be assured it is not of the Spirit!!

1:11—*and a voice came out of the heavens*—here are the 3 persons of the Godhead: Jesus the Son being baptized, the Spirit like a dove descending, and the voice of the Father from heaven.

- “*You are My beloved Son*”—One who is loved and cherished
- “*in You I am well-pleased*”—very pleased with who Jesus is, not specifically what He will do.

The Temptation

1:12—*Immediately [at once] the Spirit impelled [“drove, send away”] Him to go out into the wilderness*—in His first act after descending on Jesus, the Spirit led Jesus to take the offensive against temptation and evil instead of avoiding them. Mark’s account is very brief.

1:13—*And He was in the wilderness*—He did not take Jesus directly into temptation but into the wilderness for forty days first.

- *forty days*—Matthew 4:2 says, *after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry*. It was then that Satan could tempt Him with food (Matt 4:3).
- *being tempted by Satan*—to test someone. It can be used in a good sense, such as God’s testing of us (1 Cor 10:13; Heb 11:17) or in a bad sense of luring into sin. Jesus’ temptations and sinlessness are a witness to His true humanity (Rom 8:3; Luke 2:18). Mark does not say anything about the temptation’s content, its climatic end, or Jesus’ victory over Satan. But he does introduce the ongoing conflict Jesus will have with Satan in the rest of the book.
- *and He was with the wild beasts*—combined with “wilderness,” making a hostile environment
- *and the angels were ministering to Him*—do not know exactly what they did, but Matthew 4:11 says it was after the temptation.

Preaching in Galilee

This is over a year later. Mark omits the events covered in John 1:19–4:54 and 6:17–20—

- Jesus acquiring His first five disciples (two from John the Baptist and two by referral).
- The early Judean ministry, where He speaks to Nicodemus about being born again.
- The discussion of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well.

1:14—*Now after John had been taken into custody*—Mark seems to want to show that John, the forerunner, completed his task.

- *Jesus came into Galilee*—Jesus had come from Galilee to John to be baptized (v. 9), and now He returns to Galilee. But Mark does not give the exact place or time. He cares more about the content of Jesus’ preaching.
- *Preaching* [“proclaiming”] *the gospel*—the “good news”
- *of God*—“of” means God is both the source of the gospel and the object of the gospel.

1:15—*and saying, “The time is fulfilled*—not just chronological time, but an appointed time for God’s action. God is now going to do something special, different from all other time.

- *And the kingdom of God is at hand* [arrived in history]—the kingship or royal rule, it is God’s sovereign activity or ruling over His creation, bringing His plans to realization. The Second Coming and kingdom depend on the First Coming of payment for sins.
- *Repent* [turn in their thinking] *and believe* [trust the truth (Jesus) evidence] *in the gospel*—good news. Notice Jesus’ message was the same as John the Baptist, but He adds the concept of faith: *repent and believe in the gospel*.

Calling the Four

1:16—*As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen*—The call of the two sets of brothers was not a first-time encounter but a call to leave their occupations and follow Jesus to become *fishers of men*. John 1:35-42 reads, *One of the two who heard John [the Baptist] speak and followed Him, was Andrew...he found first his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah.”*

1:17—*And Jesus said to them, “Follow Me*—this was used of a pupil walking behind the teacher. This is a radical difference between Jesus and the rabbis. Rather than being chosen by His disciples as a rabbi (Matt 8:19), Jesus authoritatively summons His own disciples to join Him in ministry.

- *and I will make you*—what will happen in the lives of these men in the future will not be their own abilities, but what Jesus will make them. They will “catch” people from the coming judgment and give them the message of eternal life.
 - *become fishers of men*—In a sense, Jesus has “caught” them!
- An Application—The Christian life is what Christ makes us (2 Pet 1:3-4).

1:18—*Immediately* [“at once”] *they left their nets and followed Him*—a “disciple” is one who follows. [An apostle is one who is sent, what we call a “missionary.”]

1:19—*Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets*—they were fishing partners with Simon Peter and Andrew (Luke 5:10).

1:20—*Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him*—Simon Peter, James, and John form the inner circle of the disciples of Jesus (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3).

An Application—Three aspects of discipleship: (1) Rather than the disciple taking the initiative, Jesus does and summons them. A disciple often does not know they need to be a disciple. (2) The disciples have to leave their occupations, and even their family, to join Jesus, to accompany Him, and to

participate in His life. To follow Christ will always mean giving up some other area of our lives. (3) They do not become students of the Law. Rather, they share in Christ's ministry and eventually continue it after His death. We proclaim Christ (Phil 1:18; Col 1:28).

The Ministry in Capernaum

1:21—*They went into Capernaum*—a village on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and home of Peter and his mother-in-law.

- *and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach*—The synagogues began during the Judean Exile (in 586 B.C.), so the Jews could meet together for prayer and to study the Law. The temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Babylonians. However, after the Exile, when they returned to the Land and rebuilt the temple, being over 60 miles from Jerusalem, those distant Jews, living in Galilee, continued to meet in the synagogues (but they were not prescribed under the Mosaic Law). Typically, any group of 10 men could form a synagogue (even today).
- *on the Sabbath*—is key to this next event. Any man teacher (rabbi) could stand up and read from the Law and teach (mostly the Pharisees, as the priests were the Sadducees at the Temple).

1:22—*They were amazed at His teaching*—Jesus was teaching with the power of the author (God being the author of the Scriptures). They recognized this in astonishment and surprise.

- *for He was teaching them as one having authority*—like the one who wrote it to begin with!
- *and not as the scribes*—who were like reading someone else's mail. The people had evidently never experienced this kind of teaching before.

1:23—*Just then*—this was no accidental meeting. Jesus knew and planned for this encounter.

- *there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit*—the man was indwelt by a demon. [BTW, angels do not indwell humans. They can be physically manifested as humans (like the angels who brought Lot out of Sodom in Genesis 19). But demons mostly possess either humans or animals.]

An Application—Paul warned the Ephesian elders: “...*savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert...*” (Acts 20:29-30). Do not assume everyone, when you assemble, is a believer! These *savage wolves* are in among you!

- *and he cried out*—the people were amazed at Christ's teaching with authority, but the demons realize Jesus is God Himself.

1:24—*saying, “What business do we have with each other*—a Hebrew idiom which expresses the incompatibility of opposing forces. [BKC]

- *Jesus of Nazareth*—1:9, John 1:45, the hometown of Jesus, speaking of the humanity of Jesus
- *Have You come to destroy us?*—plurality of demons in one man. Jesus controls the destiny of demons, first in the abyss (Luke 8:31) and then in the lake of fire (Rev 20:10).
- *I know who You are—the Holy One of God!*” In contrast to the people, these demons recognized the true character and identity of Jesus, speaking of His Deity.

1:25—*And Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet* [lit. “to muzzle” or “tie shut”]

- *and come out of him!*” Jesus did not use any magical incantations or invoke anyone else's name. He commanded. At His word, they obeyed. Just as at His word the world was created (John 1:3).

An Application: Notice, in Mark, the first miracle of Jesus he records was over the demonic world, and even the demons claimed that Jesus has the power to destroy them.

1:26—*Throwing him into convulsions*—one final abuse of the victim
— *the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him*—they obeyed (even though they did not want to).

1:27—*They were all amazed*—first they were amazed at His teaching—then at His power!
— *so that they debated among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority!”*—Jesus’ teaching was in both words and works. *He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.”*

1:28—*Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee*—Galilee was more like what Jesus called “new” wineskins. They were not traditionalists, tied to the temple and ritual “old” wineskins. They were more open to God’s message.
An Application—If someone is sold out to liturgical Christianity or other religions (like RC or JW), they will be like “old” wineskins, not open to learning. But someone who is not committed to any religion will be like “new wineskins” and more open to a gospel presentation.

1:29—*And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John*—although originally from Bethsaida (the Upper Jordan River, above the Sea of Galilee), they now lived in Capernaum, right on the shore of the Sea of Galilee—good for fishing. And it seemed to be a sort of headquarters of Jesus when He was in Capernaum (2:1; 3:20; 9:33; 10:10).

1:30—*Now Simon’s mother-in-law*—does not say what caused it [BTW, this indicates Peter was married. See also 1 Cor 9:5.]
— *was lying sick with a fever*—it seems the fever was the illness, rather than a symptom of an illness.
— *and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her*—already they know Jesus can do something

1:31—*And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand*—only by His intention...
— *and the fever left her, and she waited on them*—healing was instantaneous and complete to full health, so she could wait on them, giving them food, evidence of the full healing, as if she had not been sick at all.

1:32—*When evening came, after the sun had set*—specifically, when the Sabbath was over (v. 21).
— *they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed*—the demon-possessed man had been in the synagogue (v. 23), and healing Peter’s mother-in-law was in his home (vv. 30-31), and now...

An Application: This is simply an observation of passages: demonic activity seems greatly increased at both the First and Second Comings of Jesus.

1:33—*And the whole city had gathered at the door*—of Peter’s house, so many gathered, they blocked the entrance into his house.

1:34—*And He healed many who were ill with various diseases*—no disease was beyond His power
— *and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was*—Jesus wanted to choose how people would come to a realization of who He

was. He did not want them to come to that knowledge just as someone who had control over demons, or whatever the demons would choose to say about Him.

1:35—*In the early morning, while it was still dark* [~4 A.M.], *Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there*—here at the beginning of His ministry, near the middle (6:46) and near the end (14:32-42). Strengthened by His Father for the task before Him and to avoid the crowds who it seemed were only interested in His healing ministry.

1:36-37—*Simon and his companions searched for Him*—“to hunt down, pursue” kind of an urgency because *they found Him, and said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.”*

1:38—*He said to them, “Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for”*—His message was: “repent and believe” (v. 15), not just be a miracle-worker. The miracles were not an end in themselves. They were to authenticate who He was.

Healing the Leper

1:39—*And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons*—it seems that the demons were the only ones to recognize who He was, so He needed to cast them out. They seemed to only speak when possessing a human.

1:40—*And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, “If You are willing, You can make me clean”*—lepers were considered unclean (Lev 13–14) and were prevented from entering the Holy City of Jerusalem and were outcasts from society. It was the worst disease—like a living death. He did not question the ability of Jesus to heal him, just His willingness, His mercy. Jesus did heal him, but it required the priest to declare him clean.

1:41—*Moved with compassion*—Most manuscripts (Greek copies) have the Greek word for “anger” instead of “compassion.” Though it has been thoroughly examined, there is no answer to the word “anger” or how, when, or why it was changed to “compassion” in later manuscripts. But it is obvious that He reacted in compassion by being willing to touch the man and heal him.

— *Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed”*—Jesus could have healed him with just a word, but instead He touched the unclean.

An Application: The virtue in giving is in the motive of the giver (compassion here), not just in meeting the needs of the receiver (which is where most see the virtue). The world puts the focus on the one with the need. If the needs of the needy are met without personal compassion, such as forced redistribution of wealth, then all spiritual moral value is lost.

1:42—*Immediately the leprosy left him*—only twice in the Old Testament is it recorded that God cleansed a leper (Miriam in Numbers 12:10-15 and Naaman in 2 Kings 5:1-14).

— *and he was cleansed*—the leprosy was a consequence, and when Jesus cleansed him, made him clean, the leprosy was gone. And it was visible to all who saw him.

1:43-44—*And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, and He said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them”*—under the Law (Lev 14:2-31), the priest had to declare him clean, then he could enter the temple, and offer sacrifices. He could then re-enter Jewish society. This also shows Jesus’ support for the Law. If the priests declared the leper to be clean but rejected the One who cleansed him, their unbelief would be evidence against them.

An Application: Though the Law provided for ritual purification of a leper by the priest, both the Law and the priest were powerless to cleanse a person from the actual disease or cleanse them from their sin—only God could do that!

1:45—*But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around*—Mark does not tell us whether the former leper actually went to the priest or not.

- *to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas*—first He was avoiding Capernaum (v. 38), now it applies to all the cities of Galilee, so He went to the unpopulated areas.
- *and they were coming to Him from everywhere*—but they would find Him wherever He went

Chapter 2

2:1—*When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward,*
— *it was heard that He was at home*—probably Peter’s house (1:29)

Healing the Paralytic

2:2—*And many were gathered together*— “to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses” (Luke 5:15).

- *so that there was no longer room, not even near the door*—which prevented the men who carried the paralytic from getting into the house, closer to Jesus.
- *and He was speaking the word to them*—teaching (1:14-15; 4:14, 33) and “performing healing” (Luke 5:17).

2:3-4—*And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men*—he was laying on a pallet. These men must have been really close friends.

- *Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd*—blocking the door
- *they removed* [lit. “unroofed”] *the roof above Him*—an outdoor stairs leading to a flat roof
- *and when they had dug an opening*—probably made of clay tiles or mud and thatch
- *they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying*—possibly using fishing ropes Peter had laid on the roof to dry out. But they do not seem to say anything.

2:5—*And Jesus seeing their faith*—which was shown by the evidence of what they did to get the man to Jesus (James 2:18). “Their” would include the man and those who carried him.

- *said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven”*—Only God can forgive sins (v. 7), but Jesus has the authority of God Himself to forgive sins on earth (v. 10). Healing the paralytic would be a temporary earth-bound healing. He needed an eternal healing, his sins forgiven. [It does not necessarily mean that the sickness was caused by some particular sin.] Also, his sins could be forgiven only because Jesus would die and make the payment for that forgiveness.

2:6—*But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts*—the teachers of the Law, who were offended by what Jesus said, and Jesus knew it.

2:7—*“Why does this man speak that way?* They called Him “this man,” in spite of His miracles

- *He is blaspheming*—He is doing something only God can do. Of course, they were the ones who were blaspheming because Jesus is God and they were calling Him a man!
- *who can forgive sins but God alone?*—they realize Jesus is claiming to be God by what He says. They do not really care if the man is healed or even if he has his sins forgiven.

2:8—*Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves* Jesus knew what they were thinking.

— *said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?* By His question, Jesus demonstrated that He knew their thoughts—something else only God could know!

2:9—*“Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’?”*

The context suggests that verifiability determines degree of easier/harder. One can verify the word of healing through observation, whereas the word of forgiveness cannot be empirically verified. Therefore, the word of healing (harder) being verified by observation would imply the validity of the word of forgiveness (easier) by reasoning from the greater (harder) to the lesser (easier). This is the argument implicit to the Son of man statement that follows. [WBC]

2:10—*“But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” — He said to the paralytic* —They should use reason and make that conclusion that Jesus could forgive sins based on the validating evidence of the healing of the paralytic.

2:11—*“I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home”*—The command by Jesus for the man to walk gives the evidence for His statement of forgiveness. Notice also that Jesus did not say to be healed or touch him. Just commanded him to walk.

2:12—*And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone — so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”* Yet—in spite of the evidence, did they come to Jesus for forgiveness of their sins?

They were more interested in the healing than in the forgiveness.

An Application: It is the same today. People are more interested in temporary physical things (like healing) than in eternal spiritually getting their sins forgiven.

Calling Levi

2:13—*And He went out again by the seashore*—Capernaum was on the northern seashore of the Sea of Galilee

— *and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.*

2:14—*As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth*—Capernaum was a customs’ post on the caravan route from Damascus (in the east) to the Mediterranean Sea (in the west). Levi (also known as Matthew in 3:18; 9:9; 10:3) was a Jewish tax official, working for the Roman Herod kings. They were despised by the Jews, and were often fraudulent (Luke 19:8).

— *and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he got up and followed Him*—there was a lot at stake with this decision. Fishermen could always go back to fishing, but Levi would not be able to return to tax collecting.

2:15—*And it happened that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him*—it seems like a short time later, Matthew had this dinner. This is the first mention (of 43) in Mark of the disciples as a distinct group. Here we see there were many who followed Jesus, not just the five mentioned so far in Mark.

2:16—*When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors*—it seems that the “many” who followed Jesus were not all believers, but some were these scribes, who were trying to figure out who Jesus was and what to do about Him. They were spies!!
— *they said to His disciples, “Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?”*
— The scribes of the Pharisees followed the instructions about the Torah (the Law) and were separatists—they saw themselves as righteous and did not associate with those they that were sinners.

2:17—*And hearing this*—the scribes’ question to the disciples

— *Jesus said to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick”*—even though the scribes thought they were “healthy” and not sinners, Jesus turned the statement on them because as long as they thought they were righteous, they could not come to God. Jesus calls sinners to Himself.

— *I did not come to call the righteous* [i.e., those who see themselves as spiritually righteous or healthy], *but sinners*” [i.e., those who see themselves as spiritually sick or sinners]

An Application: First we see Jesus touching and healing a leper, a physical outcast from Jewish society. Here we see Jesus dining with tax collectors, another group who are outcasts from Jewish society. The “cleaner” and more “righteous” the scribes saw themselves, the more closed off they are to coming to Christ.

Fasting

2:18—*John’s [the Baptist] disciples and the Pharisees were fasting*—perhaps this was while Jesus and His disciples were feasting at Levi’s house. The only prescribed fasting in the OT was on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29-31). Other fasts were voluntary. It seems the Pharisees even fasted on every Monday and Thursday (Luke 18:12).

— *and they came and said to Him, “Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?”*

An Application: Jesus allowed fasting if done properly: in secret so no one knows you are fasting no gloomy face, no neglecting your appearance, etc. (Matt 6:16-18), but this was during the Law. In the age of grace, we are not to fast. It has *...the appearance of wisdom...and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against flesh indulgence* (Col 2:16-23). In 1 John 1:9, will God be more likely to forgive our sins if we fast? Or less likely to forgive if we do not fast?

2:19—*And Jesus said to them, “While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast*—the presence of Jesus with them was a time like a joyous wedding, so it was not appropriate for His disciples to fast in sorrow.

2:20—*“But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day*—when Jesus is crucified on the Cross. This is Mark’s first hint of the Cross.

2:21-22—*“No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results—*

— *“No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.”*

An Application: The fasting, the bridegroom, and the wine all seem to make the same point. The teaching by Jesus will not fit into the legalism of Judaism. In fact, 11 of His disciples were from Galilee, far removed from the religion of Jerusalem. They were more open to Christ’s teaching than the Pharisees and Sadducees were. A person with no religion will be more open to the Gospel than

someone who is legalistically following a religion. And the Word of God will be harder to understand and apply if one is living in overt sin, such as adultery, homosexuality, fornication, superstitious mysticism, etc.

The Lord of the Sabbath

2:23—*And it happened that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain*—This was allowed under the Law. *If you enter your neighbor's grain field, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to his standing grain* (Deut 23:25), i.e., “reap.”

2:24—*The Pharisees were saying to Him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”* But the Pharisees criticism was that they were doing it on the Sabbath, and they evidently considered it “reaping.”

2:25-26—*And He said to them, “Have you never read [1 Samuel 21:6] what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry; how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?”* The 12 loaves of bread were arranged in two rows or piles on the table in the Holy Place in the Tabernacle. Each Sabbath, fresh loaves were brought into the sanctuary to replace the old ones, which were then eaten by the priests. But rather than say His disciples did not break the Mosaic Law, Jesus confirms that they did, but it had a precedent, and a justification, in the illegal actions of David and his men when they were hungry. [Ahimelech was the priest who gave David the bread, but Abiathar (Ahimelech's son—1 Sam 22:20-22) was the high priest along with Zadok (2 Sam 8:17).]

2:27—*Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath”*—The principle Jesus derives from this is something not found anywhere in the Old Testament. Sabbath-keeping was designed for man so he would not have to work all the time. Man was not created so that he could serve the Sabbath, the Sabbath was created to serve man, as a gift to man.

2:28—*“So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath,”* which introduces the first incident of chapter 3. And since God is Lord of man, God has authority to determine Sabbath laws and use.

Chapter 3

Healing on the Sabbath

3:1—*He entered again into a synagogue*—no time or even location/town is given — *and a man was there whose hand was withered*—lit. “stiff” or “paralyzed”

3:2—*They were watching Him*—“They” are some Pharisees (v. 6). They are not in the synagogue to worship but to spy on Jesus. “Watching” can have a more evil meaning of “to lie in wait for” [BDB].

— *to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath*—They know Jesus could heal the man, but would He do it? They do not care whether the man is healed or not in itself. They are using the man like a prop to entrap Jesus. The Rabbinic law allowed healing on the Sabbath only if it was life-threatening.

— *so that they might accuse Him*—of breaking the law (a withered hand was not a life-keeping situation) on the Sabbath (but, of course, Jesus was fully aware of what they were planning).

3:3—*He said to the man with the withered hand, “Get up and come forward!”* lit. “Stand in the middle,” so all would see what He is about to do. No secrecy!!

3:4—*And He said to them* [the Pharisees of v. 6], *“Is it lawful [legal] to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath*—obviously, between the two options, the legal answer is to do good. But the question is, what standard determines the greater good that would permit a person to do that on the Sabbath?

— *to save a life or to kill?”*—It seems that Jesus is making this parallel: doing good is saving a life. Doing harm is to kill. [Yet the Pharisees go out and do both harm and plot to kill Jesus (v. 6) on the Sabbath!]

— But if it is only a question of doing good on the Sabbath and prohibiting doing evil, (1) what makes the Sabbath so special, when the same criteria should hold for any day of the week? Also, (2) is it even possible to do a greater good without it violating the “good” of the Sabbath? (3) It is a moral issue, not a legal issue. Are “lawful” and “moral” the same? Often not. For example, abortion is legal, but is it moral?

— *But they kept silent*—they refused to debate the morality issue with Jesus.

An Application: The Sabbath is not the real issue but faith in Jesus. Faith in Jesus is good and life giving. Also, what were Jesus’ alternatives? Either to heal or not to heal. If “to do good/save a life” meant to heal, then “to do evil/to take a life” meant to not heal, and thus keep this man from the benefit of God’s restoring power.

3:5—*After looking around at them with anger*—because of their evil

— *grieved* [deeply distressed] *at their hardness of heart*—stubborn unwillingness to learn, to close one’s mind, seared in their conscience

— *He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored*—Healing the man falls in the definition of Jesus of “doing good” and “saving a life.” Notice, He did not touch him, did not command the paralysis to go away—but it was obvious the healing had come from Him. This man has a new life relationship with God through the healing by Jesus (2:13-17). He was not healed when Jesus told him to come forward (v. 3). He was healed when Jesus intended for him to be healed.

3:6—*The Pharisees went out*—Jesus had “entered” the synagogue, but now the Pharisees go out of the synagogue.

— *and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians* (probably pro-Herod political men in Galilee where Herod ruled) *against Him, as to how they might destroy Him*—(Mark 12:13) sure enough. Jesus did exactly what they thought He would do. But “how” can they destroy Him when everything He does is healing and life?

An Application—If you live a Christian life, and have a Christian message, do not be surprised if they hate you and want to destroy you, your reputation, your job, your family (Matt 10: 22; Luke 6:22; 21:17; John 15:18-19). They hate Christ, and they will hate you.

An Application—a reminder—miracles do not produce faith. Miracles need to be interpreted. Jesus was doing a God-thing. The Pharisees thought it was threatening to their positions and authorities (John 11:47-48). For example, if there is a tornado but it misses your house, you may say, “God protected us.” The weatherman may say, “The wind currents shifted...” An unbeliever may say, “Boy, were we ever lucky!”

Withdrawal to the Sea of Galilee

3:7-8—*Jesus withdrew*—Matthew 12:15 makes it clear that Jesus left because He realized that the religious authorities were after Him.

- *to the sea with His disciples*—they re-enter the scene again.
- *and a great multitude from Galilee followed*—contrary to the Pharisees and Herodians of v. 6
- *and also from Judea, and from Jerusalem*—south of Galilee (separated from Judea by Samaria)
- *and from Idumea*—southeast of Judea and Hebron, the Edomites who adopted Judaism
- *and beyond the Jordan*—Perea to the east and northeast of Galilee, including the Decapolis
- *and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon*—west and northwest of Galilee
- *a great number of people heard of all that He was doing and came to Him*—This list is mostly Jewish, and extends the ministry of Jesus far beyond that of John the Baptist (Judea and Jerusalem).

3:9-10—*And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd Him; for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him*—so He wanted the boat ready in case He had to escape the crowd. They seemed to only want Jesus as a miracle-worker, yet He graciously healed them all.

3:11-12—*Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, “You are the Son of God!”*—even though the crowds and Pharisees did not recognize that

- *And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was*—because the time for the clear revelation of who He was had not yet come, and He did not want His reputation from demons.

The Selection of the Twelve

3:13—*And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him*—Luke 6:12 says He spent the night in prayer before choosing the Twelve. These men become His new family, who replace His natural family who think He lost his senses (vv 20-21)

3:14-15—*And He (1) appointed twelve*—Why 12? We know from Revelation 21:14 that the New Jerusalem on the New Earth will have 12 foundation stones, each with the name of an apostle. Why are there are 12 tribes of Israel? Only God knows.

- *so that (2) they would be with Him*—the greatest teaching tool—to live with a person, traveling, hearing Him preach and heal, be trained by Him.
- *and that (3) He could send them out to preach*—not until 6:7, preaching the Good News
- *and to (4) have authority to cast out the demons*—closely tied—salvation in Christ involves the defeat of Satan and his demons

3:16-19—*And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter)*—the “rock” (Matt 16:18). Although Peter is often unreliable at the beginning, after the ascension, he becomes the rock proclaimer of the new church age.

- *and James, the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, “Sons of Thunder”)*—James is the first of the twelve to be killed (Acts 12:2) and John is the last to die (~90 A.D.), about 30 years after the others. These three seem to be an inner circle around Jesus, for example, they were on the Mt. of Transfiguration with Him (Matt 17:1). There is no evidence linguistically for “Thunder,” so its meaning is obscure.
- *and Andrew*—although not much is known, he brought Peter to Jesus, a very important event (John 1:41-42).

- *and Philip*—not mentioned again in Mark, he appears several times in John (6:5; 12:21; 14:8).
- *and Bartholomew*, because his name follows Philip, possibly called Nathaniel in John 1:45.
- *and Matthew*—Levi, the tax collector (Matt 9:9; Mark 2:14)
- *and Thomas*—not mentioned again in Mark but is important in John 11:16; 14:5; 20:24, 26-29; 21:2.
- *and James the son of Alphaeus*—to distinguish him from the other James, possibly he was the brother of Levi/Matthew, who was also a “son of Alphaeus” in 2:14.
- *and Thaddaeus*—listed also in Matthew 10:3, but Luke has Judas the son of James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). Luke probably has the correct name, but the church writers (of the gospels) later tried to disassociate him with the name “Judas” and used his second name.
- *and Simon the Zealot*—most likely referring to his zeal for Jesus (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13)
- *and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him*—the only one of the twelve from southern Judea. “Iscariot” is the name of his father (see John 6:71; 13:26). In the past tense here, indicating Mark is written after the death of Jesus, sometime in the early church history, probably witnessed by Peter.

Charged with Insanity

- 3:20-21**—*And He came home*—commonly thought to be Peter’s house in Capernaum (1:29)
- *and the crowd gathered again*—as when the paralytic was lowered through the roof (2:2)
 - *to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal*—
 - *When His own people heard of this*—His relatives from Nazareth, west of Capernaum
 - *they went out to take custody of Him*—a strong verb, meaning “to arrest” in 6:17; 12:12; 14:1, 44, 46, 49, 51). They were not there to make sure He could eat His meal!!
 - *For [explanation] they were saying, “He has lost His senses”*—mentally unbalanced religious fanatic (see Acts 26:24). It is interesting this is not the result of a specific event. He was just sitting trying to eat His meal. They also fail to believe His claim of who He was. James and Jude, the brothers of Jesus, convert after the resurrection (1 Cor 15:7; Jude 1; Acts 15:13).

Charged with Demon Possession

- 3:22**—*The scribes who came down from Jerusalem*—Jerusalem is the height of Judaism, and everything and every other place is “down” from there. There is no particular event that motivated them to come. But to Mark, it represents a place of hostility for Jesus, the place of His death.
- *were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul”*—He is possessed by the ruler of the demons.
 - *and “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons”*—They thought He would not be able to cast the demons out unless he was possessed by their ruler.
 - This shows how interchangeable insanity and demon possession were in the minds of the people.

3:23-26—*And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables*—a parable is a story given to illustrate a specific point. “Literal” understanding includes parables, metaphors, figures of speech, etc. Normal human communication, author’s intended meaning.

- *“How can Satan cast out Satan?”*—why would Satan act against himself?
- *“If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand*—It is absurd. A kingdom cannot both stand and be divided against itself. It is impossible. They are opposites.
- *“If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand*—If the kingdom is divided against itself, then there is no kingdom.
- *“If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished!”*—If Satan does that, he is finished. He destroyed himself.

3:27—*“But no one can enter the strong man’s house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house*—If anyone is going to rob someone’s house, they first have to tie up the owner of the house. Then they can rob it. The application here is that because Jesus can cast out demons from a person, then He has been powerful to bind Satan, the ruler of those demons.

3:28-29—*“Truly I say to you*—i.e., He is telling them the truth (John 14:6).

— *all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men*—forgiveness is available for all sins

— *and whatever blasphemies they utter*—and even forgiveness of blasphemies against God [profanity, cursing, irreverence, disrespect] can be forgiven [there is no blasphemy except against God]

— *but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin*—It is the Holy Spirit who convicts someone to believe who Jesus is and receive Him as their Savior (John 16:7-11). To reject Jesus is to be guilty of an eternal sin and no forgiveness.

— These scribes said rather than being the Living God, Jesus was possessed by Satan. That cannot be forgiven. A person has to believe Jesus is God to be forgiven.

3:30—*because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit”*—Jesus freed the man from the bondage of evil through the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20), but they had said it was because He was possessed by Satan (Beelzebul) in v. 22.

Jesus’ True Family

3:31—*Then His mother and His brothers arrived*—this seems to resume from verse 20. The absence of “father” probably indicates Joseph is already dead, and the claim by Jesus that God is His father (Matt 10:33). This also connects His brothers to Mary, indicating she was not a perpetual virgin. His brothers were James, Joses, Judas, Simon and sisters (plural) (Mark 6:3). James and Jude wrote books in the New Testament, having become believers after Christ’s resurrection (1 Cor 15:7).

— *and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him*—they stood outside the house and sent someone through the crowd, asking for a private conversation.

3:32-33—*A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You”*—they are not part of those sitting around Him. AND, they want Him to leave those sitting around Him and to come outside and prioritize them!

— *Answering them, He said, “Who are My mother and My brothers?”*

3:34-35—*Looking about at those who were sitting around Him* [especially the Twelve], *He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers!*—actually, *“For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother”*—His family is identified by their response to Him rather than on a natural kinship (who also earlier said, “He has lost His senses” in vv 20-21). However, doing the will of God is open to His natural family also. After the ascension, Mary and His brothers were part of the group of believers in the upper room who received the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14; 2:3).

An Application—Sometimes the cost of discipleship means to prioritize one’s commitment to Christ and doing the will of God. It may be at odds with one’s family. One’s possible separation from family can only come as a consequence of discipleship, not as a condition for discipleship.

Here, Mark has linked Jesus' family and the scribes from Jerusalem together in their similar rejection of Jesus. Yet these are precisely the two groups one would most expect to have recognized and accepted Jesus, especially in contrast to the Twelve and the anonymous crowd.

Chapter 4

Jesus' Teaching In Parables

The Parable of the Sower

4:1—*He began to teach again by the sea*—no definite time, but location at the Sea of Galilee
— *And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land*—Galilee is a volcanic bowl, so the shoreline in some places rises quickly, providing an ideal public seating for Jesus to teach from a boat.

4:2—*And He was teaching them many things in parables*—the transliteration of the Greek word *parabolh* (*parabole*), a brief story or illustration drawn from everyday experiences in which a single moral or spiritual truth is illustrated by a vivid comparison. About one-third of Christ's teaching was in parables of different lengths, most of which were given without explanation. Here He is telling them many things in parables. The parables draw the hearers in to take part in a situation, evaluate it, and apply its truth to themselves [BKC]. There are 35 recorded parables.

An Application—"A parable begins innocently as a picture that arrests our attention and arouses our interest. But as we study the picture, it becomes a mirror in which we suddenly see ourselves. If we continue to look by faith, the mirror becomes a window through which we see God and His truth. How we respond to that truth will determine what further truth God will teach us." [Constable, p. 68]

— *and was saying to them in His teaching*—three times it refers to His *teaching*, what He came for (1:38), not only to do miraculous things.

4:3—*“Listen to this!”*—a command to pay careful attention to what He was going to say. In fact, His followers asked about the meaning (interpretation) of the parable. They were listening, but they did not understand what it meant. However, the same seed fell on all the different soils. [This is the only parable that is also recorded in all three synoptic gospels.]

— *Behold, the sower went out to sow*—[At this time, rather than planting seed, the seed was scattered from the hand of the sower.] The Word of God is sowed (v. 14), but three things can vary:

- (1) The “sower” is anyone or anything that communicates the Word of God.
- (2) The soils are different, that is, the people who are spiritually hearing the Word of God. In verses 10-12, He illustrates this with those believers who ask about the parables, and the outsiders who hear the parables but go away without any spiritual understanding.
- (3) What is sowed is always the Word of God, but different passages will appeal to different people. Paul quoted the Old Testament to Jews differently than he did to the Gentiles. The Jews had a background in the OT that the Gentiles did not have. [See 2 Peter 2:21.] You may tell salvation verses to an unbeliever and sanctification verses to a believer.

You need to evaluate (in a sense) where you think the person is spiritually to determine what to say.

4:4-8—*as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up*—because the seed was not buried, it was just laying beside the road, it was easily eaten by birds.

— *“Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and*

because it had no root, it withered away—there was soil, but not deep. Initially it looked like the seed did produce some crop, but it did not last long. With no root, the sun scorched it and it died.

- *“Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop*—this soil was not prepared. The thorns were not removed, so they choked the seed.
- *“Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold”*—the soil was prepared, no weeds, it was deep for the roots, and there were no rocks. Even then, the seed had different results in different good ground.

An Application—The points of the parable are that seed will land on different soils. Also, the soil has to be prepared to receive the seed. Sometimes it will look like the seed did produce the crop, but over time, it will become evident that the seed was not fruitful. The sower is not responsible for preparing the soil, the sower is only to be faithful in sowing the seed. The soil is responsible.

4:9—*And He was saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear”*—Jesus first commanded them to “listen,” to pay attention. It has to do with hearing and listening. Jesus was sowing the seed of God to them, some of them did not believe at all (like the Pharisees), some began to follow Him but then quit, but some were followers, along with the twelve, who wanted to understand and apply the parable (v. 10), but the 12 were different than the followers. For example, they had a lot of alone time with Jesus over the years of His ministry. They are all different hearers, i.e., different soils, but notice Christ’s command was “listen to this” and “he who has ears...let him hear.” That’s soils!!

4:10—*As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve*—He had more followers than just the twelve. The crowd did not ask, but His followers asked Him privately.

- *began asking Him about the parables*—referring to verse 2. The interpretation of parables was withheld from both His followers and those “outside.” But it was the followers of Christ who asked about the meaning of the parables and why Jesus even told parables. Evidently, the outsiders just left, with the spiritual meanings of parables being unknown to them.

4:11—*And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery (God’s disclosure of what was previously unknown, Paul uses it 21 times in his epistles) of the kingdom of God*—to those who were believers and followers of Jesus, who had responded in faith. But it did not mean they understood the spiritual meaning of the parables. However, they knew to ask Jesus to give them that meaning. It was available to them. The parables were kind of a filter to separate these people.

- *but those who are outside* [persistent unbelievers] *get everything in parables*—those who did not follow Christ. They had already rejected Him, so His truths He taught were not available to them, they are actually concealed from them. This would be “the scribes from Jerusalem” (3:22), even His own relatives (3:30-34). They were not curious enough to even ask Jesus to explain.

4:12—*so that WHILE SEEING* [the parables are about everyday life, easy to understand], *THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE* [discern the spiritual truths the parables illustrate]

- *AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND*—Quoting Isaiah 6:9-10. They do not get the spiritual message because the result would be more sin and accountability, not faith in accepting the truth of who Jesus is. The parable knowledge will not create faith, just accountability. They need to be part of the kingdom of God by faith first. Then the parables will produce spiritual knowledge and growth.
- *OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN*—“Taken at face value, the statement seems to be saying the purpose of parables is that unbelievers may not receive the truth and be converted” (EBC). This is probably the most difficult statement in the book. Here are some options that have been suggested as to its meaning:

- Jesus is not speaking of the purpose of parables but their result—however, it does seem to be purpose, so they will not understand and be forgiven.
 - It is a free translation of Isaiah 6:9-10, “in order that it might be fulfilled.” But Mark does not use that phrase to mean fulfilled prophecy elsewhere.
 - At least some of the time, Jesus taught in parables so that His enemies might not be able to comprehend the full significance of His words and bring false accusations against Him.
 - We know God hardens some hearts so they cannot believe (Rom 11:25; Acts 28:27; John 12:37-40). The Jewish leaders are blinded by their own hatred of Jesus (and losing their control of the people). So by teaching in parables, Jesus is keeping them from more spiritual accountability. But He also does not want them to believe—they must hate Him enough to kill Him. (See also 2 Thess 2:10-13, where during the tribulation, “*God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.*”)
- “By this method of teaching in parables, Jesus not only invited His audiences to penetrate below the surface and find the real meaning; at the same time He allowed them the [free will] opportunity—which many of them took of turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to the real point at issue.” [EBC] The parables both reveal truth to believers and veil truth to unbelievers.
- Also, remember, Jesus is living in the time of the Mosaic Law. The idea of anything being spiritual is a new concept Jesus is presenting. Under the Law, everything was physical. The Law said to not murder. Jesus said to not hate. The law said to not commit adultery. Jesus said to not lust. So these Jews would relate to the physical points of the parables, but perhaps without realizing a spiritual point. The disciples were just beginning to understand the spiritual dimension to belief in Christ.

4:13—*And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable?”*—They did not understand the spiritual meaning of this parable. Jesus had to explain it to them. But they did want to know the meaning. What is being sowed?

An Application—The disciples’ failure to understand and Jesus’ patient explanation to them is an example of what discipleship is all about. Helping other believers to understand the Scripture.

— ***How will you understand all the parables?*** Understanding this parable is key to understanding all the other parables.

4:14—*“The sower sows the word*—First, notice it is about the seed, not the sower. However, the sower would be anyone who proclaims the message of Jesus Christ. *How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a proclaimer?* (Rom 10:14). The seed is identified as *the word* [ton logov, “the logos”] (used by Mark in 1:45 [“news” is *logos*]; 2:2; 4:33; 8:32). This is the only place in the synoptics that Jesus Himself uses the word *logos*.

An Application—Reminding us immediately of John 1:1-14, “*In the beginning was the logos, and the logos was with God and the logos was God...and the logos became flesh, and dwelt among us...*” “The Word” became very much a part of the technical language of the early church (when Mark was written; see Acts 17:11; 1 Thess 1:6; James 1:21), so what is sowed is information about the person and work of Jesus, which is what Jesus was teaching across Galilee, the Transjordan, and even in Jerusalem. The miracles were to show He was God, who “*became flesh, and dwelt among us...*”

— Second, the interpretation is about the identity of the soils, the ones on whom the seed falls. Actually, the seed (Word of God) becomes the victim of use and misuse.

4:15—*“These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them*—In this first

soil, it is the seed itself that is taken away before a response (growth/fruit) was even possible. The seed's fate is the result of Satan's opposition rather than a failure of the seed itself. Paul uses this reason also (1 Thess 2:18; 3:5; 2 Cor 11:3). The road is not identified in the parable.

An Application—You may witness to someone, quoting Scripture, but the moment the words leave your mouth, they also leave the mind of the one hearing it, it is snatched away by Satan before they even can consider it. They have hardened hearts, and are indifferent to the Word, such as when you may try to witness to a JW who comes to your door. Their JW belief snatches away the Word.

4:16—“*In a similar way*—there is a shift now in the parable, to the seed sown. Also, the seed is the subject of the verbs rather than the destructive elements (birds, sun, thorns).

— *these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately* [suddenly] *receive it with joy*—a shallow perception, an emotional response

4:17—*and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary*—before the seed can produce any fruit, a short time, responding with emotion rather than reason. This may describe a child at camp who receives the Word but then returns home to a pagan family and environment.

— *then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away*—a word that originally meant a stick placed in a trap or snare that, when touched by an animal, caused the trap to spring—because it was an emotional decision, when hardships of life, especially attacks against the Word, happen, they again respond emotionally, what Jesus said was like a house built on sand, not solid rock. “*So when the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall*” (Matthew 7:24-27).

4:18—“*And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word* (past tense)

4:19—*but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in*

— *and choke the word*—this time, the seed has been planted and even grows, but the desires for other things and the worries of the world, choke the Word. For example, one can sit through Bible study, agreeing with what the Bible says, but by the time we get home in traffic, plan and shop for food, prepare supper, greet family, clean up—what we learned from the Word has been choked out of our minds and hearts—not necessarily from sinful things but from the things of living life.

— *and it becomes unfruitful*—for us with the epistles, this would be the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23); agape love (1 Cor 13); longing for the Word and growing (1 Peter 2:2); maturing in Christ, etc.

An Application—The fruitless hearts are influenced by different enemies. The hard heart—the devil snatches away the seed. The shallow heart—the flesh counterfeits religious feelings. The crowded heart—the things of the world smother the growth and prevent a harvest. These are the great enemies of the Christian: the world, the flesh, and the devil (Eph 2:1-3). [Constable, p. 71]

4:20—“*And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil*—they have prepared their minds and hearts to receive the Word and let it produce fruit in their lives, they meditate on it.

— *and they* (1) *hear the word*—hearing is in present tense, continuing reality, *and* (2) *accept it and* (3) *bear fruit, (4) thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold*—the seed will bear fruit. It is part of the nature of the seed to do so. The soil does not have to make it grow. But the soil condition can kill the seed's effectiveness. What you learn from the Word can produce sometimes a lot of fruit in your life, sometimes not much fruit. It varies. Not always much fruit.

— Rather than comparing three seeds that meet differing ends with three that produce a varied harvest (30, 60, 100), the interpretation sets three examples of failure against one of productivity (which varies).

— Also, it is a warning of the attacks against the seed, and your heart, and how you will respond. An Application—We may more often think of doctrinal differences between believers, but if the Word of God is sown, it is people who hear it where the difference lies. For example, there may be 7 women here today hearing the same truth from the Word of God, but it will be applied differently in each person, depending on how they prepared their hearts before they came. WBS could just be the last thing in the “to do” list today, or there could be a suffering situation where God’s Word brings comfort, etc. Each person has a responsibility to prepare to listen to God’s Word, to be the good soil. This would also be the issue before any private devotions or time in the Word.

The Parable of the Lamp

Jesus frequently used this light parable with different people in different places (Matt 5:15; 7:2; 10:26; 13:12; 25:29; Luke 6:38; 11:33; 12:2; 19:26).

4:21—*And He was saying to them, “A lamp is not brought—i.e., its purpose, why it was brought*

— *to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed—to hide or extinguish its light*

— *Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand?*—the lamp’s intended function: to give light! The Bible/revelation, was not given to us by God to hide truth about Him but to reveal the truth. Jesus said, “*I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life*” (John 8:12)

4:22—*“For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light—Jesus’ coming is not intended to be secret. It is meant to come to light. He will go on to describe the kingdom of God, that began with Jesus and will end with the Second Coming.*

4:23—*“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear”—that would be the good soil. Jesus told them to listen in v. 3.*

4:24—*And He was saying to them, “Take care what you listen to—Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds (2 John 8-11).*

— *By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides.*

4:25—*“For whoever has, to him more shall be given—this is part of the kingdom of God parables. The more you understand the prophecy of the kingdom, the more you will understand. Like any profession, the more you learn it, the more you will learn it.*

—*and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him”—the opposite is also true. The less you are in the Word, you will even forget what you already learned. Also, meditating and reviewing are key to remembering.*

The Parable of the Sprouting Seed

Only Mark records this parable. Here the mysterious power of the seed itself produces a crop.

4:26—*And He was saying, “The kingdom of God is like a man [a farmer] who casts seed upon the soil—to understand this parable, you should understand the parable of the soils (4:1-20).*

4:27—*and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows — how, he himself does not know—the kingdom of God grows throughout the centuries, as people from all the nations of the world become believers in Jesus.*

4:28—*“The soil produces crops by itself—the very nature of the Kingdom of God is that it grows. Satan and his evil world systems have tried for centuries to kill it, but still it grows!!*

— *first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head—at the fullness of time, determined by the seed becoming mature grain. Only God the Father knows that day (Matt 24:36).*

4:29—*“But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come”—the farmer casts the seed initially [Christ’s first coming], then the story separates the farmer’s activity from the seed, now the farmer becomes involved again at the harvest [Christ’s Second Coming].*

— This is a parable about *the kingdom of God*. It seems to be teaching that the seed of the kingdom of God will grow throughout history, despite the lack of understanding by Christ’s followers or the absence of visible strengthening. Until one day, the harvest will come, when Christ sends His angels, *“Put in your sickle and reap, ...because the harvest of the earth is ripe”* (Rev 14:15). The separation of the sheep and the goats, etc. (Matt 25).

— “As seedtime is followed in due time by harvest, so will the present hiddenness and ambiguousness (unclearness) of the kingdom of God be succeeded by its glorious manifestation” [EBC].

An Application—“The fruit is the *result* of the seed; the end is implicit in the beginning. The infinitely great is already active in the infinitely small. In the present, and indeed in secret, the event is already in motion ... Those to whom it has been given to understand the mystery of the Kingdom (Mark 4–11) see already in its hidden and insignificant beginnings the coming kingdom of God. [*The Parables of Jesus* [London: SCM, 1963], pp. 152-53]

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

4:30—*And He said, “How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it?*

4:31—*“It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil—it is the symbol of smallness, not that it is smaller than all seeds*

4:32—*yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR can NEST UNDER ITS SHADE.”*

— It is a picture of the kingdom of God. It started very small, just Jesus and the 12. Yet as it grows, it becomes great and powerful. Some interpreters see the branches including the Gentiles in the kingdom, but the general application of the truth of the parable is that we should not judge the significance of the results of the kingdom based on the smallness of the size of the kingdom at first.

4:33—*With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it—seems to imply limitations to their hearing, different soils heard differently.*

4:34—*and He did not speak to them without a parable—back to His reason in verse 12, so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive. They were riddles they did not understand.*

- **but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples**—they came to Him, asking the meaning of the parables (verse 10), to understand the proper interpretation. Even they needed Jesus to explain the interpretation of the parables.

Jesus' Demonstrations of Power over Nature, Demons, Illness, and Death

Calming the Sea

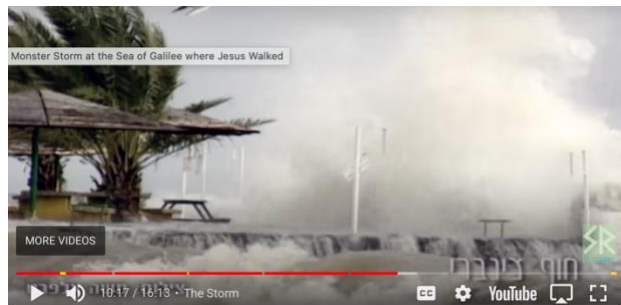
4:35—*On that day, when evening came*—after a full day of teaching in parables

- **He said to them**—Mark uses this as an introductory formula 16 times (Matt 5x; Luke 0). “Them” are *His own disciples* (from verse 34).
- **“Let us go over to the other side”**—of the Sea of Galilee. It seems He was near Capernaum in verse 1, and now would be going to the eastern shore (5:1), perhaps to escape the crowd and to rest.

4:36—*Leaving the crowd*—

- **they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was**—possibly in the boat from which He had been teaching (v. 1), without going ashore. He and His disciples fit in one boat at other times (5:2, 21; 6:30-32; 8:10).
- **and other boats were with Him**—no other information is given about them. However, John 6:23-24 mentions other small boats which seem to be water taxis crossing back and forth on the north end of the Sea. But no information is given here as to whether the wind drove the boats to shore or even if they broke up in the storm on the sea.

4:37—*And there arose a fierce gale of wind*—being the basin of a former volcano, surrounded by high hills, with no notice, suddenly wind would come from the north down the Upper Jordan Valley and then swirl on the Sea, creating waves even 15 feet high. Even today such storms are notorious. This video of storm in 1992.



- **and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up**—It was a catastrophic storm. Each huge wave threatening to swamp the boat at any moment.

4:38—*Jesus Himself was in the stern*—in the most back part of the boat

- **asleep on the cushion**—a sign of Jesus' sovereignty and security. The only place in the gospels that describes Jesus as sleeping. As a human, He must have been very tired to sleep through such a violent storm. The lack of positive response to Christ's teaching in itself can be exhausting.
- **and they woke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”**—they are not only in despair but are angry at Jesus, rebuking Him as He seemed to not care about them perishing. Matthew 8:25 and Luke 8:24 do not include the rebuke. Why were they fearful? Jesus had told them, “*Let us go over to the other side*” (v. 35). They are not going to perish in the sea.

An Application—We may have the same attitude toward God when we are in a suffering situation. We may think He does not care about us because He allows suffering into our lives. Do not think that for even a moment. In 1 Peter 5:7, Peter wrote, *casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you*. This is God's promise to you.

4:39—*And He got up and rebuked the wind*—similar to when He rebukes the demons

- *and said to the sea, “Hush, be still”*—only recorded in Mark. Jesus spoke words and all creation came into being (Gen 1:1-3; John 1:1-3). Now He simply speaks the words, and His creation immediately responded.
- *And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm*—Jesus did what in the Old Testament account of Jonah only God could do in overcoming the raging sea (Jonah 1:14-16). The storm did not just slowly quit raging—the sea became perfectly calm, like the storm never happened. The quiet had to be deafening!! [Compare this picture to the cover of the study book.]
- 4:40**—*And He said to them*—Jesus then rebukes the disciples.
 - *“Why are you afraid?* Their fear of the danger of the storm exposed their lack of faith.
 - *Do you still [not yet] have no faith?”*—that is, having eyes, they do not see, and having ears, they do not hear (4:11-12). Their behavior illustrates their failure to understand the parables (4:13), even after Jesus had explained them to them privately (4:34b). Their lack of faith was not just the fear of the storm but the charge that Jesus did not care about them. Jesus rebuked them, as He will continue to do for their lack of understanding of who He was (7:18; 8:17-18, 21, 32-33; 9:19).

4:41—*They became very much afraid [terrified] and said to one another*—a power even greater than the storm

- *“Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”*—they failed to recognize that God was working in Jesus. Even though they have already seen Jesus work miracles, they seem astonished at what He does here. They do not realize He is the Creator of the sea and the wind.

An Application—Reminding us of the Gerasenes, in chapter 5, where the people were afraid of the man possessed by the demon, yet when Jesus frees the man, the people become more afraid of Jesus and ask Him to leave (5:17). When confronted with the power of Jesus, people become afraid. Jesus said, *“Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”* (Matt 10:28). *“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’”* (Psalm 53:1).

Chapter 5

The Gerasene Demoniac

5:1—*They came to the other side of the sea*—arrival at the destination for the boat trip (4:35). They left in the evening. Sometime during the night was the storm. Now it is obviously daytime.

- *into the country [“region”] of the Gerasenes*—the hills on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. There are various theories as to what town is closest (Gerasa, Gergesa, Gadarenes, or Gerasenes). Although the exact town is unknown, it says “the region,” which would be the Decapolis (v. 20), the Gentile region east of the Sea of Galilee, on the steep hills near the shoreline (v. 13). The exact nearest town is unknown today.

5:2—*When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him—seeing Jesus from a distance* (v. 6), he approached Him to beg Jesus to not torment him (v. 7).

5:3—*and he had his dwelling among the tombs*—the caves in the side of the cliff, used as tombs.

- *And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain*—Jesus was able to do what no man was strong enough to accomplish

5:4—*because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him*—

the uncontrollable strength of multiple demons (“Legion” v. 9), enough strength to drive all the swine into the sea—but all within one man!!

5:5—*Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones*—scary hearing the screaming from the tombs during the night!!

5:6—*Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him* [“fell on his knees in front of Him” in acknowledgement, not “worship”]—knowing Jesus had the power to torment him. The man, of course, would not know of Jesus, but the demons that possessed him did know.

5:7—*and shouting with a loud voice* [“at the top of his voice”], *he said, “What business do we have with each other*—lit. “What do we have in common?” The demons have the disadvantage.

— *Jesus, Son of the Most High God?*—used in a Gentile context in the OT (Gen 14:18-20; Num 24:16; Isa 14:14; Dan 3:26; 4:2), only in Acts 16:17, a Gentile context in the NT. The demons recognized Jesus as God’s Son, as the demons were created by Jesus as angels in eternity past, before becoming demons. *“For by Him (Jesus) all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, ...all things have been created by Him and for Him”* (Col 1:16).

— *I implore You by [the Most High] God, do not torment me!*—evidently, he recognized he was in the presence of the very One who threatens his very existence. [Demons would have been created as good angels in eternity past before 1/3 of them fell from heaven with Satan (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezek 28:12-17; Rev 12:4). The worst of them are prisoned in the abyss, to be released for a short time during the tribulation (Rev 9), but they are all doomed to the eternal lake of fire (Rev 20:2-3, 10).] He seems to be begging the Son in God’s name because he knew that Jesus was subject to His Father.

5:8—*For He had been saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”*—This is a difficult verse at this point. It seems to imply a previous ineffectual command for the unclean spirit to come out of the man. However, Christ’s command was not ineffectual (v. 13). Some think Mark added this verse because it is an essential component of exorcisms (Acts 16:18). Others think the verse should be before verse 7, and it was the reason the demon was asking Christ not to torment it. Most reasonable is that Jesus had commanded the spirit to come out of the man, but now in the event we learn the spirit does not want to merely come out or even be sent out of the country, but to get permission from Jesus to go into the swine (v. 12). So the verse fits the following verses, rather than the preceding verses.

5:9—*And He was asking him, “What is your name?” And he said to Him, “My name is Legion; for we are many”*—If Jesus needed to know the unclean spirit’s identity, it would have meant Jesus’ lack of knowledge had put Him at a disadvantage against the unclean spirit’s knowledge of Jesus’ identity. [WBC] This information is for the disciples (and our) benefit.

An Application—This information is to explain the tremendous power the demons had over the man (vv. 3-4). And even more important, the even greater power of Jesus over the legion of demons. It encourages us in our own battle with Satan (Eph 6:10-12). *Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world* (1 John 4:4).

— “legion” was a Latin military word, designating a unit in the Roman army, including the infantry and cavalry, at this time, numbering between 4,000 to 6,000.

— Using both the singular [“my”] and plural [“we”] seems to be Mark’s way of indicating the multiple demons were speaking through the lips of the one possessed man.

5:10—*And he began to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country*—using the same word “region” as verse 1. Being a Gentile area (not the Jews who believed in the Living God), the demons would be more acceptable and active in the Gentile area.

— In the parallel account in Luke 8:31, the demons “*were entreating Him not to command them to depart into the abyss.*” In Revelation 9:2-11, the abyss is called “*the bottomless pit.*” It is a temporary holding place of the worst of the demons, who are let loose on the earth during the fifth trumpet of the tribulation. In Revelation 20:1-3, Satan is bound in the pit for the thousand years of the Millennial Kingdom. He is released after the thousand years, to deceive the people on the earth for one final battle against Jesus. Then they are defeated by Christ and thrown into the lake of fire, where *they will be tormented day and night forever and ever* (Rev 20:7-10).

5:11—*Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain*—here is the third description of “uncleanness” (“from the tombs,” “unclean spirit,” and “swine”). To Jews, pigs were unclean animals (Lev 11:7), so this emphasizes the fact it was a Gentile area.

5:12—*The demons implored Him, saying, “Send us into the swine so that we may enter them”*

— This tells us that demons can possess animals. They preferred this to being cast into the prison of the abyss. They could then leave the animals to do whatever they wanted to do next.

5:13—*Jesus gave them permission*—it is not the time of the final judgment of Satan and his demons, which is planned by God for the end of the Millennial Kingdom (Rev 20:14).

— *And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine*—being unable to destroy the man, the demons went into the unclean animals.

— *and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them*—[the number of swine is not in the Matthew 8:32 or Luke 9:33 accounts). An average pig weighs about 150 pounds. So this would be about 150 tons (2,000 pounds/ton) of swine flesh hitting the water (it had to cause a tsunami wave across the Sea). This was tangible proof to the people that the demons actually left the man, and that their purpose had been to try to destroy him, as they did the pigs.

— The previous evening, Jesus calmed the waves, now He is causing the wave!!!

— The swine were peacefully feeding on the grass of the mountainside, but when the demons entered them, they “rushed” down to destruction in the water. It shows the destructive nature of these evil forces. Other examples of demons causing people to throw themselves into fire and water are in Matthew 17:15 and Mark 9:22.

— *and they were drowned in the sea*—the swine drowned, but the demons did not. If they had been “drowned,” they would end up in the abyss, the very thing they asked Jesus not to do to them.

5:14—*Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the country*—it seems the swine were actually owned by the people in the city and region, who hired herdsmen to take care of them.

— *And the people came to see what it was that had happened*—evidently the story was so unbelievable, they came to see it for themselves.

5:15—*They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the “legion”; and they became frightened*—the first thing they saw was the formerly demon-possessed man: sitting, clothed, and in his right mind, not screaming, not gashing himself with stones. They were powerless to control the man before, yet Jesus did it. They became afraid of Jesus and His power, maybe wondering what He might do to them.

5:16—*Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine*—now the people not only hear about the man but about what happened to their pigs. It is a lot of income just drowned!! The economic loss becomes their concern. They probably feared further losses if He stayed there. [Remember, He was a Jew in a Gentile area. Was this Jew taking over?]

5:17—*And they began to implore* [urged, begged] *Him to leave their region*. They were not in awe of the power of Jesus or interested in anything about Him. Rather than turning to Him in worship, they just wanted Him to leave. They preferred their darkness (John 3:19). Jesus' miracles repelled some (vv. 15-17) and attracted others (vv. 18-20).

5:18—*As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring* [begging] *Him that he might accompany Him*—he was the object of a great miracle Jesus just performed.

5:19—*And He did not let him, but He said to him, “Go home to your people [Gentiles] and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.”*—This is an interesting contrast to Jesus' instructions to the cleansed leper in 1:44, “*See that you don't tell this to anyone.*” Probably it was because, being a Gentile area, there was little danger that the people would respond wanting to make Jesus their Messiah, like the Jews would. In fact, the people already reacted in wanting Jesus to leave their region. Also, Jesus wanted to proclaim in more Jewish areas, but the more crowds there were, the less He could move and minister (5:31). He did not often go into the Gentile areas, so He wanted the man to proclaim the message there.

5:20—*And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis*—Ten Greek cities on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. This prepared the area for Jesus' further ministry there in 7:31–8:9.

— *what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed*—They were responding to the testimony of the man. They had not seen the miracle.

An Application—Knowing God is the Creator can be concluded from observing creation (Rom 1:17f). The Gospel is special revelation from God. It needs to be told (Rom 10). This is our assignment, too.

— The two responses are interesting. Demons know Jesus has the power, they are doomed to torment, their only request was, “but not yet.” In their evil, they destroy 2,000 pigs. This man, even though a Gentile, does not ask for mercy, yet he receives mercy and deliverance from Jesus. He gives testimony and praise to the greatness of Jesus everywhere he went. There is no redemption for demons—only judgment. Redemption is for humans.

Jairus' Daughter Is Dying

5:21—*When Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side*—going back to the western side of the Sea of Galilee, to the Jewish area.

— *a large crowd gathered around Him*—Jesus had left the crowd to go to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee in 4:35-36—now that He is back in the Jewish west, and the crowds return to Him.

— *and so He stayed by the seashore*—most likely near the area of Capernaum, Peter's hometown and the main town right on the northwest seashore.

5:22—*One of the synagogue officials*—possibly suggests there was more than one, for it is a large synagogue in Capernaum. Luke 7:5 says a Roman centurion, who loved the Jews, built the synagogue for the Jews. Today, its excavated ruins still stand.

- In 586 B.C., the Babylonians exiled the Jews from Judah and destroyed the temple. With no temple, the priests could not function in the sacrificial system. The Jews were in Babylon for 70 years. There, they started synagogues (places to meet) and rabbis (laymen teachers of the Law, later called Pharisees). When they returned to the land and rebuilt the temple, many of the Jews lived in Galilee, about 60 miles away. They would go to Jerusalem for feast days, but kept the new tradition of meeting more often in the synagogues in their hometowns, even using the buildings for schools for the children.
- *named Jairus*—a Jewish official was one responsible for the management of the synagogue building, not a teaching rabbi. Using his name is unusual, as most healings were anonymous.
- *came up, and on seeing Him, fell at His feet*—even though a synagogue official, he humbled himself to Jesus. He did not address Jesus with the pride of his official position.

5:23—*and implored [begged] Him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live”*—obviously, he had heard of Jesus healing others and believed Jesus could heal his daughter, who was seriously ill.

5:24—*And He went off with him*—Jesus does not speak, but He goes with Jairus to his home
— *and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him*—this introduces the next healing episode, and the disciples’ almost rebuke to Jesus’ comment of healing.

The Woman with a Hemorrhage

The Situation Described

5:25—*A [unnamed] woman who had had a hemorrhage*—possibly some kind of menstrual disorder or uterine hemorrhage. Her condition made her ritually unclean (Lev 12:1-8; 15:19-30), so anyone who came in contact with her would also become “unclean.” Touching her would be like Jesus touching a leper. Her illness left her personally, socially, and spiritually cut off.

— *for twelve years*—a really long time to be sick. Also, interestingly, Jairus’ daughter was 12-years-old (5:42). Such different lives they lived for 12 years—both need Jesus!!

5:26—*and had endured much at the hands of many physicians*—rather than getting well, her illness intensified as many physicians tried to help her. Evidently, their “help” involved remedies she had to “endure,” sounding like more suffering in addition to her illness.

- *and had spent all that she had*—she had no money left for any more physicians or cures
- *and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse*—she was beyond all hope and help
- It is interesting that the physician Luke only records that she *could not be healed by anyone* (Luke 8:43). But Mark gives the details of the many physicians she tried, the money she spent, and she actually got worse and was not helped at all. Of course, Luke is correct, too.

5:27—*after hearing about Jesus*—word is spreading about His miraculous healings

- *she came up in the crowd behind Him*—being “unclean,” she would be behind Jesus in the crowd, trying to not be seen. Also, her condition was embarrassing and she probably did not want to draw attention to that. Evidently, no one in the crowd knew who she was or objected to her being there (obviously, not aware of her unclean condition).

5:28—*and touched His cloak For she thought, “If I just touch His garments, I will get well.”*
This woman was not the only one to believe this. *Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or*

countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured (Mark 6:56). Jairus also thought if Jesus could just come and touch his daughter, she would get well. Either wanting Jesus to touch them, or they to touch Jesus.

5:29—*Immediately*—in contrast to 12 years of failed physicians who did not help
— *the flow of her blood was dried up*—including whatever “worse” condition from the physicians
— *and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction*—without any conscious participation by Jesus. He said nothing. He did nothing (like touch her, etc.).

Now the switch to narrative:

5:30—*Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself*—both Jesus and the woman perceived “*immediately*.” She felt in herself that she was healed. He felt in Himself power had gone out.
— *that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth*—with His power He calmed the storm, He cast out a legion of demons, now with no words or actions, His power healed.
— *turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched My garments?”* He didn’t say, “Who did I heal?” He invites the woman to testify of her faith.

5:31—*And His disciples said to Him, “You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’”* All kinds of people were touching Jesus, but she was touching Him in faith.

An Application—All kinds of people know about different things about Jesus, in a sense, touch Him like people in this crowd touched Him. But only a few touch Him in faith for spiritual healing.

5:32—*And He looked around to see the woman who had done this*—of course, He knew who she was, but He wanted her to acknowledge what happened.

5:33—*But the woman fearing and trembling*—reminding us of the disciples’ reaction when Jesus calmed the storm (4:40). The Gentile reaction, to want Jesus to leave, when He cast out the demons (5:17). When confronted with the awesome power of Jesus, people fear.

An Application—Jesus said, “*do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*” (Matt 10:28).

— *aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth*—you cannot hide from God. Also, she needed to testify of her faith in Jesus.

An Application—We are His witnesses. “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations*” (Matt 28:20). This is her testimony of what Jesus did for her. Much as the man who had been delivered from the demons was told by Jesus, “*Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you*” (5:10).

5:34—*And He said to her, “Daughter*—the only time Jesus addressed someone this way
— *your faith has made you well*—Jesus wanted her to know it was her faith in Him, the object of her faith, that healed her, not just touching His garment. The garment had no power.
— *go in peace and be healed of your affliction*”—Yes, she was physically healed. But also, she had “fear and trembling” over what she did, but Jesus said, “*Go in peace.*” Later Jesus said, “*My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful*” (John 14:27). This is the peace this woman now has.

“In her extremity of need—incurable illness and socio-religious isolation—she was a living “dead” person for 12 years. Her restoration to wholeness of life anticipated the dramatic raising of Jairus’ daughter who died after living for 12 years.” [BKC]

Jairus’ Daughter Has Died

5:35—*While He was still speaking*—to the woman He had just healed. Stopping to heal and talk to her became a test of Jairus’ faith. Will Jesus get to his daughter in time to heal her?

— *they came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, “Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?”*

— Matthew’s abbreviated treatment of this event (135 words whereas Mark used 374) accounts for Matthew’s statement that the girl had already died (Matt 9:18).

— Jesus had *went off with him* (5:24). But the news was addressed to Jairus, “Your daughter...”

— *Why trouble the Teacher anymore?*—From their perspective, Jesus could heal, but He could not raise the dead. Her death ended all human hope. But Jesus would not be dissuaded from going.

5:36—*But Jesus*—This is true over and over again—Things would be so different, *but Jesus...*

— *Overhearing* [some translate this word as “ignore” or “overlook”—Louw & Nida] *what was being spoken*—Jesus heard the words but refused to accept its conclusions they were saying.

— *said to the synagogue official, “Do not be afraid any longer*—lit. “stop fearing” his daughter’s death. [Contrast the woman who was afraid because of her healing (5:33).]

— *only believe*—“keep on believing.” He just witnessed the faith of the woman (5:34), and Jesus healing her. Now Jesus is telling him to extend that faith beyond sickness to death.

5:37—*And He allowed no one to accompany Him*—except the parents (v. 40)

— *except Peter and James and John the brother of James*—the inner circle of His disciples (3:16-17). Jesus separated Himself from the crowd following Him. James was the first apostle to be martyred (Acts 12:2). Peter (Acts 2) and John (Rev) became the leaders of the new church age.

5:38—*They came to the house of the synagogue official*—where the dead child was, where the father had asked Jesus to come (v. 23).

— *and He saw a commotion, and people loudly weeping and wailing*—as is common at the death of someone, professional mourners were hired. Because Jairus was a prominent man, probably a lot of mourners (Jer 9:17; Amos 5:16).

5:39—*And entering in, He said to them, “Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died*—Jesus rebuked the mourners. Since her death was not final, He spoke of it as sleep.

— *but is asleep*—probably meaning the girl’s death would turn out to be like “a sleep” from which she was awakened. Her condition was not final and irrevocable (Luke 8:55; John 11:11-14).

5:40—*They began laughing at Him*—They did not believe Him. They mocked Him. Their reaction proves that the girl was dead.

— *But putting them all out*—not only was their response to the death inappropriate (from Jesus’ perspective), but their mockery of Him made Him want them out. They would not see the miracle. They lost their opportunity because of their reaction to Jesus.

— *He took along the child’s father and mother and His own companions, and entered the room where the child was.*

5:41—*Taking the child by the hand*—to physically associate His power with her healing in their minds (in contrast to the woman whom He did not touch to heal). In the Law, touching a dead body

makes one unclean (Num 6:7), but when Jesus touched her, she was alive. And it was instantaneous. And Jesus addressed the dead person directly.

— ***He said to her, “Talitha kum!” (which translated means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”).***

— Mark is the only one to record Jesus’ command in Aramaic and translate it into Greek, except the phrase “I say to you,” which are the Greek words, emphasizing Jesus’ authority over death.

— Luke 8:55 clearly states that Jesus brought her back to life, “...*her spirit returned.*”

An Application—Some call this a “resurrection,” but the Bible says ...*the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body* (1 Cor 15:42), i.e. resurrection to an eternal body. It is probably better to say this girl was absolutely dead, “*her soul was departing (for she died)* (as Rachel in Gen 35:18), but Jesus restored her to life. Luke writes, “*Her spirit returned...*” (Luke 8:55). Where her soul/spirit was in the interim, we are not told. This also happened to several others: 1 Kings 17:17-22; 2 Kings 13:20-21; Matthew 9:18-30; Luke 7:12-15; John 11:39-44; Acts 9:36-41; 20:9-12.

5:42—***Immediately the girl got up and began to walk***—not only is she brought back to life, she was also healed of the whatever that had killed her. Restored to life and health, to her normal self.

Reminding us of when Jesus stopped the storm on the Sea, and it became instantly calm (4:39).

— ***for she was twelve years old***—the age when a young woman might begin her menstruation. In contrast to the previous women whose blood would not stop (just a thought). Also, the woman with the hemorrhage would have certainly be close to death.

— ***And immediately they were completely astounded***—to be so astonished as to almost fail to comprehend what one has experienced [Louw & Nida]

5:43—***And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this***—for sure, the mourners would now realize she is not dead. And the person who brought the news of her death now see her alive. He does not want it to be broadcast about to keep the gawking crowds away.

— ***and He said that something should be given her to eat***—which transitions into the next miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, when Jesus commanded His disciples to feed the crowds (6:37).

Chapter 6

Jesus’ Rejection by the Nazarenes

6:1—***Jesus went out from there*** [Capernaum, by the Sea of Galilee] ***and came into His hometown***—Nazareth, where He grew up (Matt 2:23; Luke 16:16), at the top of a cliff, overlooking the north side of the Jezreel Valley, southwest of the Sea, in the surrounding hills, ~40 miles away.

— ***and His disciples followed Him***—This is not a personal visit to His family. Rather, He comes as a rabbi accompanied by His disciples. The disciples will see the negative response of these people to Jesus, which will, in part, prepare them for a similar response in their own ministries.

6:2—***When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue*** (Luke 4:16-31)—this is the last mention in Mark of His presence in a synagogue. The synagogue was a local place of teaching in which any rabbi was allowed to speak on the Sabbath.

— ***and the many listeners were astonished***—they were perplexed by His teaching, in light of their knowledge of Him growing up there. They asked 5 questions:

— ***saying, (1) “Where did this man get these things***—belittling Him, calling Him “this man.” Was the source heaven or human (11:30), or from Satan (3:22)?

— ***and (2) what is this wisdom*** [only used here in Mark] ***given to Him***—“*for He was teaching them as one having authority, not as the scribes*” (Mark 1:22).

— (3) [how] *such miracles as these performed by His hands?* Obviously, they had not concluded these miracles came from God. *He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief* (Matt 13:58). He only healed *a few sick people* (v. 5). But they must have heard about them from other places around Galilee. But miracles do not take place in the absence of faith. They would not believe His teaching, so He did very few miracles there.

6:3—(4) *“Is not this the carpenter*—the only place in the New Testament where the writer refers to Jesus as a carpenter, one who works with stone and metal, as well as wood. To associate “carpenter” with only wood is a modern definition. In Israel, wood was mostly decorative, as it was rare. Mostly there was stone. The point of the criticism is they thought Jesus was a common worker, like probably most of them were.

An Application—Actually, reminding us Jesus did not come as a King. He had a humble birth and upbringing. *He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows...* (Isa 53:2-4). This is seen in the reaction of the people in Nazareth to the person of Jesus and His ministry.

— (5) *the son of Mary*—if Joseph was alive, He would be called “son of Joseph,” as previously (John 6:42). Also, Jesus’ teaching of God as His Father, would be confusing if Joseph was still alive as His father. But Joseph must have lived during Jesus’ growing up years, to father at least another 6 children.

— *and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?* They seem to not believe in Jesus during His lifetime (3:20-21). After His resurrection, they are part of the believers in the Upper Room when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:14). The Apostle James is the first one martyred (Acts 12:2). So the James, the head of the Jerusalem church, was the brother of Jesus (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:9, 12). He also wrote James and also Jude who wrote the book of Jude (Jude 1).

— *Are not His sisters here with us?*—more than 1 sister

An Application—The Roman Catholic church teaches that Mary was a virgin perpetually, i.e., had no other children (because the curse of sin is pain in childbirth, and they teach she was immaculately conceived and is without sin). They and others say these are not really her children but either children from Joseph’s previous marriage or cousins. Obviously, they are ignoring the text itself, which not only says they were the brothers of Jesus but even names them!!

— *And they took offense at Him*—a hostility, repelled to the point of abandoning belief in Him. In contrast to the woman with the hemorrhage and Jairus, who both responded in faith.

6:4—*Jesus said to them, “A prophet*—much of Jesus’ ministry was like the OT prophets, but He was much more than a prophet—He was God in the flesh (John 1:14; Matt 11:9).

— *is not without honor except in his hometown*—Also an old proverb: Familiarity breeds contempt. Like His own family, these people identified Him too closely with themselves.

An Application—When a person goes to an unfamiliar place, all the people know is what the person chooses to reveal at that time. Usually, evangelism is harder with your family and friends than with total strangers, as they have to deal with their own familiarity of you and what they expect.

— *and among his own relatives and in his own household*—Mark 3:20-21 already stated that His own people *were saying, “He has lost His senses.”* Jesus’ rejection was not only by those who knew Him but even by those who knew Him best—His own family.

6:5—*And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them*—Jesus did not come primarily as a miracle-worker. His ministry was to bring people to faith in God. Miracles do not take place in the absence of faith. They would not believe His teaching, so He did very few miracles there.

6:6—*And He wondered* [amazed] *at their unbelief*—they rejected Him and His teaching and Jesus is amazed. Only here in Mark is amazement ascribed to Jesus. But soon the disciples will experience that rejection, too.

An Application—Yet they are often the very ones we most want to believe. Jesus specifically went to Nazareth twice. Also He appeared after His resurrection to His brothers, and they finally believed. Jesus said, “*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me*” (Matt 10:37). Then He said, “*For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother*” (Matt 12:50). Rejected at first, in the end, His physical family became His spiritual family!

— *And He was going around the villages teaching*—not returning to Nazareth again that is recorded.

Sending Out the 12

6:7—*And He summoned the twelve*—When Jesus first called them, He said, “*I will make you fishers of men*” (1:17). They had been with Jesus, privately and publicly, saw the miracles, heard the teaching. They were being prepared, and He decided when it was time to send them out, as representatives of Jesus. They would go to many places where He personally could not go.

— *and began to send them out in pairs*—*It is written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true*” (John 8:17; Deut 17:6). They were Jesus’ representatives, in word and power. They did not go out on their own, their own idea. They were “sent” ones.

— *and gave them authority over the unclean spirits*—this would authenticate their preaching
An Application—This was a specific situation of Jesus with His disciples He sent out. This is not instruction for everyone sent out (missionaries) today. What do we apply and not apply? We do have the same message to turn people to faith in Christ (Matt 28:20). And where we can, we help people get away from demonism and help them get well from illnesses. But we do not have the assignment of casting out demons or healing the sick. The disciples had that special ability specifically given by Christ for this time and situation. Perhaps we could also apply the provisions. [I remember our first trip to Romania, I had 2 large suitcases, filled with all the clothes I owned! I soon found it was a bad decision as they came with only the clothes on their backs!] Also, we may apply the idea that if someone does not listen to the message of Christ, move on. The more you tell them, the more accountable they will be at the Great White Throne someday (Rev 20:11-15).

6:8—*and He instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey*—more instructions on what not to take than on what to take. They were not to be self-sufficient. They were to have absolute trust in God to supply all their needs, through the beneficiaries of their ministry (v. 10).

— *Except* [Gk. an exception, “but only”] *a mere staff*—a walking stick

— *no bread*—nothing to eat

— *no bag*—this may refer specifically to a “beggar’s bag” [BAG, p. 662]

— *no money in their belt*—no way to buy provisions, especially food

6:9—*but to wear sandals*—just the sandals on their feet, no extra ones

— *and He added, “Do not put on two tunics”*—a change in clothing. Often they would use the extra tunic as a blanket at night, if they were not in a house.

6:10—If they receive you—*And He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town*— It implies an extended visit. Even if more comfortable or attractive lodgings were offered to them, they were to stay put. It can be tempting to move to a “better” place, but that is very insulting to the hosts at the first place. Also, at one place, others can find them. If they move around, others may not find them.

6:11—If they do not receive you—*“Any place that does not receive you or listen to you*—the message of faith in Jesus

— *as you go out from there*—as Jesus left Nazareth, when they rejected Him (v. 5-6).

— *shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them*—This was a testimony of protest against them (Acts 13:51; 18:6).

6:12—*They went out and (1) preached that men should repent* (change their mind about who Jesus was and His message of faith, not works of keeping the Mosaic Law)

6:13—*And they were (2) casting out many demons*—just an observation—there seems to be more demonic activity at the time of the first coming and then the Second Coming of Christ.

— *and were (3) anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.*

— This mission of the Twelve was an extension of the ministry of Jesus, beyond His personal presence. Their independent mission will not be until after Jesus’ resurrection/ascension.

John the Baptist’s Death

6:14—*And King Herod* [Antipas]—“king” as people spoke of him, not his official title, but he was the Roman ruler (tetrarch—of one of four political divisions of Israel). He was born in 20 B.C., to Herod the Great and his Samaritan wife Malthace. He ruled over Galilee and Perea (east of the Dead Sea) from 4 B.C. (at the age of 16) to A.D. 39, when he was banished to Gaul [ancient Germany/France area]. He built the city of Tiberias, on the southwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and named it after the ruling Caesar, Tiberias.

— *heard of it*—the ministry of Jesus and His disciples (vv. 7-13).

— *for His name had become well known*—Matthew wrote that Herod had heard “*the report concerning Jesus*” (Matt 14:1), and Luke wrote that Herod heard of “*all that was happening*” (Luke 9:7). So Herod and the people heard about the ministry of Jesus and His disciples.

— *and people were saying* (explaining Jesus’ power), (1) “*John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him*”—yet in his lifetime, the Baptist never did any miracles when he was alive (John 10:41), but evidently, his rumored resurrection status was thought to give him that power!

— Mark now has mentioned that John the Baptist is dead, so he interrupts the telling of the mission of the 12 to tell about how and why John the Baptist was killed.

6:15—*But others were saying, (2) “He is Elijah”*—as a prophecy from Malachi 3:1; 4:5.

— *And others were saying, (3) “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old”*—so the people had different viewpoints as to who Jesus was, but evidently, no one was saying He was God!!

6:16—*But when Herod heard of it, he kept saying, “John, whom I beheaded, has risen!”*—Herod evidently concluded this from his own guilty conscience. It seems he had not heard about Jesus before he killed John.

Verses 17-29 are a flashback account, in which Mark explained how John had died. Interesting, Mark devoted 14 verses to John's death but only 3 to his ministry!

6:17—*For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison*—in Machaerus, in Perea, a fortress east of the Dead Sea.

- *on account of Herodias*—the daughter of Aristobulus, the son of Herod the Great and Mariamne, and therefore the niece of Herod Antipas.
- *the wife of*—according to Josephus (a Jewish historian of that time in “The Antiquities of the Jews” 18.5.1-2), Herod first married a daughter of the Arabian king, Aretas IV (just east of Perea). He divorced her (causing political problems) to marry his niece Herodias, who had divorced a Herod Philip (not the Philip of Luke 3:1), but she and Philip had a daughter Salome. John has repeatedly denounced this marriage as unlawful.
- *his brother Philip*—There is much confusion as Herod the Great had 8 wives and many sons, also named Herod. Likely, this is not Herod Philip the Tetrarch (Hoehner, *Antipas*, 132-136), who is recorded as married to Salome, the daughter of Herodias and her first husband Philip, who seems to be another “brother Philip.”
- *because he had married her*—evidently, after they had each divorced their previous mates.

6:18—*For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife”*—Historically, Herod had converted to Judaism, putting himself under the Mosaic Law, so his divorce and remarriage were against the Law (Lev 18:16; 20:21). Also, John's continuing to talk about it, created tension with Perea, whose king was already upset at the divorce of Herod and his daughter.

6:19—*Herodias had a grudge against him [John] and wanted to put him to death and could not do so*—evidently, the whole situation was more annoying to Herodias than to Herod.

6:20—*for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man*—Herod's testimony about John. (Similar to Pilate's dilemma with Jesus in 15:6-15).

- *and he kept him safe*—so Herod was protecting John, not allowing him to be put to death
- *And when he heard him, he was very perplexed*—he did not understand John's message
- *but he used to enjoy listening to him*—but he liked to listen to him anyway

6:21—*A strategic [key] day came*—from Herodias' perspective, her time to get her desire.

- *when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee*—only for the men, much drinking for these pagans, maybe in Tiberias, the Roman city he built where Herod had established the residency for his court. Or possibly near the prison that held John, as it would be a long distance for the executioner to go to the prison and return to Tiberias, still at the time of the banquet.

6:22—*and when the daughter of Herodias herself [from her marriage to Philip] came in and danced*—these dances were often by professional prostitutes in that society in those days, so this dance was most likely a sexual pantomime for the lords and military commanders and men.

- *she pleased Herod and his dinner guests*—they liked it
- *and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you.”*

6:23—*And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom”*—a figurative statement, not to be taken literally as he did not have the authority to give away half his kingdom—it belonged to Rome.

6:24—*And she went out*—women were not at the banquet, except for the girl dancer
— *and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist”*—her quick reply shows she has been looking for an opportunity to kill him.

6:25—*Immediately*—very quickly, before he had time to change his mind
— *she came in a hurry to the king and asked*—so there is not time for Herod to think and change his mind.
— *saying, “I want you to give me at once*—right now, not later
— *the head of John the Baptist on a platter”*—the young girl added “on a platter.” She did not just want John killed, she wanted the evidence given to her.

6:26—*And although the king was very sorry*—only used one other time in Mark 14:34, describing Jesus’ agony in Gethsemane. This rare usage shows the extent of Herod’s feelings and sadness
— *yet because of his oaths*—which were considered irrevocable, unable to be changed (Dan 6:12)
— *and because of his dinner guests*—his popularity with *his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee*
—*he was unwilling to refuse her*—he could have refused her, but he was unwilling to do it.

6:27—*Immediately*—again, hurry before he changed his mind
— *the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his [John’s] head*—
— *And he went and had him beheaded in the prison*—at Machaerus, the fortress east of the Dead Sea

6:28—*and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl*—what she requested
— *and the girl gave it to her mother*—her desire all along

6:29—*When his disciples heard about this, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb*—the ministry of John, as the forerunner of Christ, has ended. “*When Jesus heard about John, He withdrew from there in a boat...*” (Matt 14:13).

The 12 Return

6:30—*The apostles* [sent-out ones] *gathered together with Jesus*—possibly near Capernaum
— *and they reported to Him all that they had done* (traveling, casting out demons, and healing) *and taught*, for which they were sent out in verses 7-13. [The “Twelve” becomes an official term after the ascension, in the formation of the church.]

6:31—*And He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.” (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)*—This was a time to recuperate after their mission, unlike references to Jesus’ desire to be alone for prayer (1:35; 6:45-46). Mark does not record any evaluation Jesus may have made of their work. Instead, there is a care about them as workers, that they find some rest. Their ministry time was tiring.

An Application—We have human bodies. Rest is so important. Someone has said: Come apart and rest so you don’t come apart!! God built the rest of Sabbath into the creation (Gen 2:2-3).

6:32—*They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves*—the only way to get away from the crowds was to go out in a boat. Luke 9:10 says this was near Bethsaida. It seems to be a Jewish context and on the Jewish (western) side of the Upper Jordan, near Jewish Bethsaida. The feeding of the 5,000 is also in Matthew 14:13-21; Luke 9:11-17; and John 6:1-13. Mark later referred to this miracle twice (6:52; 8:17-21), showing that the disciples did not learn what they should have from it.



- At this point in Mark, this meal contrasts the selfish feast of Herod in verses 17-29, which resulted in the death of a righteous and holy man.
- Also, the disciples *did not even have time to eat*, providing the context of the next miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 men.

Feeding the 5,000

6:33—*The people saw them going, and many recognized them and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them*—around the north end of the Sea of Galilee. Also, the people could see the boat on the water and where it went.

6:34—*When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them*—rather than being frustrated, as He was trying to escape the crowd and rest, but they had followed Him.

- *because they were like sheep without a shepherd*—His compassion caused Him to see they were spiritually lost and helpless, without guidance, nourishment, or protection. Jesus is the true Shepherd (John 10:1-21).
- *and He began to teach them many things*—about the kingdom of God (Luke 9:11). Spiritual food was what they needed the most—but physical food was the need they realized.

6:35—*When it was already quite late, His disciples came to Him and said, “This place is desolate and it is already quite late*—two pressing factors: (1) quite late and (2) a desolate (remote) place.

6:36—*send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat*—they assumed Jesus wanted to dismiss the people so they could provide their own food, so they came to Jesus on behalf of the people. There does not seem to be a sense of urgency or need for a miracle, seeing they could go to the surrounding areas to buy their own food. So it was desolate, yet the villages were not far away.

- John 6:6 says, Jesus *knew what He was intending to do*.

6:37—*But He answered them, “You give them something to eat!”*—Jesus did not dispute with them the fact that the people needed food. But Jesus wanted them to realize their inability to provide it, so then Jesus’ ability will make an even greater impression on them. He emphasizes “you.”

- *And they said to Him, “Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat?”*—one denarius was a day’s wage, so 200 would be almost an entire year’s wages for a day laborer (Matt 20:2). And, of course, they did not have that much money either.

6:38—*And He said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go look!”*—Jesus is already anticipating His solution to the problem. They do not have enough money, now Jesus makes them realize they do not even have enough available food either.

- *And when they found out, they said, “Five [loaves], and two fish”*—although with all these people, these seem enormously inadequate, “...but what are these for so many people?” (John 6:9)—however, they are an essential part of the miracle.
- John 6:9 also says they are “barley loaves,” which were small and flat. A person could easily eat several of them at a single meal.

6:39—*And He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass*—green grass would date this miracle probably in the late winter or early spring. John dated it as near Passover, in late March or early April (John 6:4).

6:40—*They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties*—it truly boggles the mind to read of all the meanings people give to the 100s and 50s, etc., getting a spiritual meaning from numbers. Unless the Bible gives a spiritual meaning to the number, we should not either. Groups of 50s would be 100 groups. Groups of 100s would be 50 groups, just of the men, plus women and children (Matt 14:21). Counting the number of groups would easily determine the 5,000 men.

6:41—*And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed [the food]*—there is no command to pray before eating, giving thanks to God for the food, but it was practiced by Jesus (Matt 14:19). And it was a Jewish custom.

- *the food* is not in the Greek text. Jesus blessed God, and gave Him thanks (Mark 7:34; 14:22-23; John 11:41—where Jesus gives God thanks before doing a miracle). [Mark 7:6 sounds like Jesus is blessing the fish, but the Greek actually says, “having given thanks” omitting “them.”].

An Application—So the appropriate thing is to pray before eating, giving thanks to God for the food. But it should be done out of a grateful heart, not as a legalistic law of works.

- *and broke the loaves and He kept giving them to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all*—it seems like the miracle happened when He was breaking the loaves and dividing up the fish.

6:42—*They all ate and were satisfied*—to give them food so that they didn’t want any more. [Louw & Nida] All 5,000 men, plus women and children (Matt 14:21).

- Mark makes no mention of the reaction of the crowd. Are they oblivious to the whole miracle? But John 6:14 says, *when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world,”* probably referring to Deuteronomy 18:15, where Moses predicts a prophet like himself (when they ate the manna in the wilderness) who will come into the world.
- But Mark does mention the reaction of the disciples in 6:52—*for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.*

6:43—*and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish*—No mention of what happened to that food. But the point is that Jesus super-provided, He didn’t just give only enough. There was more left over than they had at the beginning.

6:44—*There were five thousand men who ate the loaves*—adding how many groups there were.

6:45—*Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side* (a political border) *to Bethsaida*—there seems to be two Bethsaidas. One is Bethsaida in Galilee (John 12:21), on the Jewish west side of the river, and one on the Roman eastern side [Herod Philip elevated the village to the status of a city and named it after Bethdaida Julias, the daughter of the

Roman emperor Augustus (Josephus, *Antiquities*, XVIII, 28)]. They were divided by the Upper Jordan River on the northern end of the Sea of Galilee.

An Application—Think of Grand Rapids, east of the Grand River and west of the River (“West Side”). Two totally different places, divided by the river, but all GR.

- This transitions into the next story of Jesus walking on the water and why the disciples were in the boat and Jesus was not.
- *while He Himself was sending the crowd away*—evening now, so they went home?

6:46—*After bidding them farewell*—the disciples in the boat? Or the crowd?

- *He left for the mountain to pray*—three times in Mark when Jesus withdraws to pray: after a busy Sabbath in Capernaum (1:35), here after the multiplication of the loaves (6:46), and in Gethsemane, after the Lord’s Supper (14:32-36).

An Application—Praying is at the same time the easiest thing to do and the hardest thing to do. Paul said prayer is not just spiritual, but “*pray with the mind also*” (1 Cor 14:15) and “*Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving*” (Col 4:2). Prayer acknowledges that God is in control, and you are not!!

Walking on the Water

6:47—*When it was evening*, after sunset, but before dark

- *the boat was in the middle* [a position, “in the midst of,” “*a long distance from the land*” (Matt 14:24)] *of the sea*—Jesus had left them at the shore, when they got into the boat (v. 45). He had sent the disciples in the boat on the Sea of Galilee, ahead of Him.
- *and He was alone on the land*—He had gone up a mountain alone to pray (v. 46), for several hours, until the fourth watch (v. 48).
- The Sea is about 7 miles across in the wider northern part, so they were about 3.5 miles out.

6:48—*Seeing them*—a miracle itself, to see from the mountain, in the nighttime, from that distance, in a storm

- *straining*—a Gk word often translated “torture” or “torment.” As is usual on the Sea, the wind came up suddenly. It was not windy when they left Jesus on the shore or they would not have left
- *at the oars*—they would be rowing against the wind, trying to cross over to the Capernaum area.
- *for the wind was against them*—coming from the North down the Jordan River between the hills. This strong wind is crucial to the event in contrast to v. 51, *and the wind stopped*.
- *at about the fourth watch of the night*—Roman reckoning divided the night into four watches: 6-9 P.M., 9-12 P.M., 12-3 A.M., 3-6 A.M., so this would be between 3-6 in the morning hours, so it seems they had been straining for several hours, and it was very dark.
- *He came to them*—indicating He wanted to help them in their struggle with the wind
- *walking on the sea*—at this point, the waves would be huge, as the wind swept over them
- *and He intended to pass by them*—this does not mean to “bypass” them. It makes no sense that He would come out to them but walk past them. Rather, it is a phrase from the Old Testament, when God revealed Himself as God to His followers (Ex 33:19, 22; 1 Kings 19:11).

6:49—*But when they saw Him walking on the sea*—on the huge waves, in the wind, in the dark.

- *they supposed that it was a ghost*—it was not a hallucination, because they all saw Him. There is no such thing as a group hallucination. But they all did see some form of light in the darkness of the night and storm, and they concluded that it was a ghost, a phantom (Gk. *phantasma*)

— **and cried out**—they have been struggling against the waves and wind for hours. They are tired (after feeding 5,000, and now it is late at night). They had left Jesus on the shore, so they definitely were not expecting Him to appear, walking on the water.

6:50—**for they all saw Him and were terrified**—they all saw the same thing

— **But immediately**—quickly, to calm them

— **He spoke with them**—it is the words of Jesus, in the Scriptures, that give comfort and hope. He was able to make His voice known to them, to be heard above the wind storm.

— **and said to them, “Take courage**—“in the NT, it is an imperative [word]: have firmness of purpose in the face of danger or testing.” [Louw & Nida]

— **it is I**—lit. “I AM”—God’s memorial name to all generations (Ex 3:14-15). The storm is still raging, but God is there with them, so they do not need to be afraid. However, the disciples probably only recognized Him as Jesus. In their state of mind, it is a stretch to think they concluded He was saying He is the great “I AM.”

— In the 4:41 storm, the disciples asked, “*Who is this that the wind and the sea obey Him?*” But now, Jesus answers Who He is: *it is I AM!* God Himself.

— **do not be afraid**—words of encouragement.

— Matthew 14:28-32 records, “*Peter said to Him, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” When they got into the boat, the wind stopped.*—Peter took his eyes off Jesus and looked at his raging circumstances instead.

6:51—**Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped**—after He got in the boat, the wind stopped, as it did before in 4:35-41. This time, He did not command the wind. It just stopped when He wanted it to.

— **and they were utterly astonished**—they are so slow to believe Jesus is God.

6:52—Mark interprets their amazement negatively—and it began with their failure to understand the previous miracle of the loaves—**for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves**—when He just that day had fed 5,000 men, plus women and children, and they themselves participated in that miracle by handing out the food—they should have concluded Jesus was God.

— **but their heart was hardened**—Mark alone records this conclusion. Their hearts are like the response of Christ’s opponents. They could not gain insight from what Jesus did, who He was.

Bringing the Sick to Jesus

6:53—**When they had crossed over**—They were headed to Bethsaida (v. 45), but probably due to the storm, they landed further away in Gennesaret (at Magdala on the map).

— **they came to land at Gennesaret**—a fertile plain, 2 miles wide and 4 miles long, along the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee between Tiberius and Capernaum, near the base of Mt. Arbel. The Sea of Galilee was also called the Sea of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1). (For those who have travelled to Israel, this is where we get on the tourist boats to ride to the middle of the Sea.)

— **and moored to the shore**—tied the boat to the shore so they could get out on land.

6:54—**When they got out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him**—because of its fertile grain fields, it was a densely populated area.

6:55—*and ran about that whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard He was*—as in 1:32-34; 3:7-12. Jesus did not go to the nearby Roman city of Tiberius, but the city was founded on many hot springs, which meant the area had a large number of sick people, hoping to be healed.

6:56—*Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured*—It seems He was not teaching here, but Jesus honored this means of expressing their faith in Him, such as the woman with the flow of blood had (5:28-29).

Chapter 7

Commands of God and Traditions of Men

In Mark's narrative here, the words "unclean" or "defiled" occur in verses 2, 5, 15, 18, 20, 23 and "tradition" occurs in verses 3, 5, 8, 9, 13. These verses do not appear in Matthew's account. In Jesus' day, the Jews communicated the traditions of the elders orally from generation-to-generation. About A.D. 200, the rabbis completed the Mishnah, which became the basis for the Talmud in A.D. 425. [Constable, p. 107] These were the rabbis' interpretations/applications (called the Talmud or Rabbinical Judaism) of the Mosaic Law (called the Torah or Levitical Judaism). "If the Law was silent or vague about a particular subject, one could be sure that the tradition would be vocal and explicit!" [EBC] For example, today, in Israel, doing no work on the Sabbath (Levitical Law) has been defined (Rabbinical Law) as no cooking (turning on a stove—therefore all food is cooked the day before and served cold on the Sabbath), no pushing an elevator button (so Sabbath hotel elevators stop by themselves every other floor, where Jews would be staying), nor turning a light on or off (therefore using special Sabbath day short candles that extinguish themselves about bedtime). Of course, their clothing also adheres to Rabbinical traditions.

7:1—*The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem*—the religious leaders from the temple who came to investigate Jesus (as in 3:22-30), but we do not know where this occurs.

7:2—*and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed*—they did not mean hygienic washing, but ceremonially washing.

7:3—*(For the Pharisees and all the Jews*—Mark gives us cultural information—i.e., it was the accepted practice of generalized Jews. The explanation seems to indicate Mark may have had a Gentile audience.

— *do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders*—not just the Mosaic Law. Although this tradition has had multiple changes, basically, first one is to have clean hands with soap and water, then blessed water in a two-handled cup is poured from the left hand 2 or 3 times over the right hand. Then switch places on the cup (2 handles are to separate the one already cleansed from the one needs to be cleansed) and pour from the right hand over the left, saying a blessing while doing it. [Google search]



7:4—*and when they come from the market place* [typically where they would encounter Gentiles], *they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves*—from contact with the unclean Gentiles

— *and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers [jugs] and copper pots.*)—used in cooking food.

— The rabbis considered any break of any of these traditions to be sin.

An Application—Romans 14 talks about believers with opinions of things not prescribed in the Bible. Those with the opinions are not to judge others who do not keep what their opinions say is right or wrong (e.g., playing cards). Likewise, those with opinions should not consider their opinions as righteousness. They are just their opinions. Many traditions start as just opinions.

7:5—*The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk [figure of speech meaning habitual daily conduct] according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?”*—Mark explained the tradition in verses 1-4, now he is ready to talk about it. They ask Jesus for an explanation because, as their teacher, He was responsible for them. Also, that the disciples did not wash their hands implied they did not do other things [*walk*] of the traditions.

— Jesus did not explain or justify His disciples’ conduct. Instead, He addressed the issue of the source of religious authority (vv. 6-13) and the nature of defilement (vv. 14-23).

The Source of Religious Authority (vv. 6-13)

7:6—*And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you—in Isaiah 29:13.*

— *Hypocrites*—from Gk *hupokriton*, meaning to play a part, an actor.

— *as it is written:*

‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS—their religious traditions that can be observed by others, to look religious, to look like they are worshipping God, but it is often an act.

An Application—How many Sunday morning trips to church are spent arguing in the car, but putting on a quiet, pious face when walking through the church door. It is an act!!

BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME—their spiritual heart is away from God

An Application—Religions have all kinds of man-made rules to obey that have nothing to do with whether their heart is right with God. For example, going to a priest for confession of sin, doing “good works” and fasting (seen by an ash mark on the forehead), and praying to be noticed by others, with fancy words or long prayers (Jesus was against this—Matt 6:1-13). Yet people think that doing those things are righteous acts before God—but their hearts are far away from Christ.

7:7—**‘BUT IN VAIN** [being without any result] **DO THEY WORSHIP ME**—Jesus said, “*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth* (John 23-24), not in traditions made up by men, which kinds of worship accomplishes nothing. It is without any result, it is empty.

— **TEACHING AS DOCTRINES** [claiming to be from God] **THE PRECEPTS** [commandments created by men] **OF MEN**’—Roman Catholicism is full of that, but most Protestantism is, too.

How many Christians think a church building is “holy ground”?

An Application—Paul wrote, “*why...do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence*” (Col 2:20-23).

7:8—**“Neglecting** [“to stop, to leave”] **the commandment[s] of God**—plural, any commands of God — **you hold** [“to cause to continue, to keep”] **to the tradition of men**”—

An Application—One old religious tradition was to not dance because it would lead to sexual fornication. There was lots of teaching about not dancing!! But some teens would lie (breaking God’s law) to their parents so they could secretly go to dances (men’s tradition).

7:9—*He was also saying to them, “You are experts [a person who has authoritative or skillful knowledge] at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition*—legalism claims it is helping us to keep the commandments of God, but instead, they end up making laws God has not made and then treating them as equally authoritative as God’s law, and it actually creates a way to get around following God’s law. Jesus gives an example.....

7:10—*“For Moses said, ‘HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER’; and, ‘HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH’* [Exo 20:12a; 21:16].

— The law is clear, but has to be interpreted—what is “honor” or what is “speaks evil”? It seems that children have some responsibility to the parents for adequate financial support and/or practical care for their parents’ needs in their old age (1 Tim 5:4, 8). [But, for example, wonder if you financially help the parents but they spend all the money at the casinos? Or drinking?]

7:11—*but you say, ‘If a man says to his father or his mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God)’*—all they had to do is “declare” (Corban) something was dedicated to God. That did not mean they had to give it to a priest or even give up using it on themselves. The “Talmud” says, “It is a greater offense to teach anything contrary to the voice of the Rabbis than to contradict Scripture itself.” [Constable, p. 109]

7:12—*you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother*—it goes to the person’s motivation.

An Application—1 Timothy 5:1-16, *...first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God, ...if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.* Families are to especially take care of their own widows, so the other believers can help widows who do not have families.

7:13—*thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that*—the commandment was to honor/help parents, but their tradition of Corban, allowed them to set aside God’s commandment in order to do their own commandment. The scribes distorted and overshadowed the Old Testament.

The Nature of Defilement (vv. 14-23)

7:14—*After He called the crowd to Him again, He began saying to them, “Listen to Me, all of you, and understand*—the crowd—but especially the lack of understanding by the disciples is something Mark refers to in 6:51; 7:18; 8:14-21. Jesus calls people to listen to the words, and to understand the meaning of the words (interpretation).

7:15—*there is nothing outside the man which can defile him (morally) if it goes into him*—food, even if it is eaten with ceremonially unclean hands or declared clean by kosher food laws, cannot defile a person. Only people can be unclean, not things!!

— *but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man*—out of the heart and the will, i.e., what one thinks, says, desires, and does. These make the whole person unclean. Jeremiah 17:9-10 says, *“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick...”* The intent of the Mosaic Law regarding “unclean” food (Lev 11; Deut 14) was not that the food defiled but disobeying God’s command about the food defiled one. Jesus actually broadens what defiles a person as a person’s heart. Food and unclean hands are narrow and easy to do.

7:16—*[“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”]*—this verse does not appear in the majority Greek text. [NET, p. 1870]

7:17—*When he had left the crowd and entered the house*—the last recorded time Jesus was in a house was Jairus’ house (5:38). He is away from the crowd, having a private time with disciples.
— *His disciples questioned Him about the parable*—privately teaching the disciples. A disciple asks questions, wants to understand. [Mark is identifying verse 15 as a parable, an illustration.]

7:18—*And He said to them, “Are you so lacking in understanding*—Jesus is rebuking disciples
— *also?* indicates that the crowd was not understanding, but He expects more from the disciples.
— *Do you not understand*—But by this time, Jesus expects that the disciples should be understanding. But they do not understand because of the hardness of their hearts (6:52; 8:14-21).
— *that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him*—it is impossible. This was revolutionary when Jesus said it. They probably understood the words, but could not believe He really meant what He had said.
— In verses 6-13, Jesus equated the Mosaic Law with God’s Word and rebukes the Pharisees for nullifying God’s Word with their tradition. But now Jesus is getting to the point of the Mosaic Law—it was not about clean and unclean food, but about obeying God from their heart.

7:19—*because it does not go into his heart*—food does not go into your mind/heart
— *but into his stomach, and is eliminated?”*—food comes from outside of you and goes into your stomach, and then it is eliminated. It does not stay there. It passes through!
— *(Thus He declared all foods clean.)*—This is dealt with in later NT writings, especially when Peter sees the sheet with all the animals let down from heaven (Acts 10:9-16), and God told Peter, “*Get up, Peter, kill and eat! What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.*”
— Here we see some of the first signs of the ending of the Mosaic Law. By the time of the church/grace age, Paul will write, *For freedom that Christ set us free* (Gal 5:1). God gave the Mosaic Law and only God could end it.

7:20—*And He was saying, “That which proceeds out of the man*—it is not coming from the outside, it is coming from within a person (from your sin nature).
— *that is what defiles the man.* It is like a faucet. If the source of water is polluted, then every time a person turns on their water faucet, they will get polluted water.

7:21—*“For from within, out of the heart of men [human sin nature], proceed the evil thoughts [human mind] fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,*

7:22—*deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness [human deeds].* Jeremiah 17:9 says, “*The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick...*”

7:23—*“All these evil things proceed from within [the source] and defile the man [the result]”*—
An Application—Therefore, there are no outside solutions to the evil (prisons, e.g.). There is only an inside solution—God changing your heart, transforming your minds (Rom 12:1).

The Faith of the Syrophenician Woman

7:24—*Jesus got up and went away from there*—He got away from the Jewish crowds, who only wanted healing and away from the Jewish scribes who verbally attacked Him.
— *to the region of Tyre*—on the Mediterranean coast, about 40 miles northwest of Capernaum, in Syria. Josephus records them as “notoriously our bitterest enemies.” [AgAp, 1.13]

- Mark records more things outside of Galilee and fewer things within Galilee than the other Synoptics. This would help later Gentile readers to realize that Jesus’ ministry was to the Gentiles, too.
- **And when He had entered a house**—to illustrate His previous point, this Gentile contact would make Him ceremonially unclean, according to Jewish traditions. Before, Jesus removed the distinction between clean and unclean foods. Now, He is removing the distinction between clean and unclean people.
- It is assumed His disciples are with Him, although they are not mentioned.
- **He wanted no one to know of it**—He simply wanted privacy, away from the public. There is no mention of Him wanting to do “missionary” activity in this area. He has no Gentile mission.
- **yet He could not escape notice**—3:8 reads, “...from the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great number of people heard of all that He was doing and came to Him.” So His reputation with the Gentile people preceded Him to this locale.

7:25—**But after hearing of Him**—that Jesus was in her town

- **a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit**—This event is in the immediate context of uncleanness brought up by the Pharisees. He was in the territory of the unclean Gentiles.
- **immediately came and fell at His feet**—an expression of deep respect as well as personal grief over the condition of her daughter. She had faith Jesus could heal her if He would do so.

7:26—**Now the woman was a Gentile** [lit. “Greek”—culture and language, i.e., non-Jew]

- [born in] **of the Syrian-Phoenician race**—combines Syria and Phoenicia. [In the 300s B.C., the Greek Empire was in control, but by the 100-50 B.C., that empire was conquered by the Romans, who were in power at the time of Christ.] This puts the emphasis on her “Gentile” origins rather than her moral character (of which we know nothing).
- **And she kept asking** [Gk. “asked”] **Him to cast the demon out of her daughter**—she acknowledged without question His power to accomplish this.
- “Demons” are fallen angels. So far, Jesus has cast out many demons, as well as giving the disciples power to also cast out demons (1:23, 34; 3:11-12, 14-15; 5:1f; 6:7, 23-26). Rather than appear as themselves (Rev 9:1-3), they usually possessed humans or animals.

An Application—We might ask: why would demons choose to indwell a child? Perhaps because children have less will-power, are less discerning, etc. and therefore, easier to indwell. But the same is true of anyone. The more you fill your mind, the less power demons can have over you. Sin (or any mystical/magical/emotional experiences, like ouija boards or dream catchers or horoscopes) opens your mind to demons. “*Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might...stand firm against the schemes of the devil*” (Eph 6:10-18). See also Matthew 12:43-45, *when the unclean spirit goes out of a man...then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came;’ and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there, and the last state becomes worse than the first.*” We do not want to have *unoccupied* minds!!!

7:27—**And He was saying** [Gk. “said”] **to her, “Let the children** [i.e., the Jews] **be satisfied** [‘to eat one’s fill’] **first**—Jesus came to the Jews first. The Gospel came to the Jews first (Acts 1:8). The point is not that that Jews will be filled with the message, but the point is who is “first”? Israel’s claim was not exclusive. But there was a sequence: Jew first, then the Greek (Rom 1:16 and Acts 1:8). And Jesus makes that distinction.

- **for it is not good to take the children’s bread**—the children are the priority, and that is Jesus’ ministry to the Jews and to His disciples. Here, Jesus is talking about the bread while the children are eating.
- **throw it to the dogs**—this is not a derogatory comparison of “Gentile dogs” [street dogs, as in Matthew 7:6] but the Greek word for “pet dogs” [*kynarioi*, “puppies”] who would be waiting under the table for the crumbs that are dropped (always by the children!). [Though it is still a bit derogatory even in comparing children to pet dogs.]

7:28—**But she answered and said to Him, “Yes, Lord, but**—she acknowledged Jesus as “Lord,” but refused to believe she was therefore excluded from any of His benefits.

- **even the dogs under the table feed on the children’s crumbs**—the woman says that she does not want the children’s bread at the table, she is not trying to take the place of the Jews (understanding the contrast as exclusivity, not knowing it was a sequence or temporary). Her point was that the dogs get some food at the same time as the children and do not have to wait. She just wants the crumbs that drop. She claimed God’s benefit that came through the Jews. She was not trying to take their place or have their Jewish relationship with Jesus.

7:29—**And He said to her, “Because of this answer go**—the response of one’s heart ultimately qualifies one’s relationship to God (7:15-23). Jesus was pleased with her reply—her faith and her humility.

- This is the only instance of healing at a distance found in Mark.
- **the demon has gone out of your daughter**—without any direct act or even word of healing given by Jesus.

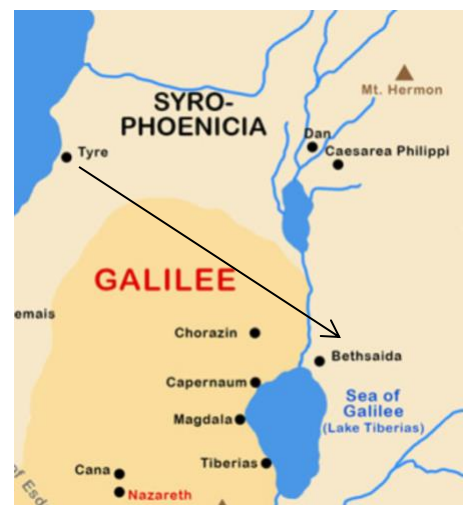
7:30—**And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having left**—when Jesus said it was gone. Before she even went home, the demon had already left.

Healing a Deaf and Mute Man

7:31—**Again He went out from the region of Tyre** (on the Mediterranean coast), **and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis**—He went east and came south to the Sea on the eastern side of the Upper Jordan River, in the Gentile Decapolis area [though probably not in a straight line!]. This could have taken weeks of travel. Besides the distance of some 50 miles, there are hills to cross. There is no mention of what He did during that journey.

- Only Mark includes this event, possibly to fit his point in this chapter of another healing in Gentile territory.

7:32—**They brought to Him**—maybe the result of the testimony in the Decapolis (ten Greek cities) of the



Gerasene demoniac, whom Jesus had previously healed and had “...*began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him*” (5:1-20).

- ***one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty***—a rare condition called *mogilalos* (Gk), and this is only occurrence of this word in the NT, and only in the Septuagint [Greek version of OT] in Isaiah 35:5-6, ...*the tongue of the mute [mogilalos] will shout for joy*, a prediction of the time of the Messiah. It is defective speech, usually a result of defective hearing. He spoke in a way that people had difficulty understanding him.
- ***and they implored Him to lay His hand on him***—others did the requesting because the man could make no intelligible request for himself. Also, assuming he is a Gentile, and with a condition making him unclean, Jesus is once again illustrating the point about His contact with ritual uncleanness.

7:33—***Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself***—for personal time with the man

- ***and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva***—of course, He could have healed the man with just a word. Why did He use these signs? It is the two places of which the man was to be healed. But they were not healed until He said, “Be opened!”

7:34—***and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh***—in an attitude of prayer, His looking to heaven points to His relation with God from whom He receives the power to do the miracles.

- ***He said to him, “Ephphatha!” that is, “Be opened!”***—an Aramaic word (indicating the man was a Gentile), which Mark translates for his readers as “Be opened!”

7:35—***And his ears were opened***—they were opened instantly at Christ’s word.

- ***and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly***—he could speak before, but he *spoke with difficulty* (v. 32).

7:36—***And He gave them orders not to tell anyone***—Jesus did not want only the miracle to be communicated by the person healed. He wanted His teaching to be known, from Himself.

- ***but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it***—in contrast to the healing of the Gerasene demoniac, when the crowd wanted Jesus to go away (5:17).

7:37—***They were utterly astonished***—overwhelmed, beyond measure, in the extreme

- ***saying, “He has done all things well***—similar to Genesis 1:31, “*God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good....*”
- ***He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak***—as Isaiah 35:6 predicted the Messiah would do. “Even” shows two different classes of people: “deaf” and “mute.” But here, Jesus healed them both at one time.

An Application—The Good News about Jesus has to be spoken to others, and they need ears to hear the message. The Good News is special revelation from God through Jesus Christ. It cannot be understood through creation (Rom 1) or through morality/conscience (Rom 2). *How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a proclaimer?* (Rom 10:14).

An Application—The difficult conflicts were not with demons. Jesus had authority over the demons (Mark 3:15). Not with nature, for Jesus had authority over nature (Mark 4:39). He could teach with authority (Luke 4:32). He had authority to forgive sins (Luke 5:24). He could give that authority to the disciples (Luke 9:1) He had authority to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness (Matt 10:1). He has authority to cast people into hell (Luke 12:5). He has the authority over all who believe in Him, to give them eternal life (John 17:2).

- The difficulty was with people. Jesus had no authority to control them. Humans have free will. Jesus could not stop the crowds' free will to listen to Him. He could not make His disciples understand. And He will not keep the authorities from killing Him. He has *granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness...* (2 Pet 1:3). We have 100% salvation. We have 100% Holy Spirit. We have 100% God's Word. We have 100% of all we need for our sanctification, but we also have 100% free will. It is our free will to be *diligent...* (1:10).

Chapter 8

Feeding the 4,000

Only also in Matthew 15:32-39 (whereas the feeding of the 5,000 is in all four gospels.)

8:1— *In those days, when there was again a large crowd*—probably connecting this with the previous event of the crowd in the Decapolis, on the east side of the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus healed the deaf/mute man. This event again included Gentiles in Christ's ministry. This is one of the most difficult points—where exactly was the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000. After much reading and searching, it seems impossible to know. Both seem to be near Bethsaida, on the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. Possibly the 5,000 is on the western Jewish side, where it would be nearer villages and more populated. The 4,000 would be on the Gentile eastern side, in the Decapolis, with less villages. But there is no definitive written proof.

- *and they had nothing to eat*—having exhausted any provisions they had brought with them.
- *Jesus called His disciples and said to them*—will the disciples ask Him to feed them, as when He fed the 5,000, probably a few months previously (6:31-44)? No.

8:2— *"I feel compassion for the people*—Christ's feeling of concern for food for the people.

- *because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat*—which distinguishes this from the previous feeding (6:31-44), in which the sea crossing, the meal, and the recrossing all happen on the same day. Also, the disciples initiated the eating last time.

8:3— *"If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance"*—there is no information as to why they were with Him for the three days (we can assume He was teaching them, as before in 6:34). This becomes an emergency because some will faint on the way without food, having a great distance to travel (Jesus and the disciples themselves had just come from a long journey from Tyre). Also in contrast, in 6:36, the disciples had asked Jesus to send the people away to find something to eat.

An Application—This is an example of the people's spiritual hunger for Christ's words exceeding their physical hunger for food, as they stayed with Him three days. Do we even hunger for spiritual food? Peter wrote, *"like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the Word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation"* (1 Pet 2:2). How can you grow to long for the Word? Like many things, the more you do it, the more you want to do it.

8:4— *And His disciples answered Him, "Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people?"*—In the feeding of the 5,000, the issue was how they could afford to feed that many (6:37). Here, their issue is where they could get enough feed, as it was a more desolate place. The 5,000 had *surrounding countryside and villages* (6:36).

- Also, notice it was baked bread (not just dough), and assume the fish are like what is cooked over the fire, not raw.

8:5—*And He was asking them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven”*—of course, much has been made of the number “7”, but from the text, it is simply the number of loaves they have. This is also different than the 5 loaves in the feeding of the 5,000.

8:6—*And He directed the people to sit down on the ground*—notice there is no ordering of the people into groups of hundreds and fifties, as in the feeding of the 5,000. Also, the 5,000 were sitting on grass (6:39, the spring/summer time), but now it is just “ground,” later in the year?

— *and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks*—to God for the provision (though here it does not record Him looking to heaven, as in 6:41).

— *and broke them, and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the people*—He fed the people. Involving the disciples was teaching a lesson to them.

8:7—*They also had a few small fish*—do not know how many, but they were “few” and “small.” In the feeding of the 5,000, the bread and fish were together and blessed at the same time.

— *and after He had blessed [them]*—this is a bad English translation. The Greek is *eucharistein*, “having given thanks. “them” [the fish] is not in the text. The NET translates it as: “giving thanks for these.” As mentioned in 6:41, praying before eating is not a command, but it seems to be practiced by Jesus. And when He prays, it is thanksgiving to God for the food, not asking God “to bless” the food. [We want God to “bless” us, not “bless the food.”]

An Application—So the appropriate thing is to pray before eating, giving thanks to God for the food. The point is that “good [blessing]” comes from God, not the food (and if the food is “good,” God has made it so). But it should be done out of a grateful heart, not as a legalistic law of works. Colossians 3:17 says, *whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.* (Pray to God the Father, in Jesus’ name.)

— *He ordered these to be served as well*—why this separation of bread and fish is not said.

8:8—*And they ate and were satisfied*—all they wanted to eat, they did not want to eat any more. It must have been a lot, seeing they were there for 3 hungry days, compared to one day for the 5,000.

— *and they picked up seven large baskets full*—Gk *spyris*, a large basket, such as the one in which Paul was lowered from the wall in Damascus (Acts 9:25). In the 5,000 the leftovers were put in *Kophinos* (6:43), a small wicker basket in which Jews usually carried their food when on a journey.

— *of what was left over of the broken pieces*—but it is unknown what happened to those pieces.

8:9—*About four thousand were there*—Matthew 15:38 says besides women and children.

— *and He sent them away*—now without the danger of fainting along the way. Their need for food had been abundantly provided for (probably also took some for their journey home).

An Application—Why spend so much time comparing the details of the two feedings? To show there were indeed TWO feedings, one of 5,000 men and one of 4,000 men. [Many writers conclude there was only one feeding, in spite of the many different details.] In 8:19-20, Jesus Himself refers to two feedings. The disciples participated in two huge opportunities to understand who Jesus was, yet they did not understand because their hearts were hardened, like Jesus’ enemies (v. 17).

Requesting a Sign from Heaven

8:10—*And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha*—escaping the crowd on the Gentile eastern side, Jesus got into a boat, on the Sea of Galilee (with no storm this time), arriving at the “*region of Magdala*” (Matt 15:39). This is the only mention of Dalmanutha (an Aramaic word, meaning ‘the harbor,’ so it was (as it is today) the harbor

for Magdala). They are back in Jewish territory, on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee, and back to the attacks from the Jewish religious authorities.

8:11—*The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him*—Matthew 16:1-4 gives a fuller account of this event. The Sadducees (ruling class) accompanied the Pharisees (rabbis). They came to Jesus to argue, not to learn. They had previously concluded His power was from Satan (in 3:22).

- *seeking from Him a sign from heaven*—Nowhere in the Synoptics does “sign” refer to a miracle nor is a miraculous event called a “sign.” For sure, they had heard of (or even witnessed) some of Jesus’ miracles, even among the Gentiles. A “sign” is an interpretation. For example, if you see a “stop” sign, you interpret it to mean you need to stop—whether in a car, truck, walking, etc.
- “Sign” in the Jewish OT sense was a confirmation or authentication that what Jesus did was actually from heaven (and not from demons as they thought in Mark 3:22).
- *to test Him*—the OT Jewish instruction was to authenticate a prophet’s claim (Deut 13:2-6; 18:18-22; 2 Kings 20:1-11; Isaiah 7:10-14).

8:12—*Sighing deeply in His spirit*—Gk *anastenazo*, only used here in the NT, indicating grief, disappointment, anger. The Jewish leaders, who were trained in the OT, should have been more responsive to Jesus. Did they not listen to His teaching? It was 100% consistent with the OT (but not with Rabbinical Judaism!! That is their “problem”!)

- *He said, “Why does this generation*—includes more than the leaders, but the mind of the entire Jewish people at His time.
- *seek for a sign?* —they wanted God to authenticate Christ’s ministry. They were testing the trustworthiness of Jesus, not His supernatural power. The real issue was unbelief, not a sign. The unbeliever, despite the evidence, will always find grounds for unbelief. For example, at the empty tomb, the chief priests paid the guards to say the disciples stole Christ’s body (Matt 28:11-15). When they saw the resurrected Lazarus, they wanted to re-kill him, or else *all men will believe in Him* [Jesus] (John 11:48).
- *Truly I say to you*—“I tell you the truth...” By definition, as God He is always telling the truth.
- *no sign will be given to this generation*—in their unbelief, nothing will persuade them. Jesus even rebuked His own disciples for their lack of understanding who He was (v. 21).

8:13—*Leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side*—leaving the Jews, He went to the east side of the Upper Jordan River, i.e., the Roman Gentile side.

The Leaven of the Pharisees and Herod

8:14—*And they had forgotten to take bread*—one cannot help but think of the bread in the previous events of the feeding of the 5,000 (6:35-44) and the feeding of the 4,000 (8:1-9). The lack of bread places the disciples in the same situation as the crowds in each of the feedings (hungry).

- *and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them*—this sets the stage for the following teaching. Evidently, there was one loaf on the boat, but they had not remembered to take enough bread for their whole group to eat.

8:15—*And He was giving orders to them, saying, “Watch out! Beware of the*—a warning

— **leaven**—(yeast) is a common metaphor for an invisible, pervasive, usually corrupting influence. Paul uses this as an illustration in 1 Corinthians 5:5-7 of how an evil person is like leaven and the evil will permeate any group of believers, so the leaven (evil person) needs to be removed. *A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.* For example, one rotten apple among a bushel of good apples will soon make all the apples bad. However, one good apple in a bushel of bad apples will not make any bad apples good. OR one person in a room with a cold will spread to the others. But one healthy person in a room of people with colds will not spread to them. It is usually true of only spreading bad things.

An Application—Peter wrote in our age, *there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies...* (2 Pet 2:1). Jesus said they *...come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves* (Matt 7:15). They want to kill you spiritually! They are *destructive* and *ravenous*—but they will appear to care for you and “look good.” Beware! One person in your group with false teaching, like leaven, it will spread to the whole group. Remove the leaven (person) (1 Cor 5:7) or leave the group!! Their false teaching will spread!!

— **of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod**—they both claimed that Jesus was not the Messiah. Herod thought Jesus was John the Baptist come back to life (6:14-16). The Pharisees asked for a sign of divine authentication in spite of Christ's miracles (8:10-13).

— Jesus is talking about the leaven (unbelief) of the Pharisees and of Herod.

8:16—***They*** [the disciples on the boat] ***began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread***—They understood Jesus' teaching in the context of their own circumstances of a lack of physical bread instead of understanding the meaning of the author/Jesus.

An Application—This is a tendency—to interpret the Bible via our own circumstances. Always strive to understand the author's meaning. That is what communication is. Without the author's meaning, there is no communication—you only reinforce your own bias.

8:17—***And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread?”***—Jesus knew what they were discussing and used it as an opportunity to teach them.

— ***Do you not yet see*** [observation] ***or understand*** [interpretation]?—Even a disciple, traveling with Jesus, is no guarantee that they would perceive the significance of Jesus and His ministry. Yet, Jesus expected them to understand this point. What more proof do they need? Healed every sickness. Cast out demons. Calmed the storm. Raised someone from the dead. Fed 5,000 and then 4,000. Besides hours and even days of teaching. Do they not understand the meaning of His presence with them? Peter finally answered correctly in verse 29: *“You are the Christ.”*

— ***Do you have a hardened heart?*** They knew the facts but they failed to grasp the meaning/significance (interpretation) of His presence with them. They had closed minds. In their unbelief, they actually come close to the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod.

An Application—What causes hardened hearts? *The deceitfulness of sin* (Heb 3:13). Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44). There is no truth in him and what he convinces us of through our sin.

8:18—***“HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? AND HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR?”***

And do you not remember—Here is how we are deceived—by what we see, what we hear, and what we remember. If we are already deceived by what we see, then, of course, what we remember is also a deception!!

An Application—The Jews were blinded by Rabbinical Judaism. They could not see past their laws to what Jesus was teaching and doing. The disciples were so focused on the bread on their boat, they could not even hear/understand what Jesus was saying. Our circumstances, our beliefs, our personalities, our experiences—they can all harden our heart. For example, Replacement Theology

says the church replaced Israel, therefore they are hardened to any OT or NT prophecy about Israel. Or RC, who know so many things about Jesus except that His payment was sufficient for their sins.

8:19—*when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?*” They said to Him, “Twelve.”

8:20—*“When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?” And they said to Him, “Seven.”*

— It is interesting here that Jesus zeroes in on what was left over in both feedings. “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works with us... (Eph 3:20).

8:21—*And He was saying to them, “Do you not yet understand?”* Mark leaves us hanging. But Matthew 16:12 says, “Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees—now they understood the author’s (Jesus’) intended meaning!

Healing a Blind Man at Bethsaida

This event is recorded only in Mark, as is the healing of the deaf-mute in 7:33.

8:22— *And they came to Bethsaida*—on the east (Gentile) side of the Upper Jordan River (v. 13).

— *And they brought a blind man to Jesus*—much as the friends who brought the paralytic and lowered him through the roof to be healed by Jesus (2:3-5).

— *and implored* [earnestly appeal] *Him to touch him*—they wanted Jesus to heal him of his blindness.

8:23—*Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village*—Jesus brought him away from the crowds, like He did the deaf-mute in 7:33. Why? Don’t know.

— *and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, “Do you see anything?”* Similar to the deaf/mute (in the Decapolis), who was also healed in a process (7:32-37). Both outside Judea.

8:24—*And he looked up and said, “I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around”*—this would seem to indicate he was not born blind because he recognized seeing trees.

8:25—*Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly*—why a two-step process? We are not told.

— Possibly this is an example of the disciples’ understanding. At first they did not see clearly who Jesus was. Now, Mark introduces Jesus’ next question: “Who do you say that I am?” (v. 29). They now clearly see that He is the Messiah—but they will learn He’s not a Messiah who will bring in the kingdom now. He is a Messiah who will die for their sins.

8:26—*And He sent him to his home*—now the man can see to go home by

BLIND PEOPLE WHOM JESUS HEALED IN PROBABLE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)	
Many blind people in Galilee	Luke 7:21
A man who was demon-possessed, blind, and dumb in a synagogue in Galilee	Matt. 12:22
Two blind men in Galilee	Matt. 9:27-34
Many blind people in Galilee	Matt. 15:30-31
A blind man in Bethsaida	Mark 8:22-23
A man blind from birth in Jerusalem	John 9:1-41; cf. 11:37
Two blind beggars near Jericho, one of whom was Bartimaeus	Matt. 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43
Some blind people in the temple precincts	Matt. 21:14

himself. He needed others to bring him to Jesus (v. 22).

— *saying, “Do not even enter the village”*—maybe Jesus does not want even more crowds.

Recognizing Jesus as Messiah

8:27—*Jesus went out, along with His disciples,*

—*to the villages of Caesarea Philippi*—about 25 miles north. Caesarea Philippi was near the base of Mount Hermon (9,000 feet high—most of the hills in Israel are about at 2,000 feet), on a shelf of land 1,150 feet above sea level and overlooking the north end of the Jordan River Valley. Originally, the city was called Paneas (the name survives today as Banias) in honor of the Roman god Pan, whose shrine was located there. Herod Philip had rebuilt the ancient city and named it in honor of Tiberias Caesar and himself. Thus it was known as Caesarea Philippi (distinguished from Caesarea, the Roman city on the Mediterranean coast). Today, about 10% of southern Hermon is in Israel. The rest is divided between Lebanon on the west and Syria on the east. The melting snow is the headwaters of the Jordan River, flowing south to the Golan and to the Sea of Galilee, down the Jordan River, and eventually to the Dead Sea.



— Notice, Jesus did not go into Caesarea Philippi (a pagan city), but into the villages around it.

— *and on the way*—trips are great learning times. Good advice in the law: “*These words...shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and what you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up*” (Deut 6:6-7).

— *He questioned His disciples, saying to them, “Who do people say that I am?”*—at the location where the people were worshipping the pagan god Pan and Caesar.

8:28—*They told Him, saying, “John the Baptist [like Herod said, John was resurrected]; and others say Elijah [prophesied in the OT as the forerunner of the Messiah (Mal 4:5-6)]; but others, one of the prophets”* [an even lower view of Jesus, as an unnamed prophet]—Jesus as the Messiah was not even mentioned by the people. It was information hidden from the crowd—it was only for the disciples.

8:29—*And He continued by questioning them [the disciples], “But who do you say that I am?”*

—*Peter answered*—this is the first time in Mark that Peter acted as the spokesman for the Twelve, as he will continue to do so from now on (so far, he’s been mentioned twice, but 16 times after this).

—*and said to Him, “You are the Christ”* [Gk. *Christos*, Hebrew *Masiah*]—this is the first time, at the mid-point, it is mentioned in Mark. Jesus did not call Himself that. It is the name of the OT Messiah. Jesus could now build on their understanding and faith and commitment. However, immediately, Peter is rebuked for refusing to believe the Messiah would suffer and die (v. 32).

8:30—*And He warned them to tell no one about Him*—if the people believe He is the Messiah, they will push for a political leader to rescue them from Rome and bring in the kingdom (Mark 11:9-10). But from now on in Mark, the narrative (and the teaching of the disciples) is oriented toward the Cross and the Resurrection (8:31). After the Resurrection, the disciples will freely preach it.

The Journey to Jerusalem (8:31–10:52)

The First Prediction of the Passion

8:31— *And He began to teach them that the Son of Man*—Jesus has referred to Himself as this since the beginning of His ministry (2:10, 28). It occurs 81 times. With the possible exceptions of Mark 2:10, 28 (where “Son of Man” seems to be part of Mark’s editorial comments), no one else, neither His friends or enemies, refers to Jesus as the Son of Man. In the OT, it simply means “man,” but in Daniel 7:13-14, He is described as God (see Mark 8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 14:21, 41). But it is as the Son of Man that is able to suffer, to be killed, and to rise again.

- *must suffer many things*—Most of the Jews believed the Messiah would begin His kingdom with power and glory, not with suffering and dying (as in Matthew 24:29-30). But Jesus begins to teach the disciples what messiahship really means—that suffering from the hostility of men (Isaiah 52:13–53:12) will come before His reign as King.
- *and be rejected by the* (1) *elders* (influential lay leaders) *and the* (2) *chief priests* (mainly Caiaphas and Annas, the high priests) *and the* (3) *scribes* (Pharisees, professional teachers of the Law)—altogether, these are the Sanhedrin, Jewish high court
- *and be killed*—it seems contradictory. How can He be the Messiah, but be destined to die? The solution, of course, is the resurrection. His death is not a defeat (as the Jews and Romans would like it to be) but a prerequisite for the accomplishment of His mission. The disciples did not understand and even abandoned Christ at His arrest and death.
- *and after* [a marker of time, where both the first and last days were counted] *three days rise again*—also translated as “on the third day” (Matt 16:21; Luke 9:22). “*If Christ has not been raised, then...your faith also is vain*” (1 Cor 15:14). After the resurrection, their thinking will change!!

8:32—*And He was stating the matter plainly* (i.e., not in parables)—the popular expectations of messiahship ruling would have hindered, and probably even prevented the accomplishment of the cross. However, on the other hand, the cross was also not to take away from the glory of the coming of the Messiah.

- *And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke* [“to silence,” used for silencing the demons in 1:25, 3:12 and the storm in 4:39] *Him*—Peter’s view was that the Messiah was a symbol of strength (as a king), not weakness (suffering and death). He understood what Jesus said but refused to believe it was true.

An Application—This is true for many people (the RC, for example), who recognize that Jesus died on the cross but they do not understand (that it is true) that His death was a 100% sufficient payment for their sins. They think they have to add works to that payment.

The Requirements of Discipleship

8:33—*But turning around and seeing His disciples*—as Peter was speaking for them all

- *He rebuked Peter and said*—[“to silence,” used for silencing the demons in 1:25, 3:12 and the storm in 4:39]—the same word Peter used to rebuke Christ in v. 32.
- *“Get behind Me, Satan*—recognizing that Satan was the ultimate and immediate source of Peter’s suggestion (Matt 4:10).
- *for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s*—God’s purposes were accomplished by the obedience of His Son, even to death. Man’s interests are about conquest and submission to power.

8:34—*And He summoned the crowd*—people from the villages near Caesarea Philippi

- *with His disciples*—this message is for both groups of people
- *and said to them, “If anyone* [the disciples, the crowd, us] *wishes to come after Me,*

- **he must deny himself**—not to deny one’s personality, to die as a martyr, or to deny things (as in asceticism of the monks), but to deny “self-centeredness,” to quit making self the object of one’s life and actions. It is not to think of yourself less, but to think less of yourself!!
- **and take up his cross**—this would be your life situation. It could be health, relationships, job, family, abilities, talents, whatever circumstances, etc.
- **and follow Me**—a present imperative, i.e., “keep following” Christ through whatever your life situation is.

8:35—“**For whoever** [in any country, at any time] **wishes to save his life** [*psyche*, soul]—to preserve the self

- **will lose it**—having a self-centered life on earth results in eternal ruin.
- but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it**—but not being self-centered but giving one’s life to Jesus and the gospel, will preserve that self for eternity

8:36—“**For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world**—earthly possessions, position, pleasure, power—all the world can provide.

- **and forfeit his soul?** Jesus told a parable in Luke 12:16-22, *a man said...*, “*I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and...I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come...’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’* Even the whole world, if he owned it, could not buy back eternal life for him.

8:37—“**For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?** Physical things are for your temporary physical body. Invest in spiritual things for your eternal spiritual future.

8:38—“**For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words**—they do not accept salvation in Jesus

- **in this adulterous and sinful generation**—the physical world we live in now, spiritually unfaithful to Jesus Christ
- **the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels**—when Jesus comes at His Second Coming, in power and great glory

An Application—The point is, this Jesus who will suffer and die for our sins, who wants us to deny ourselves and follow Him, is the same Jesus who will come in power and glory, and His reward will be with Him for those who have chosen to follow Him.

Chapter 9

The Transfiguration

The Transfiguration is a transition between 8:38 and 9:2. The Transfiguration guarantees Jesus’ coming in the glory of His Father with the holy angels (2nd Coming).

9:1—**And Jesus was saying to them** [the disciples], “**Truly** [this is the truth] **I say to you**—Jesus said, “*I am the truth...*” (John 14:6)—everything Jesus says is the truth, by definition.

- **there are some** [not all of the disciples] **of those who are standing here who will not taste death**—i.e., in their lifetime they will see Jesus in the *glory of His Father*.
- **until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power**—the transfigured, glorified Jesus

9:2—*Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John*—the inner circle of Christ’s disciples. The same three were with Jesus at the raising of Jairus’ daughter and will be with Jesus in Gethsemane. James will be the first martyr, and Peter and John the first leaders in the church age.

- *and brought them up on a high mountain*—tradition (and the RC) have a monastery on Mt Tabor in the Jezreel Valley, claiming it is where the transfiguration happened. But Tabor is the same height as the neighboring mountains (1,843 feet), and Jesus was not even in that area at this time.
- Jesus was in the area of *the villages of Caesarea Philip* (8:27), at the base of Mt. Hermon. Also, 9:2 says it was a “high mountain,” referring to the 9,000 foot Mt. Hermon.
- *by themselves*—without the rest of the disciples. Luke 9:28-29 says, *He...went up on the mountain to pray. And while He was praying the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming.*
- *And He was transfigured* [to become a completely different form, Gk. *metamorphoo*, for example, like a caterpillar metamorphizes into a butterfly, a completely different form] *before them*—fulfilling the prediction of 9:1, seeing Jesus in His glory.

An Application—This same word is used in Romans 12:2, describing the believer’s change into the moral likeness of Christ. “*do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed [metamorphoo] by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*” As a believer, we are to become completely different people, conformed to God, not conformed to the world.

9:3—*and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them*—Garments of glorified believers are also described as white (Dan 12:3; Rev 7:9; 19:14). Mark does not mention it, but Matthew 17:2 says, “...*His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as light.*”

9:4—*Elijah appeared to them*—who is to be the forerunner of the Messiah (Mal 3:1; 4:5)

- *along with Moses*—How they were recognized by the disciples is not stated. Perhaps Jesus called them by name.
- *and they were talking with Jesus*—in their temporary spiritual bodies, you could see them and they talked. Luke 9:31 says they *were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem*. That is very interesting because they knew Jesus in glory before He became human and knew about the cross on earth and what Jesus would accomplish there.
- Why these two men? There have been some speculations: (1) Moses represents the Law and Elijah the prophets, or (2) these will be the two witnesses (Rev 11) before the Second Coming, or (3) these two saw the glory of God at Mt Sinai (Exo 3; 1 Kings 19:9-15). Or, (4) unknown, the Bible does not tell us why.

An Application—This is proof that the soul/spirit of believers continues after death. They appeared as who they were in this life (Moses ~1500 years after his death and Elijah ~800 years after his death). They had form. They talked with Jesus. This is the temporary spiritual body until we get our eternal resurrected bodies. The New Testament saints get their resurrected eternal bodies at the Rapture (1 Thess 4:13-17). The Old Testament saints get their resurrected eternal bodies at the Second Coming (Rev 11:18; 20:4; Dan 12:2; Job 19:25-27). The Tribulation saints get their resurrected eternal bodies at the Second Coming (Rev 20:4). Unbelievers of all times get their resurrected eternal bodies which are cast into the lake of fire after the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-15). See also Luke 16:19-31.

9:5—Peter said to Jesus, “*Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah*”—It seems he viewed all three as being equal in importance. Perhaps he anticipated they would be staying awhile—wanting to prolong the experience.

9:6—*For he did not know what to answer*—this is a good observation—Peter did not know what to say or do in the situation and said maybe the first thing that popped into his head.

— *for they became terrified*—When Isaiah saw God, he said, “*woe is me! for I am ruined*” (Isaiah 6:5). When John “*saw Him, I [John] fell at His feet like a dead man...*” (Rev 1:17). The supernatural glory of God is overwhelming.

9:7—*Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them*—a cloud was frequently seen in the Old Testament, indicating God’s presence and protection (Ex 16:10; Num 9:15-22; 1 Kings 8:10-11). This is usually describing the presence of the Holy Spirit (Exo 40:35).

— *and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!”*—even though Jesus would be rejected by the Jewish leadership and the Jews themselves, He was pleasing to the Father. God is speaking and commands the disciples to listen to whatever Jesus is telling them.

— It seems that here is the presence of all three persons of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Spirit. Reminding us of the baptism of Jesus, where the Spirit came down on Jesus, and God the Father also said, “*You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased*” (Luke 3:22; John 1:33-34).

9:8—*All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone*—neither the great Moses nor Elijah can accomplish God’s redemptive plan. Only Jesus alone.

The Coming of Elijah

9:9—*As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead*—the Transfiguration was the revelation of Christ in all His glory. To talk about it before the cross and resurrection would take away from the cross and resurrection. But they did not have to keep silent forever. There was a time limit.

9:10—*They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant.* Not only would Jesus be killed, but He would rise from the dead. It is only after His resurrection that they can correctly understand the Transfiguration. And the telling of the Transfiguration can only be proclaimed in light of the crucifixion and resurrection.

9:11—*They asked Him, saying, “Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”* Probably just seeing Elijah reminded them of Malachi 4:5-6, the very last verses of the Old Testament: “*I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children...so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.*” That was one reason many did not believe Jesus was the Messiah, because they thought Elijah had not come first.

9:12—*And He said to them, “Elijah does first come and restore all things*—Jesus says, in part you are correct. Elijah does come first.

—*And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt?*—If Elijah does come and restore, how is it Jesus will suffer and be killed?

9:13—“*But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come*—referring to John the Baptist (Mark 1:2-8; Matt 17:13; Luke 1:17).

- *and they did to him whatever they wished*—and they imprisoned and killed John (Mark 6:14-29).
- *just as it is written of him*” [the Son of Man, v 12]—referring to Himself, as in Isaiah 52:13–53:12. Or referring to John (but we have nothing written predicting his suffering).

Healing a Boy with an Evil Spirit

9:14—*When they* [Jesus, James, John, and Peter] *came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them*—the subject of the arguing is not stated

9:15—*Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and began running up to greet Him*—some suggest there was some kind of afterglow on Jesus from the Transfiguration, but the text says nothing of that. They simply ran up to Jesus when they recognized Him. Some were hoping He would cast the demon out, as the disciples could not do it. It is why they came.

9:16—*And He asked them, “What are you discussing with them?”* —It seems that Jesus was asking the 9 disciples what they were discussing with the crowd and/or scribes.

9:17—*And one of the crowd* [actually, the boy’s father] *answered Him*

— *“Teacher [Rabbi], I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute* [can’t speak], and also deaf (v. 25)

9:18—*and whenever it seizes him*— “to take hold of, with or without force”—so it doesn’t seem to be a constant indwelling, such as the Gerasene man at the tombs (5:3).

— *it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out*—

— *I told Your disciples to cast it out*—Jesus had given the disciples power to cast out demons in 3:15, and they had done so successfully earlier (6:13). So they expected they could do it again.

— *and they could not do it*—lit. “they lacked the strength”

9:19—*And He answered them and said, “O unbelieving generation*—actually, the disciples lacked the faith (vv. 28-29). They were unbelieving. Possibly because Jesus and the 3 disciples had been gone for a while and left them alone—maybe wondering if and when they would return, and that they could do nothing without them being there.

— *how long shall I be with you?* Having just heard His Father’s voice at the Transfiguration, Jesus must have longed to be at home with Him and away from all this unbelief on earth.

— *How long shall I put up with you?* Reminding us of what Jesus said to them when they didn’t have bread on the boat: “*Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart?*” (8:17-18; see also 4:40; 6:50-52)

— *Bring him to Me!*” The disciples lacked the power, but Jesus did not!

9:20—*They brought the boy to Him*—evidently at a moment not controlled by the demon

— *When he saw Him*—i.e., when the demon saw Jesus

— *immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion*—the boy stiffens out (v. 18). The demon/spirit began controlling him.

— *and falling to the ground, he began rolling around and foaming at the mouth.*

An Application—This shows that sicknesses can be caused by demons. But we cannot know if a sickness is just physical or is demonic. For sure, question a person to see if they have been dabbling in the mystical, demonic lifestyle. This also shows children can be demon possessed. With modern-day Satan clubs, Ouija boards, etc. Satanism is very acceptable and prevalent. People (esp. children)

can participate in it on the Internet, thinking no one will “know.” But it will be revealed!! Evil does not stay hidden. It will come out in personalities, sicknesses, mental issues, etc.

9:21—*And He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood*—Mark alone tells us that Jesus asked the father this question. Possibly the boy was now a young teenager. This was not one event, but a repeated condition, which would be harder to exorcize. Most likely, the father had taken the boy to other exorcists over the years (besides the disciples), who also could not get rid of the demon. So if Christ does it, that would be very impressive!!!

9:22—*“It has often thrown him both into the fire [to burn him up] and into the water [to drown him] to destroy him*—to kill the boy. Satan and his demons are murderers (John 8:44). Started with Cain killing Abel (Gen 4:8; 1 John 3:12). The possession was potentially fatal.

- *But if You can do anything*—probably the disciples’ lack of ability to help caused the father to doubt if Jesus could help either
- *take pity [compassion] on us and help us!*—the father suffers seeing his son suffering

9:23—*And Jesus said to him, “If You can?”*—the father thought the crucial question was whether Jesus could heal the boy.

- *All things are possible to him who believes*—But Jesus said the question was whether the father could believe that Jesus could heal the boy. Faith sets no limits on God’s power.

9:24—*Immediately the boy’s father cried out and said, “I do believe*—to understand that it is true that Jesus can heal his son.

- *help my unbelief*—the father was pleading for himself as well as his son. He recognized his own weakness and did not want that to hinder Christ’s healing of his son.

An Application—This is true of all of us. No one has 100% perfect faith. We all have mixed faith, but as with the father here, be honest with Jesus about it.

9:25—*When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering*—Jesus did not want a “healing” meeting. He preferred teaching, which had eternal benefits, to healing, which is temporal.

- *He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him*—the disciples had given commands to the spirit which were ignored. But now, Jesus says, “*I command you...*”
- *and do not enter him again*—it usually came and went (v. 18). At this moment, in front of Jesus, the spirit was in the boy, but just casting it out was not enough. Jesus commanded the spirit to not go into the boy again, when they were away from Christ, in the future also.

9:26—*After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions*—it was in a rage!

- *it came out*—it had to obey the Creator/God
- *and the boy became so much like a corpse*—the stillness after having terrible convulsions and foaming at the mouth (v. 18)
- *that most of them said, “He is dead!”*—that the spirit finally killed him (v. 22)

9:27—*But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him*— he was not dead, but even if he was, Jesus raised him up!!

- *and he got up*—showing he was completely restored to health

9:28—*When He came into the house, His disciples began questioning Him privately, “Why could we not drive it out?”*—privately, away from the crowd. They do not seem to question or comment on Christ actually driving the demon out of the child OR giving thanks for the deliverance. Instead, it’s all about them. Why could they not do it? They had been given authority to do it (6:7) and had some success in doing it (6:13). Is their authority gone now?

9:29—*And He said to them, “This kind*—suggests there are different kinds of spirits, some stronger than others. The angel Michael said that to Daniel (Dan 10:10-13).

— *cannot come out by anything but prayer*—it seems that they had taken for granted the power that had been given to them, or they thought they had that power in themselves. They needed to prayerfully depend on God for it. Their failure showed their lack of prayer. “Experience can teach, but it cannot empower.” [Constable, p. 138]

— Some ancient Greek manuscripts (and translations) read “by prayer and fasting.” But it seems that “fasting” was added later by some scribes. The earliest manuscripts do not have it.

An Application—Fasting is practiced by many today. For example, the RC fast during Lent. Fasting was practiced under the Law. We are not under the Law. Colossians 2:23 says, “...*these...have the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.*” We could ask: Is Jesus more likely to forgive my sins if I fast? Is Jesus less likely to forgive my sins if I do not fast? (1 John 1:9). Jesus paid for all my sins on the cross. Fasting is not a payment to add to Christ’s payment.

The Second Prediction of the Passion

9:30—*From there they went out and began to go through Galilee*—leaving the Caesarea Philippi area in the north by Mt. Hermon (8:27), they travel south toward the Sea of Galilee.

— *and He did not want anyone to know about it*—Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem, and more of His time will be in teaching His disciples, preparing them for what lay ahead. His public ministry in Galilee was over. The crowds would now be a distraction. The disciples needed to concentrate on what Jesus was teaching them.

9:31—*For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be delivered* [Gk *paradidotai*, “going to be betrayed”), i.e., to be handed over. It was used both of Judas’ betrayal of Jesus (3:19; 14:41; Luke 24:7) and of God’s delivering up Jesus to death for the redemption of sinners (Isa 53:6, 12; Acts 2:23; Rom 8:32). [BKC]

— *into the hands of men*—He told them He would be killed (8:31), but now He adds that He will be delivered up into the hands of men.

— *and they will kill Him*—He is not at their mercy. He is delivered to them. He knows His destiny.

— *and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later*—in three days. They do not win because Jesus will be resurrected. He will overcome death.

9:32—*But they did not understand this statement*—did it mean they would also die, as His disciples? Jesus raised others from the dead, but who would raise Jesus from the dead?

— *and they were afraid to ask Him*—instead, they started arguing who would be the greatest, like not believing He would die. He’s the Messiah. He is bringing in the kingdom!! NOT!!

A Question about Greatness

9:33—*They came to Capernaum*—home of Peter? (1:21, 29), on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, after being away several months. This is His last recorded activity in Capernaum in Mark.

— *and when He was in the house, He began to question them, “What were you discussing on the way?”*—of course, Jesus knows, but wants them to admit it

9:34—*But they kept silent*—shows they knew Jesus would not approve of their conversation and their motives.

— *for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest*—does the favor shown to Peter, James, and John in selecting them to be eye-witnesses of the coming glory at the Transfiguration imply they will be greatest in the coming kingdom? Of course, they hope so, but the others hope not!! Were they discussing the death of Jesus as He had just told them? No. It seems like they would wonder what will happen to them when Jesus is killed. Instead, it's like they are not believing Jesus would die and instead still think He will bring in His kingdom, in which they wanted to be the greatest.

9:35—*Sitting down*—as the teacher (Matt 5:1; 13:1; Luke 5:3; John 8:2)

— *He called the twelve and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first*—it's a good desire

— *he shall be last of all and servant of all*”—Gk. *diakonos*, one who serves willingly, not *doulos*, a slave in bondage—Jesus tells them this is how to be first in the kingdom

— Completely the opposite of the world's values. The kind of greatness Jesus is talking about in the kingdom involves sacrifice, not status, in this world.

— All three synoptics record His words, indicating how important they are.

An Application—This is a profit motive, which is biblical—but have the profit motive for heaven, not earth. Jesus said, “*Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven*” (Matt 6:20). To be great in God's coming kingdom is to serve others while in your life on earth. Paul wrote that our spiritual foundation is salvation in Christ. *But each man must be careful how he builds on it*. One day in eternity, the quality of each man's work will be tested by fire. If the work remains, he will be rewarded. If the work is worthless, it is burned up, and no reward for it (1 Cor 3:11-15). *Being careful* is to do work that God considers to be valuable—here it is being a servant, not seeking to be the greatest on earth.

Mark bookends his point about greatness with the illustration of a child/believer, i.e., one who is not “great” but simply a lowly believer (v. 36 and v. 42).

9:36—*Taking a child*—it was simply a child from this home (not a special royal child, etc.)

— *He set him before them, and taking him in His arms*—a child is the least powerful and least influential of people. Yet Jesus sees them as precious in His sight. It seems that the child is an illustration of the point He is making through to verse 42, not that it is ministry to children (although that could be an application).

9:37— *He said to them, “Whoever receives*—to be welcome and treated as a friend, even as family. In 6:11, when the disciples were sent out, the people/homes where they went were to receive them, as being sent by Jesus, in His name. They were there to minister as His representatives.

— *one child like this in My name receives Me*—“in My name” describes the child as a believer, it is not referring to the character of the one doing the receiving. Whoever receives a believer, even a “lowly” believer, receives Christ.

— *and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me*”—receiving a believer is receiving Jesus, is receiving God the Father. Now an example:

Driving Out Demons in Jesus' Name

9:38—*John said to Him*—John is speaking for the disciples

- ***“Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name***—claiming the authority of Christ. The issue was not that he was casting out the demons, but that he was doing it in Christ’s name, claiming that as his authority.
- ***and we tried to prevent him***—evidently, he was successful at casting them out (BTW, coming closely after the event where the disciples could not cast the demon out of the boy in 9:18!).
- ***because he was not following us***—he must have been a believer, but not one of the 12, who had been commissioned by Christ to cast out demons (6:7-13). He was “unauthorized”! And the 12 thought they were the “great” ones and the only ones who could exorcize demons.

9:39—***But Jesus said, “Do not hinder him***—the 12 tried to prevent him, but Jesus said to not prevent him.

- ***for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name***—casting out demons was done by God’s power, and His power was not limited to the 12.
- ***and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me***—this man did not follow Jesus in exactly the same way as the 12 did, but he did follow Christ and stood against Satan.

9:40—***“For he who is not against us is for us***—a person cannot work against Christ and for Christ at the same time.

9:41—***“For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ***—a person doesn’t have to do a great thing, just giving a cup of water to another believer, because they are a believer, is great in God’s eyes. It’s an example of serving believers.

- ***truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward***—this will be rewarded in eternity.

9:42—***“Whoever causes one of these little ones [i.e., humble followers of Jesus] who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea***—if the disciples hindered the man from casting out demons, it is like causing a little one (meaning not one of the 12) to stumble. It is not receiving the one coming in Christ’s name who was casting out demons.

- So who is the greatest (vv. 33-37)? Whoever serves someone who comes in Christ’s name. They should not feel jealous and rivalry for someone else through whom God is at work. To turn anyone/believer in Christ away is such an offense, it would be better for him to be drowned in the sea. Conversely, a believer will be rewarded for the simplest act of kindness shown to anyone who is following Jesus. James talks of this same thing. *“do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism...”* (James 2:1-6).

The Demanding Requirements of Discipleship

9:43—***“If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off***—again, Jesus is using this as an illustration

- ***it is better for you to enter life***—the goal of self-discipline is to have a good life (especially eternal life). Resurrection to life is full restoration. There will be no lame or blind persons limping around in heaven.
- ***crippled, than, having your two hands...***what you do
- Quality of life in eternity is so important, that radical action must be taken to remove whatever will prevent it. Here, He is connecting sin with the physical self. It is through the eyes, and other bodily members, that we sin. It is letting the physical body lead the spiritual body astray.

An Application—For example, if pornography on the internet is causing you to sin, get rid of the internet—maybe even get rid of the computer if it is tempting. It is better to go through life without a

computer [although it may be difficult], than giving in to the sin. It is spiritual self-discipline. The point is to radically deal with sin in your life.

- **to go into hell** [Gk. *gehenna*, Heb. *ge Hinnom*—the valley of Hinnom, along the south side of Jerusalem, which was used in OT times for human sacrifices to the pagan god Molech (Jer 7:31; 19:5-6; 32:35). *Gehenna* occurs 12 times in the NT, and all but once (in James 3:6) are spoken by Christ.
- **into the unquenchable fire**—King Josiah put a stop to human sacrifices (2 Kings 23:10), and then the valley came to be used as a place where human excrement and rubbish, including animal carcasses from the Temple sacrifices, were disposed of and burned. The fire never went out. It was constant. Jesus called it an “*eternal fire*,” originally “*prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt 25:41). But it became the future eternal place for all unbelievers (Rev 20:11-15). [In the 1990s when we first travelled to Israel, they still burned their garbage dumps, and it looked like a lake of fire, never going out. Burned continually. The fire would glow and periodically erupt. It is an image “burned” in my mind, it’s so awful!]

9:44—quoting verse 48 (for emphasis?) [**where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE** (internal torment—see Acts 12:23), **AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED** (external torment).]—quoting Isaiah 66:23-24. “*All mankind will come to bow down before Me,*” says the Lord. “*...who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched.*”

- This is a picture of eternal punishment, not annihilation. The fire is not ever quenched. Unbelievers are given a resurrected eternal body to withstand the eternal fire (Rev 20:11-15).

9:45—“**If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell**—where you go. Who you are with. Who are your friends? If a friend leads you into sinful behavior, cut off that friendship.

9:46—again quoting verse 48 [**where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.**]

9:47—“**If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell**—what you see, or watch on TV.

9:48—**where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED**—taken from Isaiah 66:24.

9:49—“**For everyone will be salted with fire**—this is a difficult verse. It is the conclusion. There are at least 15 different interpretations. ‘everyone’, is both believers and unbelievers, and judgment:

- 1 Cor 3:11-15, *fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work...if any man’s work which he has built on it [foundation of Jesus Christ—Rom 8:1, there is no condemnation in Christ, sin is paid for on the cross], remains, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*” It is your works that are tested by fire. God will reward you for what is done for Him, in His name. Everything else is burned up
- Rev 20:11-15, *and the dead were judged...every one of them according to their deeds...and if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*
- **Have salt in yourselves**—test yourself while in this life. Take radical action (judgment) against the sin and works in your life. You will be accountable one day (2 Cor 5:10).
- **and be at peace with one another**—be loyal to Jesus, then you will be able to maintain peace with one another, instead of arguing about who is the greatest or some sin causing division.

Chapter 10

Teaching on Divorce

10:1—*Getting up, He went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan*—Though Mark did not record it, Jesus gave His disciples much additional instruction as they traveled from Capernaum in Galilee toward Jerusalem (cf. Matt. 8:19-22; 18:15-35; Luke 9:51—18:14; John 7:2—11:54). Evidently, Jesus departed from Capernaum and journeyed through Samaria to Jerusalem. Then He proceeded east across the Jordan River into Perea, which lay east and north of the Dead Sea. From there He returned to Jerusalem again. Leaving Jerusalem, Jesus visited the tribal territory of Ephraim, traveled farther north into Samaria, headed east into Perea, and returned to Jerusalem a third time. The following ministry took place during this last loop in Perea and Judea. [Constable, pp. 146-47]

— *crowds gathered around Him again, and, according to His custom, He once more began to teach them*—teaching had eternal benefits. Healings were physical benefits.

There are five parts to Mark's form of the divorce question (the other gospels make other emphases):

(1) The Pharisees' question about divorce (v. 2)

10:2—*Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him*—their motive was testing, not truth.

— *and began to question Him whether it was lawful*—what was allowed in the Mosaic Law, not what God intended when He created man and woman and marriage (some 2,500 years before the law).

— *for a man to divorce a wife*—this teaching is expanded in Matthew 19:1-9, is abbreviated in Luke 16:18, and also appears in Matthew 5:31-32.

— Remember, John the Baptist had denounced Herod Antipas' divorce and remarriage to Herodias (Mark 6:18). And Jesus is in Perea, Herod Antipas' territory. There is no reason to think Jesus had a different view than John. Maybe the Pharisees hoped, by asking this question, that Jesus would get into trouble with Antipas (and be killed like John was?).

— Among the Jews, divorce was allowed. But the difference of opinion was on the grounds for the divorce. The crucial (and only) text was Deuteronomy 24:1. "*When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce...*" Some Jews interpreted this "indecency" as "adultery," others interpreted it as anything the husband did not find to his liking (even just burning the food!).

— First, let's look at Deuteronomy 24:1-4. A man divorces his wife—for whatever reason (v. 1). She leaves and becomes another man's wife (v. 2). Then the second husband divorces her (v. 3). The conclusion is: *then the former [first] husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife...* (v. 4). That is the point. Not divorce in general. Not reasons for divorce.

— Adultery was punished by death (Lev 20:10), not divorce. By Jesus' time, it seems the death penalty was dropped (Matt 1:19-20).

— Paul later wrote: *...the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife* (1 Cor 7:11). Paul said this is *...not I, but the Lord...* (v. 10), who gives these instructions.

An Application—Hopefully, a few applications. Divorce happens. If so, the options are *to remain unmarried, or else be reconciled* (1 Cor 7:11). Believers are not to marry unbelievers (1 Cor 6:15-19). But if a person becomes a believer after marriage, and the unbelieving spouse agrees to stay married, they are to stay married (1 Cor 7:12-13). But if the unbeliever wants to leave the marriage, the believer is to let them, but not get married to someone else (1 Cor 7:15). Marriage is only binding in this life. If one of the spouses dies, the other spouse is free to marry (1 Cor 7:39).

(2) Jesus' counterquestion (v. 3)

10:3—*And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?”*

— As Jesus often did, He answered the question with a question of His own. And Jesus referred to the Scriptures, not their interpretations of the Scriptures.

(3) The Pharisees’ response (v. 4)

10:4—*They said, “Moses permitted a man TO WRITE A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY”*—although not the point of Deuteronomy 24, it is stated that a divorce did happen, with no teaching about the divorce itself. Moses permitted it, but that is not approving it.

(4) Jesus’ rebuttal (vv. 5-9)

10:5—*But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment*—It was permitted because of human sinfulness, not because it was God’s perfect will in the beginning. *God hates divorce* (Mal 2:16). Moses’ intention was to limit and control the effects of ending a marriage.

10:6—*“But from the beginning of creation, God MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE*—Genesis 2: 24 is just as much a part of God’s law as Deuteronomy is.

— Rather than addressing divorce, Jesus talks about what marriage is.

— God made them distinctly male and female, yet fully complementary to each other.

10:7—*“FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER*—

parenting is not a lifelong union. A man does not become one flesh with his parents. In fact, God’s plan is for a man to leave his parents. There are big problems when a man does not do that.

10:8—*AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH* [physical union]; *so they are no longer two, but one flesh.*

— Eve was taken from Adam’s rib. In marriage, in a sense, they recapture their original unity. It is a physical union, not a spiritual union. They are “one flesh.” It is not a contract that can be cancelled whenever they desire. It cannot be undone, once it happens.

10:9—*“What therefore God has joined together (one flesh), let no man separate”*—to divorce is to cut off half of the one-flesh, leaving only half a flesh. They do not become two flesh again. Being single, they are incomplete. Rather than “take sides” with the rabbinical reasons for divorce, Jesus went right to the reason for the marriage.

(5) Jesus’ further explanation to His disciples (vv. 10-12)

10:10—*In the house the disciples began questioning Him about this again.*

10:11—*And He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her*—it is not the divorce but the marriage to another that is adultery against the one-flesh first wife (Exo 20:14; Deut 5:18). Divorce violates God’s creation, but it does not dissolve it. It is impossible to undo the one flesh of the first marriage.

10:12—*and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery*—it is the marriage to another that is adultery against the one-flesh first husband. In the Jewish traditions, a woman could not divorce a husband. Only he can divorce her (her able to divorce was added by the Greek/Roman culture).

The new element in this teaching, which was totally unrecognized in the rabbinic courts, was the concept of a husband committing adultery against his former wife. According to rabbinic law a man could commit adultery against another married man by seducing his wife (Deut. 22:13-29)

and a wife could commit adultery against her husband by infidelity, but a husband could not be said to commit adultery against his wife. . . . This sharp intensifying of the concept of adultery had the effect of elevating the status of the wife to the same dignity as her husband and placed the husband under an obligation of fidelity. [Constable, p. 149]

Blessing the Children

10:13—*And they were bringing children* [Gk. any child from infancy to 12-year-old, as daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:39). In the parallel passage, Luke used the word for “babies” (Luke 18:15).] **to Him**— *so that He might touch them*—evidently the parents were bringing the children. Not for healing but for some kind of blessing or benefit for touching a holy man.
— *but the disciples rebuked them*—again, the disciples were abusing their authority by excluding some people from coming to Jesus. There is no explanation, however, as to whom the disciples rebuked (the children or the parents?) The children may have been viewed as disruptive or a distraction from the teaching.

10:14—*But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant*—only Mark records this reaction of Jesus. It is anger or offended—a strong emotional reaction to what the disciples were doing.
— *and said to them, “Permit the children to come to Me*—in the positive, to encourage them to come to Jesus
— *do not hinder them*—in the negative, do not do anything to obstruct them from coming
— *for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these*—something which the children are not aware of so they cannot have worked for it or deserve it.

10:15—*“Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all”*—Children possess no power or authority of their own. Adults have power and authority which clash with God’s in coming into the kingdom. A person does not get into God’s kingdom by working for it or “deserving” it. It must be received as a gift.

10:16—*And He took them in His arms*—He did not merely touch them. He embraced them. It is what Jesus was teaching them in 9:35-42. Jesus welcomed all who come to Him. He did not turn anyone away.

— *and began blessing them, laying His hands on them*—similar to what Jacob did in blessing Joseph’s sons (Gen 48:15). The disciples were preventing the children from receiving Christ’s love, AND they were trying to prevent Jesus from giving them His love!!

An Application—Do not be the reason someone cannot receive, **and** do not be the reason someone does not give. Encourage receiving. Encourage giving. *“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...”* (James 1:17).

Riches and the Kingdom of God

10:17—*As He was setting out on a journey*—on their way to Jerusalem (v. 32)

— *a man ran up to Him*—Luke says he was a ruler (Luke 18:18). Matthew says he was young (Matt 19:20).

— *and knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher*—expressing a high regard for Jesus

— *what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”*— This is a strategic location in Mark, who just recorded Jesus teaching that for entrance into the kingdom one had to receive it humbly, with no works, as a child. Now Mark records a man approaching Jesus, asking what work he needs to do to inherit eternal life. Exactly the opposite of being like a child.

— The man viewed eternal life as something to be achieved by doing good. Yet, in spite of all the commandments he felt he obeyed, he had a lack of security that it was sufficient. Also, common

was the belief that simply being a Jew, with an ethnic relationship to Abraham, gave them the right to be in the kingdom of God.

10:18—*And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good?”*—The man had a superficial understanding of goodness. First, that it was of works. Second, that Jesus was a “good” teacher.

— *No one is good except God alone*—Jesus is God, not merely a “good rabbi”, and it is God who is the source of all goodness (James 1:17), and eternal life. The question is: What does God require?

10:19—*“You know the commandments*—Jesus assumes the man knows the Ten Commandments.

— These are from the last half of the Ten Commandments, those having to do with people, which are easily verifiable in conduct. However, in Matthew 5, Jesus enlarges the physical to the spiritual. What is going on in your heart.

— *‘DO NOT MURDER*—in Matthew 5:21-26, Jesus said to not hate

— *DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY*—in Matthew 5:27-28, Jesus said to not lust

— *DO NOT STEAL*—the opposite, do not turn away someone who wants to borrow (Matt 5:42)

— *DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS*—in Matthew 5:33-34, Jesus said to not make any vows

— *Do not defraud*—only found in Mark, and seems to be a substitute and expression of coveting.

— *HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER”*—to have long life (Exo 20:12). In Matthew 15:3-9, Jesus said the Pharisees do not honor their mother and father, and *they invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.*

10:20—*And he said to Him, “Teacher, I have kept [Gk. make an effort to keep] all these things.*

He was a Torah-observing Jew, not just knowing the Law but carefully doing the Law.

— *from my youth up*—possibly referring to the age of 13, when Jewish boys became *bar miswah* (“son of the commandment”), then becoming responsible for living by God’s commands.

— Paul thought the same thing: *...as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless* (Phil 3:6); *from my youth up...* (Acts 26:4).

10:21—*Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him*—only Mark records Jesus’ love for him. Jesus knew the man was sincere, but Jesus also knew that the man could not give up his riches.

— *and said to him, “One thing you lack*—the young man was a good sincere moral man with respect to obeying the Law.

— *go and sell all you possess and give to the poor*—there is no indication that care for the poor was part of Jesus’ agenda. Giving to the poor can be viewed as another work! Jesus was criticized when the woman anointed His head with costly perfume, when they said it could have been sold and the money given to the poor (Mark 14:5). Jesus said that the poor are always around, so you can help them whenever you want. The point here, though, is not specifically helping the poor but that the man was unwilling to give up his riches—even if it meant inheriting the eternal life that he said he sought after.

— *and you will have treasure in heaven*—Jesus also said, *“Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also* (Matt 6:19-21).

— *and come, follow Me*—this is the point—the man could not give up his riches in order to love and follow Christ. His riches were keeping him from Christ. His riches were his security.

An Application—For us, it may not be riches, but it could be relationships, family, friends, beliefs, etc. that keep us from following Christ. Jesus said the gate to eternal life is narrow—we cannot take what we want, but only what God allows. There are only a few willing to do that (Matt 7:13). Eternal life

is a gift of God, and it cannot be bought or earned. Also, no saving merit must be attached to the action of giving all to the poor. This was not a command from Jesus for us to obey.

10:22—*But at these words he was saddened*—lit. “*but he, his face fell at this word.*”

— *and he went away grieving*—wealth was his god rather than God. His reaction showed his idolatry, his worship of money. He turned away from Christ and a relationship with Him.

— *for he was one who owned much property*—as a Jew, he viewed his wealth as evidence that his good works made him acceptable to God (God “blessed” him).

An Application—This is also the common thinking in “replacement theology,” that the church has replaced Israel, and is due physical (not spiritual) blessing. But to God, *all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment* (Isa 64:6). Paul wrote, *There is none righteous, not even one* (Rom 3:10).

10:23—*And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, “How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!”*—“hard,” not impossible. Because rather than an advantage, riches often keep a person from trusting in God. The more riches one has, the more one is accustomed to use those riches to buy whatever they want. Jesus also said, “*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other...you cannot serve God and wealth*” (Matt 6:24).

10:24—This verse is unique to Mark.

— *The disciples were amazed at His words*—lit. “astonished,” surprised, unable to believe one’s eyes/ears. Their Jewish background placed great emphasis on the privileged position of the rich. To the Jew, riches were a mark of God’s favor, an advantage, not a barrier, in God’s kingdom.

— *But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children*—only here in the Synoptic Gospels did Jesus refer to the 12 as “children,” revealing their spiritual immaturity.

— *how hard* [not impossible] *it is to enter the kingdom of God!* For anyone, not just those who have riches. But the disciples thought having riches got one into the kingdom. A person’s understanding keeps them from entering the kingdom of God.

— **10:25**—“*It is easier* [lit. not requiring great effort or work] *for a camel* [the largest beast of burden in Israel] *to go through the eye of a needle* [a typical sewing needle] *than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.*” Jesus was using an intentional over-exaggeration.

An Application—Attempts have been made to play down the meaning of this proverb. A notable one identifies the “eye of the needle” with a gate leading into the city of Jerusalem before which camels had to kneel in order to get through. But the existence of any such gate is doubtful. As Rawlinson says, it has “no authority more trustworthy than the imaginative conjectures of modern guides to Jerusalem.” Furthermore, this interpretation fails to recognize the picturesqueness of Jesus’ speech or to grasp the full force of what he is saying—viz., that “for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” is indeed “impossible.” [EBC] The door to the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem has a small door in it, called the “camel door.” They believe it is difficult for the camel to go through, but Jesus’ point is that it is impossible! Not just difficult!!

10:26—*They were even more astonished and said to Him, “Then who can be saved?”*—so, understanding it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, based on or using their riches, the conclusion of the disciples is: then no one can be saved.

10:27—*Looking at them, Jesus said, “With people it is impossible*—no works, no riches, no merit, no achievement, no religious practice, no birth lineage.....nothing originating in humans because of a lack of power to alter or control circumstances makes it possible.

- **but not with God**—the solution, it is a work of God
- **for all things are possible with God**—“*Is anything too difficult for the Lord?*” (Gen 18:14) “*I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted*” (Job 42:2).
- Notice that *eternal life* and *salvation* and *entrance into the kingdom* are used synonymously.
- Paul later wrote: *For by grace are you have been saved through faith; and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast* (Eph 2:8-9).

10:28—**Peter began to say to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You”**—seeming to say they did what Jesus told the rich man to do—give up everything and follow Christ. Implied here in Mark, but Matthew 19:27 includes Peter’s additional words: “*What then will there be for us?*” They are still thinking of material rather than spiritual values.

10:29—**Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake**—losing one’s family because of becoming a believer in Jesus

10:30—**but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms**, it seems to refer to the brother and sister believers in Christ. When Jesus’ earthly family came to see Him, Jesus said, “*who are My mother and My brothers?*” Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, “*Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother*” (Mark 3:33-35). Our Christian family becomes more spiritually meaningful than our blood ties, who are not believers.

- “Father” is omitted because God is the Father of our spiritual family.
- **along with persecutions**—Jesus said, “*in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33).
- **and in the age to come, eternal life**—what the rich ruler wanted in v. 17. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life* (John 3:16).

10:31—**“But many who are first will be last, and the last, first”**—this is a “floating saying,” used in different ways according to its context. Here it seems to mean that those who are seemingly first on earth may be last in heaven, and vice versa, those who seem to be last on earth, may have great value to God in heaven, who knows their heart, what they suffered, and how faithful they were. The point is to live your life with eternity’s values in mind.

Third Prediction of the Passion

10:32—**They were on the road going up to Jerusalem**—they were still east of the Jordan River, before they came to Jericho, which is just west of the Jordan River (v. 46)

— *and Jesus was walking on ahead of them*—typical as a rabbi, but also in this context, a determination to get to Jerusalem, where He will be killed

— *and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful*—because of the other two times Jesus talked about His death, and perhaps fearful that as His followers, they were in danger too.

— *And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him*—as He had before, Jesus gave His 12 disciples more detailed information.

	First prediction 8:31—9:29	Second prediction 9:30—10:31	Third prediction 10:32-52	Passion narrative 14:1—15:47	
1.	Handing over to the Sanhedrin	9:31	10:33	14:53	
2.	Condemnation by the Sanhedrin	8:31	10:33	14:64	
3.	Handing over to the Romans		10:33	15:1	
4.	Mocking, spitting, and scourging		10:34	14:64; 15:15, 16-20	
5.	Execution	8:31	9:31	10:34	15:24, 37
6.	Resurrection	8:31; 9:9	9:31	10:34	16:1-8

[Constable, p. 157]

10:33—*saying, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem*—the place of danger and condemnation to death. Where the enemies are.

— *and the Son of Man will be* [Gk. future-tense verbs, certainty of coming events]

— (1) *delivered to the chief priests and the scribes*—Jewish religious leaders, the Sanhedrin

— (2) *and they will condemn Him to death*—because the Sanhedrin did not have the power to carry out capital punishment

— (3) *and will hand Him over to the Gentiles*—the Gentile Romans, who could kill Jesus

10:34—(4) *“They will mock Him*—poke fun at, laugh at, jeer, taunt

— (5) *and spit on Him,*

— (6) *and scourge Him*—whip

— (7) *and kill Him*—the word “crucify” does not occur in any of the passion predictions in Mark but Matthew 20:19 uses it for the first time of Christ’s death.

— (8) *and three days later He will rise again*—on the third day—hope for the future

— Mark does not say, but Luke 18:34 says: *“But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.”*

The Request of James and John

10:35—*James and John, the two sons of Zebedee*—brothers, who, along with Peter, saw Christ’s glory on the Mt. of Transfiguration (9:2) and will be together again in 13:3.

— *came up to Jesus*—evidently, privately

— *saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You”*—wow! They want *carte blanche* (lit. “blank paper”) to write whatever one wishes, i.e., complete freedom to choose

10:36—*And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?”*— First, Jesus asks what they want Him to do for them (before He would agree to do anything).

10:37—*They said to Him, “Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory* [i.e., kingdom]”—they believed Jesus was the Messiah, and heading to Jerusalem, they expected His messianic glory to be revealed there, and they want a prominent place in His kingdom. Matthew 20:20-21 says it was their mother who asked, but Jesus addressed them in the plural, indicating the men, knowing it was their desire. On the Mt. of Transfiguration, seeing Christ in all His glory, they obviously did not understand His clear statement that He was going to be killed first. An Application—This shows they were not satisfied with Jesus alone, they want positions of power apart from Jesus and His promises. There is the danger—to want what Jesus can give you rather than

to want Jesus alone. Paul wrote, *I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...* (Phil 3:8-10).

10:38—*But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking—*

An Application—We do not have all the information or the wisdom that God has. We can ask, but then we must trust God to do what He thinks is best. Even Jesus prayed, *...not as I will, but as You will”* (Matt 26:39).

— *Are you able to drink the cup that I drink*—Jesus referred to this cup in Gethsemane (14:36).
— *or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”*—this position will come through suffering and death, not as a request of places of honor and glory.

10:39—*They said to Him, “We are able”*—they confidently and ignorantly agree

— *And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you shall drink—cup full*
— *and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized*—they think they could endure all the trouble and suffering that Jesus would have to endure because they did not understand what Jesus predicted about His coming suffering. They so wanted prominence, they were willing to promise Jesus anything.
— Jesus will voluntarily drink the cup of suffering and even death.

10:40—*“But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared”*—it is the Father’s decision, not Jesus’ decision.

— It’s interesting that when Jesus is crucified, there are two robbers with Him, *“one on His right and one on His left”* (15:27), not the disciples. When Jesus was arrested, *“they all left Him and fled”* (14:50).
— However, in Matthew 19:28, after the disciples asked, *“What then will there be for us?”* (also Mark 10:28), Jesus said, *“you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”* But obviously, those closest to the throne, on the right and left, would be special.

10:41—*Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant* [angry, annoyed, offended] *with James and John*—obviously, out of jealousy. Jesus knew what they were feeling, whether they voiced it or not

10:42—*Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized* [chosen] *as rulers* [preeminent position and status] *of the Gentiles lord* [to subject someone to a superior force, to overpower and to win] *it over them—*

— *and their great men exercise authority* [same word as “lord it”] *over them.*

10:43—*“But it is not this way* [with reference to that which precedes it] *among you—*it was not wanting to be great in the kingdom that was the issue—but the way to become great was the issue.

— *but whoever wishes to become great among you* [the way is] *shall be your servant*—to help, to do something for, to give a benefit to, to give assistance to...

10:44—*and whoever wishes to be first among you* [believers]—notice again, it is okay to want to be first among the believers—but the reward is in heaven, not in a position on earth. It is treasure to lay up in heaven, when all our deeds will be evaluated (Matt 6:19-21; 1 Cor 3:11-15).

— *shall be slave of all* [totality of kinds of people, not only believers]—

10:45—“*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve*—Jesus is not asking us to do something He has not already done Himself. He did not just serve believers, but everyone. ...*they brought to Him all who were ill...and He healed them* (Matt 4:24). He even welcomed the children (10:14). He said, “*I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat,*” so He fed 4,000 (Mark 8:2).

An Application—Paul wrote, “*with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ...*” (Phil 2:3-8).

— **and to give**—a servant gives, a servant is not served by others [chart from Constable, p. 161]

CONTRASTS BETWEEN A HELPER AND A SERVANT	
A Helper	A Servant
A helper helps others when it is convenient.	A servant serves others even when it is inconvenient.
A helper helps people that he or she likes.	A servant serves even people that he or she dislikes.
A helper helps when he or she enjoys the work.	A servant serves even when he or she dislikes the work.
A helper helps with a view to obtaining personal satisfaction.	A servant serves even when he or she receives no personal satisfaction.
A helper helps with an attitude of assisting another.	A servant serves with an attitude of enabling another.

— **His life a ransom**—“the price of release,” based on the experience of Israel’s release from slavery in Egypt

An Application—All people are slaves to sin and their sin nature—which is evil and destined for the wrath of God (Rom 1:18-32). But ...*having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him* (Rom 5).

— **for** [Gk. *anti pollon*, “instead of” or “in place of”] what should have happened to us all happened to Jesus instead. He was the substitute payment for our sin (Eph 2:1-8).

— **many**—an extensive quantity. Christ’s death on the cross paid for the sins of everyone, in every time, in every place, but it is only made a reality to those who accept Jesus as their Savior.

Restoring Sight to Blind Bartimaeus

This is the last healing miracle recorded in Mark.

10:46—**Then they came to Jericho**—Jericho is about 5 miles west of the Jordan River and 6 miles north of the Dead Sea and 18 miles NE of Jerusalem. Jericho was destroyed by Joshua and the Israelites (Josh 6; in about 1400 B.C.), when they came out of Egypt to return to the land of Canaan. By the time of Christ, an old and a new Jericho had been built. Herod the Great built his winter palace there. The city was very irregular-shaped, so it is possible that Jesus walked out of the old city and into the new city at the same time. One person might say He was leaving the city (Matt 20:31), and another may say He was entering the city (Luke 18:35), but it is the same city. It is even true of Jericho today. There is an old city tel and a new city.

— **And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd**—not just the disciples

— **a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus**—Mark is only one to name him

- **was sitting by the road**—a strategic location for begging, as it was a trade route of merchants entering and leaving the city, as well as religious people on way to Jerusalem, all who would be inclined to give alms to a blind beggar.
- Matthew 20:29 says there were two blind men. Perhaps Bartimaeus was known to those to whom Mark was writing, so he named him, as one of the two.

10:47—**When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene**—from Nazareth

- **he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David**—a descendant of King David. This was already proved when Caesar Augustus sent out a decree that a census was to be taken, and everyone was to go to their own ancestral city. Joseph, with Mary (pregnant with Jesus) went *from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David*” (Luke 2:1-6).
- By giving Bartimaeus his request, Jesus was also accepting for Himself the title *Son of David*—. An Application—Remember the demons in the Gerasene man, who addressed Him as *Jesus, Son of the Most high God* (Mark 5:7)—His deity. Paul also wrote of Jesus’ humanity in Romans 1:3, “*God...concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh.*” John wrote, “*the Word was God...and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us*” (John 1:1, 14).

- **have mercy on me!**—compassion, kindness, favor.

An Application—It is our cry, too!!!

10:48—**Many were sternly telling** [Gk. to command, even implying a threat] **him to be quiet**—he must have been shouting very loudly, maybe seen as a nuisance or interruption on their trip toward Jerusalem. Reminding us of when the children wanted to come to Jesus, and the disciples tried to hinder them (Mark 10:13).

- **but he kept crying out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”**—rather than stopping, Bartimaeus cried out even more. He wanted to no longer be blind, but to see!! Here was his opportunity, and he was not going to let anyone stop him!!

10:49—**And Jesus stopped** [walking] **and said, “Call him here”**—reminding us of the crowd around Jesus when the woman with the flow of blood touched Jesus, and He singled her out of the crowd (5:30), here Jesus singles out the voice of one man who had faith that Jesus could heal him.

- **So they called the blind man, saying to him**—rather than just the blind man calling out, now Jesus is calling for the blind man, so the disciples (and/or the crowd) respond to His command.

- **“Take courage, stand up!**—instead of trying to silence him, they now encourage him

- **He is calling for you**—this one person of faith, out of the crowd

An Application—God called us. “...*these whom He called, He also justified...* (Rom 8:30; 9:24).

Therefore, “*walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory*” (1 Thess 2:12; 5:24).

10:50—**Throwing aside his cloak**—probably sitting on part of the coat, with the rest folded over his lap into which coins could be tossed, his former way of life.

- **he jumped up and came to Jesus**—the people guiding him to Jesus

An Application—So people need to throw aside their works/righteousness, jump up and come to Jesus. It is a beautiful picture of salvation.

10:51—**And answering him**—no question was asked yet, but refers to his calling for attention

- **Jesus said, “What do you want Me to do for you?”**—reminding us of the question Jesus asked James and John in verse 36 (“**What do you want Me to do for you?**”). Jesus did not immediately heal him, though He knew that is what the man wanted. He wanted the man to verbally express his faith that Jesus could heal him.
- **And the blind man said to Him, “Rabboni**—respected teacher
- **I want to regain my sight!**—shows he used to have sight and wants it regained. This physical blindness is in contrast to the spiritual blindness Jesus will soon encounter from the religious leaders in Jerusalem who want to crucify Him.

10:52—**And Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well”**—Jesus does not touch the man. The man does not touch Jesus. Again—it is his faith in Jesus that is the means of his healing.

- **Immediately he regained his sight**—
- **and began following Him on the road**—Now Jesus continues His journey to Jerusalem and the cross. The healed man is in the crowd behind Jesus, going west into the hills to Jerusalem (on what came to be known as the “Good Samaritan” highway, which ran from Jericho to Jerusalem [today is Highway 1]).

Chapter 11

The Jerusalem Ministry (11:1–13:37)

Mark arranges the verses to cover “three days” (11:11-12; 11:19-20; 11:27).

The Triumphal Entry

11:1—**As they approached Jerusalem**—coming from Jericho, Jesus entered Jerusalem. He then came each morning and withdrew to Bethany each evening, for three consecutive days.

- **at Bethphage and Bethany**—two villages on the southeastern slope of Mt. Olives, about 2 miles (John 11:18) east of Jerusalem (although the exact location of ancient Bethphage is not known).
- **near the Mount of Olives**—this Mount stands about 2,600 feet above sea level, just east of Jerusalem, across the Kidron Valley, overlooking the temple area (to the west).
- **He sent two of His disciples**—it does not say which two. Also it does not say who the two were who were sent to prepare the Last Supper in the Upper Room (Mark 14:12-16).

An Application—The Mt of Olives is where the resurrected Christ ascended into heaven (Acts 1:1-12) and also where Jesus will return at the Second Coming. “*In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south*” (Zech 14:4).

11:2—**and said to them, “Go into the village opposite you**—evidently going from Bethany, where they were staying, into Bethphage, nearby.

- **and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt** [a young donkey] **tied there,**
- **on which no one yet has ever sat**—The Mosaic Law specified that an animal devoted to a sacred purpose had to be one that had not been used for ordinary purposes (Num 19:2; Deut 21:3).
- Also, Zechariah 9:9 prophecies are about the Messiah: “*...Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*”
- **untie it and bring it here**—Matthew 21:2, 7 says they brought both a colt and its mother to Him. This was not a supernatural event.

11:3—“*If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’*”

- *you say, ‘The Lord has need of it’*—although nowhere else in Mark (or Matthew) did they use “Lord” as a title for Jesus (it occurs in Luke and John only after the Resurrection). However, in Luke 19:33-35, it seems to be referring to Jesus, rather than to the owner of the donkey.
- *and immediately he will send it back* [“return”] *here*—to its owner

11:4—*They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street—just as He had told them* (Luke 19:32). Mark does not mention the owners. Evidently, Mark does not see it as important that the mother of the colt was also there, as Matthew does (who usually includes more details).
— *and they untied it.*

11:5—*Some of the bystanders were saying to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?”* Luke 19:33 says the owners were some of those saying this.

11:6—*They spoke to them just as Jesus had told them, and they gave them permission*—it implies they may have known Jesus and recognized His authority.

11:7—*They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it*—in place of a saddle. Like a coronation, such as with King Jehu (2 Kings 9:13).

11:8—*And many spread their coats in the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields*—from nearby. Only John 12:13 mentions palm branches, which would come from Jericho, where many palm trees are. They are not grown in the hills of Jerusalem. Laying down their coats before Him was showing Him homage due to a king.

11:9—*Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting:*

“*Hosanna!*—Greek for Hebrew *hosi ah na* (“O save us now,” from Psa 118:25a). Plea for deliverance (from the Romans).

BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD—Psalm 118:26, greeting for visitors to Jerusalem, part of the liturgy the Jews used during Passover.

11:10—*Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David*—the kingdom that would replace the Romans. The crowd was proclaiming the kingdom, not the king. And it was not part of Jesus’ proclamation. It is the crowd shouting this, not Jesus.

Hosanna in the highest!—You who live in heaven, save us know.

- To the Romans, this would have looked like a Passover praise and would not provoke them.

11:11—*Jesus entered Jerusalem*—it seems once He was in Jerusalem, the crowd dispersed

- *and came into the temple* [Gk. “precincts”—the courtyard area, not the building itself, in which only the Levitical priests could enter (Luke 1:9)]
- *and after looking around at everything*—He noted the temple needed cleansing again, as He did before but He will do that tomorrow. There was no priestly welcome at the Temple. Jesus was ignored. Jesus began at 12 years old in the temple (Luke 2:46-47), and here, the last week of His life, He is in the temple again.
- *He left for Bethany with the twelve*—they probably stayed with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, who lived in Bethany (John 11:1, 18; 12:1), or Simon the leper’s home (Matt 26:6; Mark 14:14:3).
- *since it was already late*—and the gates would soon be closed, at sunset. He and His disciples spent the night at Bethany.

The Unfruitful Fig Tree

11:12—*On the next day*—occurs only here in Mark, but it seems to be added as a detail of transition from the Triumphal Entry the previous day (11:1-11), when He just looked around the Temple area, and this day when He drove out the money changers (v. 15).

—*when they had left Bethany, He became hungry*—a glimpse into the humanity of Christ.

11:13—*Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.*

— Mark's version of the cursing is in two parts (11:12-14, 20-21), with the Temple action of 11:15-19) in the middle. Matthew's version is not broken up (Matt 21:18-22). In Luke, Jesus weeps over Jerusalem (19:28-40), but says nothing about the fig tree.

— The time of the year was Passover (14:1), the middle of April. Fig trees produced crops of small edible buds in March, followed by large green leaves in early April. The buds were a common food. The absence of the buds, despite the tree's green leaves, indicated it would bear no fruit that year. Eventually the buds dropped off and the normal crop of figs formed and ripened in late May and June, the fig season. So it was reasonable for Jesus, a short time before Passover in mid-April, to expect to find edible buds on the fig tree.

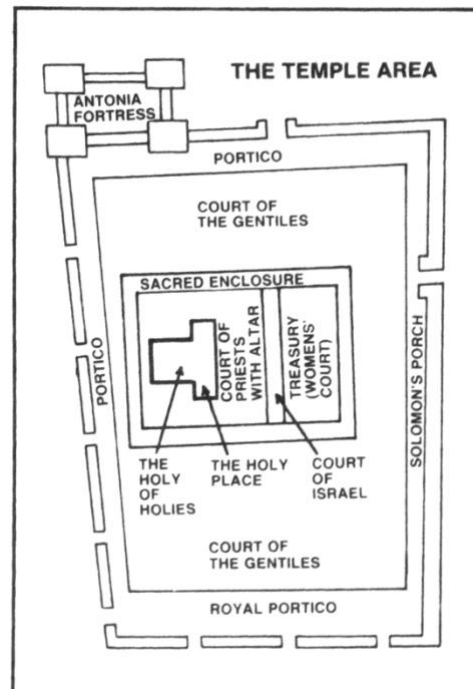
11:14—*He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And His disciples were listening*—here is an example of the authority of Jesus to judge. In verse 28, they ask Him what His authority is, what right did He have to drive the money changers out of the temple? He is the Creator and He is the Judge. Jesus created the world to worship Him. He came to His own, but His own did not receive Him (John 1:11). The fig tree was expected to have buds. Just as Jesus judged the fig tree for not having the buds, it was symbolic of when He will judge the Jews for not receiving Him as their God. The absence of the buds on the tree leads to the future inability of the tree to produce fruit. Therefore, the focus is on the failure of the fig tree and Jesus' judgment of it. Even though it was not the season for figs (later in the summer), this tree withered and would never have figs.

— Mark makes good use of this story, framing the temple demonstration (vv. 15-19). Because the Jews did not receive Jesus, judgment will come on them, and the Gospel will go out to the other nations (Rom 11-12).

Cleansing the Temple

11:15—*Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple* [courtyard, not the temple building, in which only Levitical priests could enter—Jesus was of the tribe of Judah, not Levi] *and*

- *began to drive out*—John says Jesus drove them out with a whip made from pieces of rope (John 2:13-17).
- *those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves*—This fulfills Malachi 3:1-13. Caiaphas (the high priest) had authorized a market (for the sale of pure items for temple sacrifice, such as wine, oil, salt, approved sacrificial animals and birds). For a traveler coming to Jerusalem from far away, it was much easier to buy pure items for sacrifice at the temple than to try to bring them.
- Also, there was a half-shekel temple tax (Exo 30:12-16), so Greek and Roman money (which had human pictures, considered idolatrous) needed to be exchanged for the Jewish shekel. [Even today, in the Old City there are moneychangers, to change the dollar, etc. for Jewish shekels.]



11:16—*and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple*—this statement is only in Mark. Jesus also prevented the casual use of the temple area as a short-cut through the Court of the Gentiles between the city and the Mt. of Olives (in the east). Also, people (even Gentiles) loaded with merchandise for the city were using it as a pathway. [Such use of the temple area was later prohibited also in the Talmud (*Berakoth* 9.5).]

11:17—*And He began to teach and say to them, “Is it not written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS’?”*—“*My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples*” (Isaiah 56:7). In the court of the Gentiles, how could the Gentiles pray with all the noise and smell of the public market? “The court of the Gentiles should have been a place for praying, but it was instead a place for preying and paying.” [Constable, p. 169]

- *But you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN*— “...*this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers...*” (Jeremiah 7:11), they were robbing God in that the Gentiles could not worship Him there.
- It is interesting to compare this to what Solomon prayed when he built the temple (1 Kings 8:41-43). He intended the temple to be a place where “foreigners” could also pray.

11:18—*The chief priests and the scribes heard this*—Jesus was challenging their authority over the temple and costing them a lot of money

- *and began seeking how to destroy Him*—this is the first time in Mark that their hostility to Jesus is revealed—but they could not openly be against Him
- *for they were afraid of Him*—because the people were following Him and liked Him
- *for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching*—the crowd had just celebrated His entrance into the city

11:19—*When evening came, they would go out of the city*—to Bethany, SE on the Mt. of Olives

The Withered Fig Tree and Sayings on Faith and Prayer

11:20—*As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up*—a plant may wither but if there are roots, it can grow again. So it is significant that Jesus cursed even its roots. No future growth—guaranteed!! Jesus said, “*May no one ever eat fruit from you again!*” (v. 14), but the disciples did not realize the tree would be withered *from the roots up*—total destruction, even of the totality of the tree.

Despite its leaves, which seem to bear witness to life and productivity, the temple has no fruit. And just as the tree that does not bear fruit has no value except to be cut down, the temple too will be destroyed. The withering of the tree, therefore, corresponds to Jesus’ hint of the temple’s impending doom in 11:17 and to his explicit statement to the three disciples in 13:2. Its theological significance comes for Mark and his readers in 15:38 when the veil of the holiest of holies, the presence of God, is torn at Jesus’ death. [WBC]

11:21—*Being reminded*—to make one think of, to bring/call to mind, to awaken one’s memory [used only two times in Mark (again in 14:72)]. It seems that if they had not again walked by the tree, they may have forgotten Jesus cursed it.

An Application—Take this to heart!!!! We need to be reminded of what God said in His Word, so we will obey it (James 1:24; 2 Peter 1:9). God told the Israelites: remember when you were slaves in Egypt and how God delivered them (Exo 12:27), so He began the Passover so they would remember what He did. Jesus said of Communion: “*do this...in remembrance of Me*” (1 Cor 15:23-25). Other works are obedience to commands, but Communion is done to remember Him.

— *Peter said to Him, “Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered”*—The curse miracle is a symbolic or prophetic action pointing to the coming destruction of the temple, which will happen in 70 A.D., after the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension of Christ and the start of the church age. Despite the “leaves,” which seem to indicate life, the tree does not bear fruit, as the temple looks like it is alive for God, but it also bears no fruit for God. So just as the fruitless tree will be cut down, so the temple will be destroyed.

11:22—*And Jesus answered saying to them* [not just Peter], “*Have faith in God.*”

— At first, we wonder what the withering the fig tree has to do with having faith in God. But rather than focus on the symbolic significance of the cursing, Jesus focuses on the means of the miracle that happened. God is the source of power to change. Faith (understand it is true) is the condition. There is no work that will guarantee an answer to prayer. Remember, they are living under the obedience to the Mosaic Law. Faith is a new concept.

11:23—“*Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’—a mountain is a symbol of doing something that appears to be impossible. It is a hyperbole (exaggeration) to show nothing is too hard for God. [In fact, He will move the Mt. of Olives at His Second Coming, and Every valley be lifted up and every mountain and hill be made low (Isa 40:4)].*

— *and does not doubt in his heart*—James 1:6 says that having doubts *...is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.* Maybe we are more like the father who told Jesus, “*I do believe; help my unbelief*” (Mark 9:24). Do not doubt God’s power or God’s love.

— *but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him*—Jesus was talking to His disciples, and this was a promise made to them. Our responsibility is to pray like He told

them to [i.e., we are praying to Elohim God, not Buddha or Allah], but they have God's specific promise that we do not have. Our promise is *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God [and the promise] and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus* (Phil 4:6).

11:24—“*Therefore I say to you [disciples], all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you*—God's promise made to the disciples.

11:25—“*Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions*—under the Mosaic Law, as in the Lord's Prayer: *Forgive us...as we forgive others* (Matt 6:12), God's forgiving depended on their forgiving, but in the church age, our command is “*forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you*” (Eph 4:32), i.e., we forgive because God forgave us.

11:26—[“*But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.*”]—this verse is not found in the best and most ancient manuscripts of the NT.

The Question about the Authority of Jesus

11:27—*They came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him*—the Jewish religious elite, the Sanhedrin

11:28—*and began saying to Him, “By what authority*—His credentials
— *are You doing these things*—cleansing the temple area
— *or who [who authorized Him] gave You this authority to do these things?”* not the Sanhedrin, not the Romans...If Jesus admitted He was “unauthorized,” He would be vulnerable to them, without fear from the crowd.

11:29—*And Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and then I will tell you by what authority I do these things*—He made His answer to them depend on their answer to Him. But His question created quite a dilemma for them.

11:30—“*Was the baptism of John [i.e., his ministry] from heaven, or from men?*” Jesus is implying His own authority was the same source as John's. There was no rivalry between them. Jesus Himself had gone to John for baptism.

— “*Answer Me*”—omitted in Matthew and Luke, it is almost a disrespect of them. They had come demanding an explanation and Jesus put them on the defensive with His question to them. So Jesus takes control of the situation.

11:31—*They began reasoning among themselves*—the narrator informs us of what they were reasoning to each other because they only say “we do not know.”

— *saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’*—they obviously were not ones who came to John for baptism!!!

11:32—“*But shall we say, ‘From men?’*” — *they were afraid of the people [cowards!!], for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet*—especially after his death, as a martyred prophet (6:15; 8:28). Rather than defending the temple, they are protecting themselves. So they

betray their own selfishness and their inability to respond to and for God, through John and now through Jesus.

11:33—*Answering Jesus, they said, “We do not know”*—they claimed ignorance, refused to answer. This shows their unbelief. It is embarrassing!! The religious leaders cannot respond!!

— *And Jesus said to them, “Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things”*—though Jesus will answer in an indirect way in the next parable, this story ends without any attempt on the part of Jesus to claim or defend a claim to His right to “do these things.” It also reveals the conflict and hatred of the religious authorities to Jesus, who has just humiliated them.

The next parable shows that throughout history, the religious leaders showed they rejected God’s messengers. Jesus is identified as the beloved Son of the Father and the authorities are murderers, who want to kill the Son, too. It also identifies Jesus’ unique authority to be that of the beloved Son sent from the Father, greater than the authority the prophets had (see Heb 1:1-3).

Chapter 12

The Parable of the Tenants

12:1—*And He began to speak to them in parables*—though only one parable is recorded here

— *“A man [representing God] **PLANTED A VINEYARD** [representing Israel (Isa 5:7; Jer 2:21) **AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers** [Israel’s religious leaders, see v. 12] **and went on a journey**—God left Israel with leaders [judges, prophets, kings, priests] after He had established the nation (Isaiah 5:1-2).*

12:2—*“At the harvest time [God expected the reward of worship of Him] **he sent a slave** [godly OT prophets] **to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce** [the worship of God] **of the vineyard from the vine-growers.***

12:3—*“They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed—killed the godly prophets*

12:4—*“Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully.*

12:5—*“And he sent another, and that one they killed; and so with many others, beating some and killing others—*all the true prophets of God, trying to get the nation to worship Him.

12:6—*“He had one more to send, a beloved son [Jesus]; he sent him last of all to them [there will not be any more prophets sent to them], saying, ‘They will respect my son.’*

12:7—*“But those vine-growers said to one another, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!’ [The Jews wanted a nation and a religion with no God or relationship to Him (a lot like today!)]*

12:8—*“They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard—*illustrating the coming crucifixion of God’s Son, Jesus Christ

12:9—*“What will the owner [God] of the vineyard [Israel] do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers [religious leaders], and will give the vineyard to others [non-Jewish, mostly Gentile, church age]. It is not the Jews themselves but their religious leaders who are destroyed when the temple is destroyed in A.D. 70. The Jews will join the Gentiles in the new church age.*

12:10—*“Have you not even read this Scripture:*

‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED—Jewish leaders rejecting Jesus, thinking they are winning because they killed the Son. But.....

THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE—of the church age (Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7), the new building God was making.

12:11—THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD—God’s sovereign doing. God overrules in amazing ways the rebellious human attempts to block His purposes.

AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES’

An Application—Paul wrote: *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ... For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.* (Rom 13:33-36).

12:12—And they were seeking to seize [arrest] **Him**—this is the first mention in Mark that they wanted to arrest Jesus.

— **and yet they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them**—as the time of the Passover was nearing, more people arrived in Jerusalem, who knew of Jesus, so the leaders were afraid to do anything to Him because of His popularity with the crowds, although they understood Jesus was speaking the parable against them, as the vinegrowers. Jesus said they were the sons of those who murdered the prophets (read Matthew 23:29-35).

— **And so they left Him and went away**—for now—for the moment.....

— This is one of Jesus’ most important teachings. It answers the question concerning Jesus’ authority as the Son of the owner, it condemns the ruling religious leaders as unfit to hold their high offices, and predicts God’s purposes will be accomplished in spite of their opposition. Jesus is the last of God’s servants He sent to Israel’s wicked leaders. There will be no more prophets. Jesus again predicts His death.

The Question about Paying Taxes to Caesar

12:13—Then they sent—“they” are probably **the chief priests and the scribes and the elders** (11:27-28)

— **some of the Pharisees**—viewed paying taxes to Rome as idolatry because Caesar’s image was on the coin, so they refused to do it

— **and Herodians**—supporters of the Roman Herodian rulers who said the Jews were to pay taxes to Rome directly or indirectly through Herodian client-rulers, as in Galilee.

— It sounds like they were allies, but they were not. They were just united as enemies of Jesus.

— **To Him in order to trap Him in a statement**—Gk. to acquire information with the purpose of causing harm or trouble.

12:14—They came and said to Him, “Teacher, we know—when asked about Christ’s authority before, they said they did not know (11:33). So they must “know” when it is expedient to know!! They were trying to hide their true motives.

— **that You are truthful**—what really is

— **and defer to no one**—is not concerned or anxious about what others say (neither the Pharisees or the Herodians)

— **for You are not partial to any**—Gk. to bow before someone in fear or supplication

— **but teach the way** [purpose or goal] **of God in truth**—i.e., the Mosaic Law [but, of course, the Pharisees followed the Rabbinical Law, not the Levitical (Mosaic) Law]

— **Is it lawful**—according to the Mosaic Law (but they refer to it when it is convenient to them)

— *to pay a poll-tax* [tax on every adult, without reference to income or resources] *to Caesar, or not?*—since Judea became a Roman province in A.D. 6, the Romans required the Jews to pay the poll tax into the emperor’s treasury.

12:15—“*Shall we pay or shall we not pay?*” —The Zealots refused to pay it. The Pharisees disliked paying it but did not oppose it. The Herodians, of course, had no objections to it. They were trying to force Jesus to side with either the Zealots or the Herodians. In their eyes, the Messiah would never support paying a tax to a foreign ruler.

— *But He, knowing their hypocrisy*—pretending to be righteous to entrap Him, to be two-faced. Only Mark describes their strategy as hypocrisy. Matthew calls it “malice” (Matt 22:18) and calls them “hypocrites.”

— *said to them, “Why are you testing Me?”*—Gk. to try or intend to make a person sin or do something wrong. Jesus exposes their true motives, but they do not answer.

— *Bring Me a denarius to look at*—a small Roman silver coin, which was the only coin they accepted in payment for taxes. It was the equivalent to a day’s wage of a common laborer.

12:16—*They brought one. And He said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” And they said to Him, “Caesar’s”*— The emperor’s image was on the coin.

12:17—*And Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s”*—they had an obligation to pay Caesar some of his own coins in return for the benefits his rule provided for them. Jesus simply says the obligations to Caesar do not infringe on the rights of God but are actually ordained by God. Paul wrote of this in Romans 13:1-8, *Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities* [also Rome, at his time]. ...*pay your taxes*. Paying taxes is not worshipping Caesar. They are to only worship God. They are two separate things

— *And they were amazed at Him*—Jesus did not fall into their trap. His answer was, what is owed Caesar? Taxes. What is owed God? Worship. They either misunderstood, or more likely, deliberately distorted, Jesus’ answer in Luke 23:2, at His trial before Pilate.

The Question of Marriage at the Resurrection

12:18—*Some Sadducees*—this is the only place Mark mentions them (although they make several appearances in Matthew). Josephus says they were educated men and many of them held prominent positions. [Antiq. XVIII, 17] They represented the urban, wealthy, sophisticated elite centered in Jerusalem (including some of the ruling priests). When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70, they disappeared from history.

— *(who say that there is no resurrection)*—this is cultural information made known to us in the Scriptures. Their objective here was to show how ridiculous the resurrection is. They did not follow the traditions of the elders which the Pharisees observed. They believed that souls perish along with bodies. They also say there are no angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

— *Resurrection* occurs here and in verse 23 but nowhere else in Mark. In the other gospels, it only appears once more, in Luke 14:14. Jesus refers to being “raised up” (8:31; 9:31; 10:34; 14:28). He will be raised up in the future, but His resurrection [past tense] is at the end of the gospels.

— *came to Jesus, and began questioning Him, saying*—with a hypothetical case designed to make any view of the resurrection (except their own) look absurd.

12:19—“*Teacher* (their purpose was not to learn from Him—they were hostile).

— **Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN’S BROTHER DIES and leaves behind a wife AND LEAVES NO CHILD, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER**—from Deuteronomy 25:5-6 (see also Genesis 38), called the levirate law (from the word *lesir*, “brother-in-law”). This was to protect the tribal identity in Israel. If someone from Judah married someone from Asher, etc. soon all 12 tribal identities would disappear. This would also keep the widow within the family and guarantee the continuing of the family line (Boaz with Ruth, for example, in Ruth 4:4-5).

12:20-22—“*There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children. The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; and so all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also.*”

12:23—“*In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one’s wife will she be? For all seven had married her*”—This assumes that the laws of the Torah are observed in God’s kingdom. An Application—It’s amazing how many things of the earth we believe will also be in heaven—things like marriage relationships, marriage itself, etc. Of course, “life” in heaven will be different than eternal life in the New Jerusalem on the New Earth (Rev 21–22).

12:24—*Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are mistaken—in their conclusion — that you do not understand the (1) Scriptures or the (2) power of God?*—two sources

12:25—(2) “*For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven*—in the resurrection there will be a new order of existence brought about by the power of God. Marriage will not exist as it does now, but all life will be like that of the angels. In heaven, there will be no more death, so the need for marriage and reproduction of the race will not exist.

12:26—(1) “*But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses [the Scriptures], in the passage about the burning bush [Exo 3:6], how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB’?* They had been physically dead for about 400 years when God made this statement to Moses, yet God spoke of them in the present tense—I AM, not I WAS. Therefore, they are still alive in the resurrection. Also, by naming these three men, Jesus was referring to the covenant God, important to the Jews.

12:27—“*He is not the God of the dead, but of the living*—in Luke 20:35-38, Jesus adds, *for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels. And ...for all live to Him.* God made the covenant with those three men. If they no longer exist, the covenant is null and void (no more Jews). But they are alive, and the covenant is alive.

— *you are greatly mistaken*—*they did not have courage to question Him any longer about anything* (Luke 20:40).

The Question Concerning the Great Commandment

12:28—*One of the scribes [teacher of the Law] came and heard them arguing*—in Jerusalem — *and recognizing that He had answered them well*—this scribe does not seem to have a hostile or hidden motive but wants Jesus’ skill in answering a debated question the scribes had.
— *asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?”*—this question comes out of the belief in a works-righteousness understanding of the Law and keeping the commandments. Traditionally, the scribes had 613 individual commandments in the Mosaic Law, 365 negative

ones and 248 positive ones. They also assumed some were weightier and some were lighter to obey. The scribes evidently argued over this issue because they taught it was the guarantee of life in the world to come.

12:29-30—*Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! This is called the Shema [“hear”] (from Deut 6:4). Devout Jews repeat it twice daily (morning and evening). THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD—quoting Deut 6:4-5; Lev 19:18. This affirms two things: OUR GOD—He is Israel’s God, with a covenant relationship between them, and lit. “the LORD IS ONE”—the unity of God. It is an affirmation of belief in the monotheism of God in the midst of cultures of polytheism [and other gods, such as allah, buddha, Hinduism, Greek idols, Mary, etc.]*

— *AND YOU SHALL LOVE [agape] THE LORD YOUR GOD—because He alone is God, and because of the covenant of love He made with the Jews.*

— But how to you love God?

— *WITH ALL YOUR HEART—Gk. kardia, emotions, desires*

— *AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL—personality*

— *AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND—thoughts, understandings, intelligence*

— *AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH’—abilities, exertion, actions*

An Application—Jesus used the Greek word *agape*, which is the action of “giving.” You are to give to God your emotions, personality, thoughts, abilities... Paul wrote of this in Philippians 3, *I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...*

12:31—*“The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF’—*

An Application—It is common to get these two commandments reversed—to love people more than one loves God, that is, to support sinful behavior or lifestyle all in the name of keeping the relationship. But loving God with your obedience is more important than earthly relationships.

Actually, to love one another is to try to keep them from living in disobedience to God (would you allow them to drink poison?). See 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:10, 14-15; 1 Timothy 5:1-8; 2 Timothy 2:25-26; etc. There is a responsibility for other believers we do not have for unbelievers.

— A lawyer asked Jesus, “*Who is my neighbor?*” Jesus replied that rather than looking at who could be the neighbor, He said, who *proved to be a neighbor* (Luke 10:36). We are to control what we do, not what another person does—but you prove to be a neighbor when you try to help.

— *There is no other commandment greater than these”—all the other commandments can fall under one of these two headings: either loving God or loving other people.*

12:32—*The scribe said to Him, “Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM;*

12:33—*AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE’S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF—someone who agreed with Jesus!! God and humans are eternal spiritual beings.*

— *is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices”—religious rituals and ceremonies (see Isa 1:11-17; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Matt 7:21-23). It is so much easier to perform these rituals than it is to love God and then to love other people.*

12:34—*When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently—this scribe did understand these things from the law—that to love God and others was more important than religious rituals. And that Jesus is a great rabbi. But does he choose to follow Christ? Not yet. And we do not know if he ever does.*

- *He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God”*—we are not told what was preventing the scribe from entering the kingdom of God. Was it wealth? Only Jesus would know whether a person is near or far from faith in Him.
- *After that, no one would venture* [Gk bold to challenge] *to ask Him any more questions.*

The Question about David’s Son

12:35—*And Jesus began to say, as He taught in the temple* [courtyard]—this time, Jesus is asking the [tough] question:

—*“How is it that the scribes say that the Christ* [Gk. “Messiah”] *is the son of David?* [See Isa 9:2-7; 11:1-9; Jer 23:5-6; 30:9; 33:15, 17, 22; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11]

12:36—*“David himself said*—writing Psalm 110. [Interesting trivia: The NT has more references and allusions to Psalm 110 than to any other single OT passage (Acts 2:29-35; Heb 1:5-13; 5:6; 7:17, 21).]

- *in the Holy Spirit*—who inspired David to write the Psalms. In 2 Samuel 23:1-2, David says, “*David...the sweet psalmist of Israel, The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.*” The Holy Spirit is the author of the Scriptures.
- **‘THE LORD** [God the Father] **SAID TO MY** [David’s] **LORD** [Messiah],
“SIT AT MY [the Father’s] **RIGHT HAND,**
UNTIL I [the Father] **PUT YOUR** [Messiah’s] **ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR** [Messiah’s] **FEET.”**

12:37—*“David himself calls Him* [Messiah, v. 36] *‘Lord’; so in what sense is He his son* [v. 35]?”

- The only valid answer: the Messiah is David’s son AND David’s Lord at the same time. (This implies the Messiah is both God (David’s Lord) and man (David’s son) [Rom 1:3-4; 2 Tim 2:8].
- And the Messiah will restore the future Davidic kingdom on earth (2 Sam 7:16; Amos 9:11-12; Matt 19:28; Luke 1:31-33).
- *And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him*—in contrast to the leaders who wanted to trap Jesus with their questions, the crowds got pleasure listening to Him [though not necessarily with comprehension].

The Warning about the Teachers of the Law

12:38-40—*In His teaching He was saying: “Beware* [Gk. notice carefully to learn of future dangers] *of the scribes* [religious leaders and teachers]—

- (1) *who like to walk around in long robes*—not limited to the synagogue or temple, but walking around in the market places, to draw attention to themselves by what they wore (today, it might be compared to RC with ash marks on their foreheads during lent!).
- (2) *and like respectful greetings in the market places*—to be called “rabbi” (Matt 23:7), to emphasize their highest rank above others (or “Father” or “Pastor”).
- (3) *and chief* [choice or first] *seats in the synagogues*—they had seats in front facing the people, (still practiced even by most Protestant pastors).
- (4) *and places of honor at banquets*—seating at banquets was either according to age or according to importance (see Luke 14:7-14).
- (5) *who devour widows’ houses*—hypocrisy and vanity were one thing, but the ruin and depriving of vulnerable widows was horrible. Records show six ways they might do it: (a) accepting payment for legal assistance, (b) acting as lawyers, cheating widows out of their estates, (c) freeloading on widows’ hospitality, (d) mismanaging estates entrusted to them,

possibly by the deceased husband, (e) getting paid for praying for them, (f) taking houses as pledges for debts that could not be realistically repaid.

- (6) **and for appearance's sake offer long prayers**—For example, the Pharisee who prayed, “*God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I pay tithes of all that I get*” (Luke 18:11-12).

An Application—Jesus also gave suggestions on prayer: *pray in secret...do not use meaningless words...do not use many words...* all with the purpose that you think that God would be more likely to hear them. Public, repetitious, long prayers do not impress God, like we think they do (Matt 6:5-13).

- **these will receive greater condemnation**”—see also James 3:1. With greater knowledge comes greater responsibility and greater accountability (for either reward or condemnation) in the day of judgment. “*For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil*” (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

The Widow's Offering

12:41—**And He sat down opposite the treasury** [at the temple courtyard]—the last of His public ministry recorded in Mark.

- **and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury**—there were some receptacles designated for specific purposes and others used for freewill offerings.
— **and many rich people were putting in large sums**—obviously observable.

12:42—**A poor widow**—Mark places this story here in contrast to the previous one of the scribes devouring the widow's houses (12:40).

- **came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent**—the smallest bronze Jewish coin, two were worth 1/64th of a Roman denarius (the day's wage for a laborer, 6:37).

An Application—Sometimes people do not give of themselves because they think they have so little to give. But even a little can be given to God. It is the heart's attitude. Not the amount. Even if it is out of our riches.

12:43—**Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury;**

12:44—**for they all put in out of their surplus**—in addition to what one needs to live on

- **but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on**”—she had no surplus

An Application—Many contribute 10% religiously (i.e., according to the law of tithing). I remember a “Covenant” woman saying: “10% is God's, 90% is mine!!.” Even under the Mosaic Law in the OT, giving was in addition to tithing. “*every men shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you*” (Deut 16:17). However, giving in the church age is not according to a tithing law. *Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver* (2 Cor 9:7). Tithing is a no-brainer. Charles Ryrie said: “Give 9% or 11%.” The point is not that you give everything you have to live on, but to think about it and purpose it in your heart. Give what you want to give, *according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you....*

P.S. Another thing that is popular to hear today is that all giving is to be through the local church, who then distributes the money to whomever they decide. This is what the Jews in the temple did, living under the Law (which replacement theology believes is also today). However, ...*the church, which is His body* (Eph 1:22-23); *Jesus is the head of the body, the church* (Col 1:18). Each

individual person is part of the church, His body. Assembling is one of the things the body does, it does not define the body.

Chapter 13

The Olivet Discourse (13:1-17)

Prophecy of the Destruction of the Temple

13:1—*As He was going out of the temple*—courtyard area, into the city of Jerusalem

— *one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!”*—Herod the Great had renovated the whole area. The foundation of the courtyard had huge stones, the walls rising 170 feet above the Kidron Valley, running between it and Mt of Olives. This disciple was merely making an observation, but it launches Jesus into prophecy.

An Application—Let’s review the temples:

From Abraham (2000 B.C. to Moses 1500, there was no Jewish building, religion, or nation).

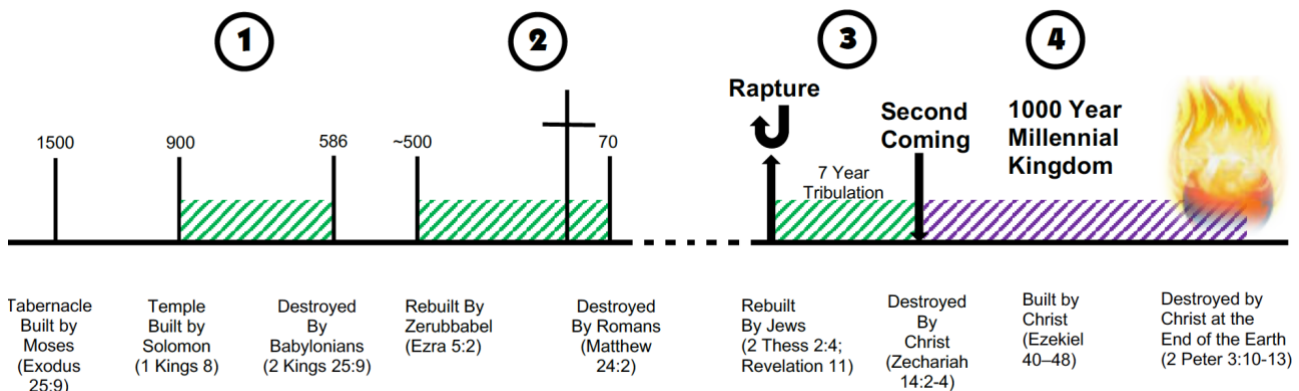
1500 B.C. Moses built the tabernacle, a tent that moved through the wilderness wandering and into the land, mostly then kept at Shiloh (in the hills north of Jerusalem).

900 B.C., King David’s son Solomon built the first temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 8). This was destroyed by the Babylonians in about 586 during the Exile (2 Kings 25:9).

~500 B.C. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel return from Babylon and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 5:2). Herod the Great renovated that temple, and it existed at the time of Jesus. It was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. [The Jews have a memorial date of August 15 as when the First and Second Temples were destroyed.]

Third Temple will be in existence during the tribulation time. No indication exactly when it will be built. Orthodox Jews have all the implements and priests to build it now, but it would probably be on the Temple Mount, currently in the hands of the Muslims and the Dome of the Rock. The Bible does tell us the antichrist “*takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God*” (2 Thess 2:4; Rev 11). This temple will be destroyed by Christ at His Second Coming (Zech 14:2-4). [Dispensational believers have more information of this temple in prophecy than the Jews, who merely want a temple in which to worship.]

Fourth Temple will be built by Jesus and be in existence during the Millennial reign of Christ on earth (Ezekiel 40–48). This will be destroyed by Christ at the end of the earth, when the whole earth will be burned up (2 Pet 3:10-13).



13:2—*And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down”*—This happened in A.D. 70, when the Roman Titus destroyed

the city, from April 11 to Sept 7. He burned the city, and the gold of the temple implements melted down between the stones, and the army literally tore up the stones trying to get the gold. Up to now, Jesus was telling about the current situation and people, but now He turns to predictive prophecy, declaring the distant future.

The Disciples' Two-Fold Question

13:3—*As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple*, i.e., looking over the Kidron Valley at the temple and its area (even done today).

— *Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately*—two sets of brothers [James and John, and Peter and Andrew. They were the first disciples who were called (1:16-20).]



13:4—“*Tell us, when will these things be*, i.e., the destruction of the temple (v. 2).

— *and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?*”—Matthew expands the question to “*when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?*” (Matt 24:3). From Mark, the disciples thought the destruction of the temple was one of the events at the end of the age and the coming of the kingdom of God.

— But Jesus refuses to give dates and signs. Instead, He warns them about the trials ahead.

Warnings against Deceivers and False Signs of the End

Jesus' prediction is specifically for the time of the tribulation, in the years right before His Second Coming. However, the warnings, to take heed of anything away from faith in Christ, are for all ages. Satan is against Jesus. And he is always at work, and we have to always be on guard. Paul wrote, “*I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ*” (2 Cor 11:3).

13:5—*And Jesus began to say to them, “See to it* (Gk. *blepete*, “take heed” also in vv 9, 23, 33, notice, pay attention to, watch out for)—four times He warns them to watch out for false news

— *that no one misleads you*—to cause you to wander away, off the path, from the truth about Jesus and the Bible.

An Application—Anything that tempts you away from an author-intended reading of Scripture will be adding or taking away from the Word (Rev 22:18-19).

13:6—“*Many will come in My name*—claiming His authority, and there are lots of them

— *saying, ‘I am He!’*—the antichrist “*takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God*” (2 Thess 2:4).

— *and will mislead many*—specifically in the tribulation, the false prophet *makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the antichrist* (Rev 13).

13:7—“*When you hear of wars and rumors of wars*—the history of the world is a history of wars. Satan is the father of lies and a murderer (John 8:44-45), *be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour* (1 Pet 5:8). Much is the consequence of human rebellion and sin (such as at the Flood).

— *do not be frightened*—afraid or anxious

— *those things must take place*—required, need to, have got to happen

— **but that is not yet the end**—both the misleading in Christ’s name and the wars have got to happen, but that is not the end.

13:8—“**For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom**—world wars

— **there will be earthquakes in various places**—unfortunately, the KJV reads “divers” places. But “diverse” means “various.” But sermons are preached on earthquakes being in “unusual” places as a birth pang of the end times. This is not accurate to the text.

— **there will also be famines**—they affect more people for a longer time. Worst of disasters.

— **These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs**—similar to an infant being born, coming from a very painful birthing experience. Note: this is the beginning happenings of the tribulation, not events in our time. The church does not exist when Jesus predicted all this, and it will also not exist when it happens (after the Rapture).

An Application—Our command is to wait and look for the Rapture. *Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus* (Titus 1:13; 1 Thess 4:13-17). We do not look for signs. We look for Jesus, who said to believers, “*I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also*”(John 14:3).

Warnings of Persecution and Strife and a Call to Steadfastness

13:9—“**But be on your guard** (*blepete*, “take heed”);

— **for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues,**

— **and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them**—this, of course, has happened throughout history, but during the tribulation, it will increase. John wrote, in heaven, *...are the souls of those who had been slain because of the Word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained...* (Rev 6:9). Much martyrdom (also in history).

13:10—“**The gospel must first be preached to all the nations**—John wrote, “*another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people*” (Rev 14:6).

13:11—“**When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit**—whose assignment is to glorify Christ (John 16:14).

13:12—“**Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. Many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another...and because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold** (Matt 24:10-12).

13:13—“**You will be hated by all because of My name** (we see the hatred of the Jews and Christians even in our time).

— **but the one who endures to the end**—who is not martyred in the tribulation (such as the 144,000 in Rev 7:4-8). He is talking about physical life here.

— **he will be saved**—alive to enter the kingdom at Christ’s Second Coming

The Abomination that Causes Desolation and the Necessity of Flight

13:14—“**But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand)**—quoted from Daniel 9:25-27. Historically, it was when Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificed a pig on the altar, desecrating the Jewish temple in 167 B.C. Jesus says that

same abomination will happen again when the antichrist “takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as God (2 Thess 2:4).

— **then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains**—“...all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled...” (Zech 14:2).

13:15-18—“**The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat—flee to the mountains**

— **“But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!**

— **“But pray that it may not happen in the winter** (Matt 24:17-21). These things will make it more difficult to escape.

13:19—“**For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will**—the “great tribulation” (Matt 24:21). It’s interesting that at the horrendous sinfulness at the time of Noah, they were simply killed in the flood, they did not live through a time of disasters like in the tribulation.

— Jesus here is affirming *the beginning of the creation which God created*.....

13:20—“**Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been** (physically) **saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days**—this is the fourth trumpet, *a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were smitten, so that a third of them might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way* (Rev 8:12). In other words, the day is shortened to 16 hours.

— Jesus is affirming here *the elect, whom He chose...before the foundation of the world* (Eph 1:4)

13:21—“**And then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, He is there’; do not believe him**—those claiming to be the Messiah

13:22—**for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders**—*the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved*” (2 Thess 2:9-10). “Miracles” do not create faith in the truth.

— **in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect**—the elect are true believers. Satan will use supernatural signs (miracles) to try to lead the believers away from the worship of Christ. [Even today “believers” are deceived by emotional experiences they interpret as “signs.”]

13:23—“**But take heed (blepete); behold, I have told you everything in advance**—forewarned is to be forearmed!! Even though we will be Raptured and not live through the tribulation, the features and objectives of Satan are alive today. He is a liar and murderer (John 8:44). We need to *stand firm against the schemes of the devil* (Eph 6:11). *Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour, But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world* (1 Pet 5:8-9).

The Coming of the Son of Man

13:24—“**But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT,**

13:25—**AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken.**

13:26—“*Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory*—very different than the Rapture. This happens after the tribulation, at the Second Coming, all eyes will see Him coming, in power and glory (Matt 24:29-30).

13:27—“*And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven*—the elect, who have not been martyred by the antichrist, will be gathered by Christ to enter His physical kingdom on earth (Dan 12:11-12; Matt 24:13; Rev 14:1). *And the rest [unbelievers] were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse* (Rev 19:21).

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

13:28—“*Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near*—we are to discern the times in which we live (Matt 16:3), and most of the epistles are written for just that (it is just that they are not the signs of the tribulation).

13:29—“*Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door*. The tribulation itself is a sign. *When you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door*. The church-age believers are already raptured to heaven, so it is the tribulation saints who would be seeing these things happening.

13:30—“*Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place*—The believers who physically survive the tribulation (like the 144,000) will see the Second Coming (Matt 24:32-33).

13:31—“*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away*—God’s Word is eternal. This world is not eternal. It will be burned up with fire (after the Millennial Kingdom)—2 Peter 3:10-12).

The Necessity of Watchfulness

13:32—“*But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone*—Only God the Father knows the exact day and hour of the Second Coming. What we know from Scripture is the general time-frame: Rapture—7-year Tribulation—2nd Coming.

13:33—“*Take heed (blepete), keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come*—as in the days of Noah, they heard about the coming flood but did not know the day or time. It is the best thing to say because the point is to always be on alert.

An Application—Although not in Mark, it is necessary to understand Matthew 24:37-40. *For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son be*—notice: the one taken away is the unbeliever. The one saved alive is the believer.

— *Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left*—notice: the one taken is the unbeliever (to death). The one left is the believer, who goes into the Millennial Kingdom.

— To say this is an illustration about the Rapture (a common teaching) is to take it completely out of context. Jesus is not talking about the church—which does not even exist at this point.

13:34—“*It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert.*”

13:35—“*Therefore, be on the alert — for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning —*”

13:36—*in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep.*

13:37—“*What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’*”—at the Second Coming, *then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds—why will they mourn? Because the first thing He will do ...the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place...weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth* (Matt 24:30, 50-51). It will be too late to become a believer. Death ends the opportunity to choose to believe.

Chapter 14

The Passion and Resurrection (14:1–16:8)

Out of Mark’s 661 verses, 242 (37%) deal with the last week of Jesus’ life, 128 verses are about Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection.

The Plot to Arrest Jesus

14:1—*Now the Passover*—commemorating when the angel of the Lord passed over the homes of the Hebrews on the night he killed all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians (Exo 12:13, 23, 27). It was celebrated on the 14th of Nisan (March/April), and the meal was eaten that evening between sundown and midnight (actually then on the 15th because the Jews end the day at 6:00).

— *and Unleavened Bread*—it followed the Passover and lasted seven days, the 15th through the 21st of Nisan (Exo 12:15-20; 23:15; 34:18; Deut 16:1-8).

— *were two days away*—

— *and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth*, i.e., to take Him into custody by surprise and without a public show of force. However, the crucifixion will happen on God’s timetable, not theirs.

— *and kill Him*—He was condemned to death before the trial!!

14:2—*for they were saying, “Not during the festival, otherwise there might be a riot of the people”*—The Jews could observe the Passover only in Jerusalem (Deut 16:5-6), so Jewish families from all over traveled to Jerusalem. It seems that the plan was to wait for the crowds to return home, after the Passover. The Romans worried celebrating God’s great deliverance from the Egyptians may inspire thoughts of a revolt from Rome. But the offer of Judas to privately betray Christ was too good to refuse.

The Anointing at Bethany

14:3—*While He was in Bethany*—a village on the Mt. of Olives, about 2 miles away

— *at the home of Simon the leper*—evidently a leper who had been previously healed by Jesus (if he was still a leper, they would not be eating a meal in his home). This wording separated him from other Simons (such as Simon Peter).

— *and reclining at the table, there came a woman*—John 12:3 identifies her as Mary, sister of Lazarus and Martha. [Although Luke 7:36-50 is similar to John 12:1-8 and Mark 15:3-9, the differences are significant and could be recording a different incident.]

- *with an alabaster vial*—“a vessel with a rather long neck which was broken off when the contents were used.” [BAG, p. 33]
- *of very costly perfume of pure nard*—made from the root of a plant found chiefly in India and was very expensive.
- *and she broke the vial*—implying no part of the ointment was held back, it could not be closed. All of it was poured out.
- *and poured it over His head*—the extravagance of her action is emphasized. It seems that it was spontaneous, expressing her honor and love of Jesus.

14:4—*But some*—John 12:4-5, tells us it was Judas who complained

- *were indignantly* [against what is judged to be wrong] *remarking to one another,*
- *“Why has this perfume been wasted?”*—spent carelessly, to no purpose

14:5—*“For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii* (about a years’ wages for a fully employed man).

- *and the money given to the poor.*” Judas was saying this, *not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it* (John 12:6).
- *And they were scolding her*—their “concern” for the poor contrasts with her expression of love and devotion for Jesus.

An Application—Know to whom you are giving—what are the “poor” using the money for? Drugs? To hurt someone else? Does money help them? Maybe you need to help them, like the model of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:33-37). Money is not the only way to give. For Mary, it was precious perfume.

14:6—*But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why do you bother her?”* Jesus came to her defense. He knew what her motivation was. He knew what she was thinking.

- *She has done a good deed to Me*—she did what she thought was the best she could do. She was glorifying Christ.

14:7—*“For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them*—there is no way to solve the poor problem. There will always be a poor person to help.
— *but you do not always have Me*—Jesus will soon be killed.

14:8—*“She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial*—she has been listening to Jesus teach. What did she understand? She probably anointed Him as an act of love. But Jesus said it was also an anointing before His burial, which would be in a few days.

14:9—*“Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her”*—Wow! Jesus’ evaluation of the greatness of Mary’s act. It also implies the continuance of the gospel, after Jesus’ death and resurrection, *to the whole world.*

The Betrayal by Judas

14:10—*Then Judas Iscariot,*

- *who was* [lit. “the”] *one of the twelve*—he had all the advantages of the 12. He cast out demons. He preached the gospel. He healed. He listened to Jesus teach. He handed out the food in the feeding of the 5,000 and 4,000. He was in the boat when Jesus calmed the storm.

— **went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them**—he took the initiative with them. Why? The only clue was in the previous story—he had the money box and pilfered the money, the whole time he was with Jesus. It was always about the money. Ultimately, he came under satanic control (Luke 22:3; John 13:2, 27).

14:11—**They were glad when they heard this**—they could arrest Jesus and avoid the hostility of the crowds.

— **and promised to give him money**—huge contrast Mark makes here. Mary, who anoints Jesus with 300 worth of nard, showing her love. Judas betraying the One he followed for three years for 30 pieces of silver (Matt 26:15), such a small sum compared to the 300.

— **And he began seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time**—as part of the inner circle of the 12, he would know the best time to hand Jesus over without inciting the crowd.

An Application—We all know people raised in believing families, who abandon the faith. Here was a man who walked and talked with Jesus. Participated in His ministry. Yet betrayed Him. Paul wrote, “*those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith... (1 Tim 6:9-10). ...they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will (2 Tim 2:26).*”

The Lord’s Supper

Preparation of the Meal

14:12—**On the first day of Unleavened Bread**—14th of Nisan, Thursday

— **when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed**—lambs killed and drained of blood—but eaten after sunset.

— **His disciples said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?”** The Passover had to be eaten within the walls of the city, and they were in Bethany (v. 3), outside the city, so they had to make preparations within the city walls. Mark presents the Last Supper as a Passover meal.

14:13—**And He sent two of His disciples**—Luke 22:8 says it was Peter and John

— **and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water**—usually, it was the women who carried the pitchers of water, so a man doing it would stand out.

— **follow him**—the man carrying a pitcher of water

14:14—**and wherever he enters**—it seems this man was a servant to the owner of the house

— **say to the owner of the house**—

— **‘The Teacher says, “Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?”’**—some say because Jesus says “My” that He pre-arranged for this room. However, it was also a custom for Jews in Jerusalem to have a room for some of the pilgrims who came and did not have a room for the Passover. The text does not really give us any of that information.

14:15—**“And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished and ready**—the point is, there was a large room prepared, ready with table and cushions

— **prepare for us there**—the disciples prepared the food, not the house owner or servant.

14:16—*The disciples went out* [of Bethany] *and came to the city, and found it just as He had told them;*

— *and they prepared the Passover*—the meal of unleavened bread, wine, the roasted lamb and bitter herbs, and sauce.

Announcement of the Betrayal

14:17—*When it was evening* (after sundown) *He came with the twelve* (which included the men who prepared the meal)

14:18—*As they were reclining at the table*—they reclined on cushions around the table. Originally, in Exodus 12:11, it was required to be standing, but by Jesus' time, they reclined to eat Passover.

— Luke 22:15-16, 24-30 and John 13:1-20 also describe what happened next.

— *and eating, Jesus said, “Truly I say to you*—Jesus always tells the truth. When He speaks, it is God speaking. Jesus is saying it, so it must be true, though they can hardly fathom it.

— *that one of you will betray Me*—Jesus had been warning them about His upcoming death, but here for the first time, the disciples hear that “*one of you*” disciples will betray Christ.

— *one who is eating with Me*—Judas was still with the disciples and Jesus. Betrayal by one who eats with you, a friend, is considered to be the worst kind of treachery.

14:19—*They began to be grieved*—sorrowful, distressed

— *and to say to Him* [(hais) *eis-kata-eis*] *one-by-one, “Surely not I?”*—interesting—they protest that they are innocent, expecting a negative answer—but yet there is a question—self-distrust. They are too stunned to suspect or accuse someone else. Each looks to himself. They hope Jesus will answer, “no, it is not you.” Matthew 26:25 says, even *Judas, who was betraying Him, said, “Surely it is not I, Rabbi.”*

14:20—*And He said to them, “It is one of the twelve*—1st clue, 2nd clue, *one who is eating with Me* at that moment. “*For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry*” (Acts 1:17)

— *one who dips with Me in the bowl*—3rd clue. Dipping the bread into the Passover sauce. John records that Jesus dipped the morsel and gave it to Judas, i.e., they were using same bowl.

14:21—“*For the Son of Man is to go just as it is written of Him*—God has ordained betrayal by “*My associate,*” *declares the Lord* (Zech 13:7; see also Psalm 41:9; Isaiah 53). “*...Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus*” (Acts 1:16).

— *but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!*—but man is still responsible in his free will. “Woe” is over a hundred times in the OT. “*Woe to the wicked! It will go badly with him, for what he deserves will be done to him*” (Isa 3:11).

— *It would have been good for that man if he had not been born*—Here, once again, Mark contrasts the worship of Christ by Mary anointing with the perfume, and her memory will be in the whole world [14:9]. Judas and what he did will also be preached in the whole world in memory of Him—but his eternal punishment will be so great for his free-will decision, it would have been better if he had never been born.

Introducing the Lord's Supper

14:22—*While they were eating*—the disciples and Jesus were eating the Passover meal.

— *He took some bread*—this would be the unleavened bread of the Passover

— **and after a blessing**—Luke 22:19 says, *when He had given thanks...* (also, 1 Cor 11:24). Giving thanks to God, not blessing the bread. Places and things are not blessed but are the objects of blessing. We bless God, thanking Him for the blessing of the food we eat.

— **He broke it, and gave it to them**—part of the symbolism of the bread is for it to be unleavened and broken (not bread with yeast or whole crackers). A symbol should be symbolic!!!

— **and said, “Take it; this is My body”**—it represented His body that was to be broken.

An Application—This is symbolic. The disciples would not understand that the bread literally became Jesus’ flesh since He was physically among them. Besides, the Jews would not eat human flesh or drink animal blood, much less human blood (Lev 3:17; 7:26-27; 17:10-14). Communion (the Lord’s Supper) is symbolic gesture, done in remembrance of Christ’s death for our sins.

14:23—**And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank [from it**—not in Gk]. True to the symbol would be for all to drink from the same cup. But it seems like a similar symbol if the same drink was poured into individual cups to drink. In essence, they would be drinking from the same container—and maybe symbolically it would show the individual response, rather than a group response.

14:24—**And He said to them, “This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many** (His blood was shed for everyone—though actualized only in those who believe).

An Application—A word about covenants. They are promises made by God to the Jews:

- (1) Abrahamic Covenant, land, seed (Jewish descendants), blessing (Gen 12:1-3).
- (2) Mosaic Covenant—God will bless those Jews who obey Him, and curse those who do not obey Him (Deut 28–30).
- (3) David Covenant—a descendant on the throne of David forever (2 Sam 7:16).
- (4) New Covenant—Jer 31:33-37), in the kingdom, *with the house of Israel and the house of Judah* [“...for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more”]. This is possible because Christ died for their sins. *...without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*” (Heb 9:22).

There is no covenant with the church age. We are the individual members of body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23). However, we have the benefit of forgiveness of sin because of the blood of the covenant, just as the Jews do for the New Covenant.

14:25—**“Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God”**—that night will be His arrest and then death, but He was already looking forward to that day, at the Second Coming of Christ as King of Kings. There is no kingdom without the cross!

— John 13–16, called the Upper Room Discourse, that Jesus taught before they left, late in the evening.

14:26— **After singing a hymn, they** (the 11, without Judas) **went out to the Mount of Olives**—where the garden of Gethsemane was located (14:32).

Predicting Peter’s Denial

All the gospels contain Peter’s denial (Matt 26:31-35; Luke 22:31-34; John 13:36-38).

14:27—**And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away**—first they learn one of them will betray Jesus, now they learn they will all fall away, and Peter will deny Him three times!!!

— Not until the resurrection, when Jesus joins them in Galilee, will the disciples become apostles.

- *because it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD'*—God the Father will put Jesus to death (Isaiah 53).
- *AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED'* [from Zech 13:7]—not that the disciples will lose their faith in Jesus, but their courage will fail, and they will physically forsake Him at His trial and death.

14:28—*“But after I have been raised*—they seem to not even hear this statement. His death was not permanent. He will come back to life. Death is part of their experience. Resurrection is not.

- *I will go ahead of you to Galilee*—Jesus will continue to lead the disciples in Galilee, where they had lived and worked and were called and commissioned by Jesus to follow Him (1:16-20; 3:13-15; 6:7, 12-13).

14:29—*But Peter said to Him, “Even though all may fall away*—denying the truth that Jesus said about them all scattering. He thought he was the exception.

- *yet I will not*—was he going to prove Jesus was wrong? He had good intentions, but he did not know how weak he was. Jesus knew him better than he knew himself!

14:30—*And Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you*—absolute certainty. Jesus tells the truth.

- *that this very night*—it is already late at night, after their meal, so it is imminent
- *before a rooster crows twice*— he would deny Christ three times before dawn, in spite of the rooster’s warning.
- *you yourself will deny Me three times*—Peter would not only desert Jesus (being scattered), but Peter’s defection would actually be more than that of the other disciples. He will deny Jesus 3 times!!

14:31—*But Peter kept saying insistently*—an adverb used only here in the NT. It is to a degree which is considerably in excess of some point, very great, emphatic, surpassing, extremely.

- *“Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!”*—It is interesting— isn’t he denying Jesus by contradicting the prophecy Jesus just said about him?
- *And they all were saying the same thing also*—they did not know how weak they were either. They implied Jesus’ prediction was wrong, but in a few hours they will show He was right.

The Agony of Gethsemane

14:32—*They came to a place named Gethsemane*—the garden [Hebrew *gat semani*, “press of oils,” olive trees on Mt. of Olives.] ... *over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, ... Judas...knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples* (John 18:1-2).

- *and He said to His disciples, “Sit here until I have prayed”*—this is Mark’s third mention of Jesus praying (1:35; 6:46). The other disciples were to pray also (Luke 22:40).

14:33—*And He took with Him Peter and James and John*—His closest disciples, nearby

- *and began to be very distressed and troubled*—a compound of fear, anxiety, deep agony—nowhere else portrayed in such vivid terms as here. [EBC]

14:34—*And He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death*—the spiritual consequences of His death for us, as well as His alienation from His Father. No martyr has ever had to endure such a death.

- *remain here and keep watch*—either to share in His agony and prayer or to be a lookout for those coming to arrest Him.

14:35—*And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by*—He is referring to the cup of the wrath of God against sin (Rom 1:18; 6:23; 2 Cor 5:21). What men will do to Him physically is awful, but it is almost nothing compared to being forsaken by His Father (Mark 15:34).

14:36—*And He was saying, “Abba! Father!”*—an Aramaic intimate form for father (“Daddy”). Jews did not use this to address God because they thought it was disrespectful. But Jesus was God’s unique Son of God, and on the most intimate terms with Him.

— *All things are possible for You*—from the earliest days in Eden, blood was shed, life was taken, to make covers for Adam and Eve because of their sin. In the OT Mosaic Law, again, blood was shed, innocent lambs were killed, to cover sins. Hebrews 9:22 reads, *without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*. All these were in anticipation of Christ’s sacrifice. *But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time...* (Heb 9:12). Either a person will themselves experience the wrath of God for their sin, OR they receive Christ, who experienced God’s wrath on sin. Death is the consequence of sin from the beginning. *The Lord God commanded the man, ... from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die*” (Gen 2:16-17).

An Application—The Bible clearly says it is death that is the payment of sin. There are no works, no rosary, no fasting, etc. that can pay for sin.

— *remove this cup from Me*—it was possible for God to keep Christ from His death, but it was not possible to remove death as a consequence of sin.

— *yet not what I will, but what You will*—not only did God declare death was the consequence of sin, He gave His only begotten Son to pay that consequence for us all. He judged the sin, He declared the penalty for that sin, and then He paid the penalty Himself with His Son’s death.

An Application—Jesus also prayed this earlier: “... *Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*” (Matt 6:10). God has the wisdom. We need to trust Him. Can we pray like Jesus, “*not what I will, but what You will*”? [In His humanity, Jesus’ will was to have the cup of suffering removed. None of us want to suffer.]

14:37—*And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep?”*—Jesus reverts to Peter’s original name (3:16), rather than “Peter,” which means “rock.”

— *Could you not keep watch for one hour?*—it seems Jesus was praying for an hour. He had asked them to “*keep watch*” (v. 34). But they failed. This prepares the reader for Peter’s denial, which will happen soon. He had said he was willing to die (v. 31), but he could not watch for one hour.

An Application—Notice Jesus used the word “hour” in two different ways. In verse 35, as a figure of speech, to refer to the time of His suffering, and then physically with the disciples as a period of time. **Author’s intended meaning!!**

14:38—*“Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation*—temptation to what? Jesus was praying about what would happen next, and the disciples should have been praying that they would not scatter (14:27), as Jesus had predicted they would.

— *the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*—they wanted to stay awake and “watch” but physically, their bodies went asleep.

An Application—Is this a tendency? Personality (soul) should control the body, and spirituality (morality) should control the personality. Satan’s lie: you have no choices. You are a victim of your situations. It is good to understand that our physical body is weak, therefore, susceptible, in need of

control. Also, our personalities—we each have weaknesses (deeds of the flesh: anger, bitterness, impatience, etc.—Gal 5:19-21), needing the Spirit’s control (Gal 5:22-25).

14:39—*Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words*—increasingly, Jesus is isolated, even from His closest disciples. They obviously do not understand the dangers soon to come upon them. They are vulnerable. When a person is troubled, they usually cannot sleep (Isa 38:15; Dan 2:1; 6:18; Prov 3:24). The disciples sleeping seems to indicate their lack of concern for what is ahead.

14:40—*And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy*—it was probably past midnight. They had a long day. The Passover in the evening.

— *and they did not know what to answer Him*—no excuses. Even Peter had nothing to say!

An Application—“There seems to be an inverse relationship between how self-confident we feel and how much we pray.” [Constable, p. 207]

14:41—*And He came the third time, and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting?”*—Three times Peter failed to watch and pray. Three times he will fall into temptation and disown Jesus.

An Application—All believers are susceptible to spiritual failure. If it happened to Peter, Christ’s closest disciple, who spent 3 years with Christ, it can happen to any of us. We are to be alert for false teaching, for anything that would get us away from the truth of the Word of God, and our dedication to Jesus (1 Peter 5:8-9).

“Because of their incomprehension, they badly misconstrue the true nature of things. Thinking themselves to be astute, courageous, and loyal, they are in reality imperceptive, cowardly, and faithless. Entering upon the passion, the disciples yet follow Jesus in commitment to him. As events unfold, however, they will renounce their commitment through word or deed and apostatize.” [Constable, p. 207]

— *It is enough*—Enough of their sleeping. Or it may mean Jesus has finished praying.

— *the hour has come*—time has run out.

An Application—We are often deceived into thinking we have a lot of time. We do not know when that time will run out—but it will!!!

— *behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands [approaching] of sinners*—who are agents of Satan, who will kill Jesus. But Jesus was also *delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God...* (Acts 2:23).

14:42—*“Get up, let us be going*—in a military context, it would mean “March,” or “Advance!” The point is that Jesus and His disciples are coming toward Judas, not moving away from them.

— *behold, the one who betrays Me [Judas] is at hand [approaching]!*—Jesus already knows who they are, and that Judas is with them. It is Jesus who announces the arrival of the betrayer, not His disciples who were supposed to be keeping watch.

The Betrayal and Arrest

14:43—*Immediately while He was still speaking*—to His disciples, obviously, only the 11 had been with Him in Gethsemane. Did they realize Judas was the betrayer because he was not with them?

— *Judas, one of the twelve*—even though the reader knows this, all the gospel writers repeat it, stressing the tragedy of Jesus’ betrayal (Matt 26:47; Luke 22:47). *Judas knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples* (John 18:2).

An Application—All those times, they had no idea they were creating the place Judas would know so he could find Jesus for the betrayal. It is interesting to look at things and decisions in our past and how they created the situations and relationships we have now.

- ***came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs***—John 18:3 says there was a *Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons*. Planning on possible resistance by His disciples.
- ***who were from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders***, i.e. the Sanhedrin

14:44—***Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal***—because it was dark, and there was confusion with the crowds and soldiers around them

- ***saying, “Whomever I kiss***—on the cheek or hand, a sign of reverence given to a Rabbi by his disciples (yet not done to Jesus before now—that we know of). For Judas—a sign of betrayal!
- ***(He is the one)***—not in the Greek manuscripts
- ***seize Him***—they would not want to arrest the wrong person (then Judas would not get paid!)
- ***and lead Him away under guard***—make sure to secure Jesus so He cannot escape (Did Judas, who saw Jesus raise the dead, think the guards could secure Him if He wanted to escape?!?!)

14:45—***After coming, Judas immediately went to Him, saying, “Rabbi!” and kissed Him***—Judas moves quickly, so Jesus cannot escape (so he supposes). Judas served the priests well—taking the guards at night, away from the crowds who followed Him, identifying Jesus with a prearranged sign of a kiss (so his actions would not be suspect by the other disciples).

An Application—What happened to Judas? ...*when Judas...saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.”* He threw the 30 pieces of silver into the temple, but they said it was blood money, so they used it *and bought the Potter’s Field as a burial place for strangers ... which fulfilled Jeremiah* [some mss have “Zechariah,” it is a quote from Zech 11:12-13] (Matt 27:3-10). So, Judas threw their 30 pieces of money back into the temple, from which they took it to buy a burial field for strangers.

- Acts 1:18-19 says: *this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out...the field was called Field of Blood.* Judas bought a field, evidently also for 30 pieces of silver, where he committed suicide, so that place is called the Field of Blood.
- But just as there are 12 tribes of Israel, there must be 12 apostles. (So the 11 appointed Matthias, ... *one of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection* (Acts 1:21-26). The New Jerusalem ...*had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb* (Rev 21:14).

14:46—***They laid hands on Him and seized Him***—it was easy only because Jesus did not resist

14:47—***But one of those who stood by*** [Peter (John 18:10)] ***drew his sword***—the disciples had brought two swords (Luke 22:38).

- ***and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his*** [right] ***ear***—Peter’s attempted defense of Jesus (maybe to prove his loyalty). The slave’s name was Malchus (John 18:10). *Jesus answered*

and said, “Stop! No more of this.” And He touched his ear and healed him (Luke 22:51). The last person Jesus healed, as recorded in the gospels.

14:48—*And Jesus said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as you would against a robber?”*—as though He was a dangerous criminal

14:49—*“Every day I was with you in the temple teaching*—they knew His message was not one of rebellion because He was publicly teaching in the temple where everyone could see and hear.
 — *and you did not seize Me*—mostly because they feared the people’s reaction to His arrest
 — *but this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures*”—Isaiah 53:3, 7-9; Zechariah 13:7

14:50—*And they all left Him and fled*—this fulfilled the prophecy Jesus made: strike down the shepherd, and all the sheep fled (v. 27). They all completely abandoned Christ.

14:51—*A young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him*—in his rush to get to where Jesus was, he didn’t take time to dress.

14:52—*But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked*—only Mark records this. It is a mystery. There are many theories, including that it was Mark himself, which is why it is in his account. But even he left Jesus and ran off.

Jesus before the Sanhedrin

JESUS' RELIGIOUS TRIAL	
Before Annas	John 18:12-14, 19-24
Before Caiaphas	Matt. 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54, 63-65
Before the Sanhedrin	Matt. 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71

JESUS' CIVIL TRIAL	
Before Pilate	Matt. 27:2, 11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38
Before Herod Antipas	Luke 23:6-12
Before Pilate	Matt. 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39—19:16

14:53—*They led Jesus away to the high priest*—under guard, back into Jerusalem [Constable, p. 210-211] Gethsemane, to the residence of the high priest, Caiaphas (Matt 26:57), high priest from A.D. 18 to 36. He is mentioned by name 9 times in Matthew, Luke, John, and Acts, but not by name in Mark. In John 18:13, he is identified as the son-in-law of Annas, the former high priest from A.D. 6-15.

— *and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together*—having paid Judas to betray Jesus, they were expecting Him, so gathered together, waiting at night. “All” probably means a quorum of at least 23 of the 71 members [Mishnah] of the Sanhedrin, from the three (priests, elders, scribes). Being in the high priest’s house ensured secrecy, in addition to being in the night-time. With Sabbath starting at 6:00 the next evening, they want this trial to be concluded.

14:54—*Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest*—while Jesus is on trial there. Peter followed—but at a distance. Another disciple (evidently John), *was known to the high priest*, and so was able to enter the courtyard. *But Peter was standing at the door outside, and [John] went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in* (John 18:15-16).
— *and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire* (to see the outcome [Matt 26:58]), trying to be inconspicuous among them. Being a disciple of Jesus put him in danger.

14:55—*Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any*—they had to satisfy the Romans, who were the ones with authority to put Jesus to death. Also, they wanted a hasty trial before the public favor built in defense of Jesus during the day.

14:56—*For many were giving false testimony against Him*—shows how rigged the trial was
— *but their testimony was not consistent*—according to the Mosaic Law, they needed two consistent witnesses for the death penalty (Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15).

14:57—*Some stood up and began to give false testimony against Him, saying,*

14:58—*“We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands’”*—there is no statement like this in the Gospels. They are possibly referring to Jesus’ statements: “[*You*] destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days *I will* build another made without hands.” It could be a combination of Mark 13:2 (referring to His body) and John 2:19 (referring to the temple building).

14:59—*Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent*—because it was not what He said!

14:60—*The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?”*—he evidently was trying to provoke Jesus into an incriminating answer.

14:61—*But He kept silent and did not answer*—the false testimony

— *Again the high priest was questioning Him*—lit. “kept asking,”—he has a new strategy—forget the useless false testimonies.

— *and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the Blessed One?”*—the Jews would not say “God” out of respect. They expected the Messiah to be a man (a descendant of David, 2 Sam 7:12), so that claim was ok. But to say the *Son of the Blessed One* [God] was blasphemy—a crime punished by death. The priest was mocking Jesus, *Are You the Messiah?* (one who is standing before Him, arrested, bound,)

14:62—*And Jesus said, “I am*—Now Jesus answered in the affirmative: “I am the Messiah, the Son of God.”

— *and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN*—bringing together Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 110:1. This does not mean He is coming in their lifetime. Rather, Jesus is referring indirectly to a bodily resurrection, when He will one day judge those who were now judging Him! Then there will be no question that He is God’s Anointed One, the Messiah.

14:63—*Tearing his clothes*—a sign of great grief. Reuben tore his when he did not find Joseph in the pit in Gen 37:29; Tamar in 2 Sam 13:19; Job in Job 1:20. A sign the high priest considered this to be blasphemy (v. 64). Even though it was illegal for the high priest to tear his garments (Lev 21:10).

— *the high priest said, “What further need do we have of witnesses?”*—the judges are now the witnesses, having heard with their own ears Jesus’ incriminating statement of blasphemy. There is no need of further witnesses.

14:64—“*You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?*” —now the judges give their own testimony. [How can someone be both the witness and the judge?]

— *And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death* [guilty]—in light of their own testimony, they now act like judges and condemn Jesus to death. [However, Leviticus 24:14-16 prescribes stoning as the manner of death for the sin of blasphemy.]

14:65—Their pent-up hostilities against Him are revealed: *Some began to spit at Him*—an expression of rejection (see Num 12:14; Deut 25:9; Job 30:10; Isa 50:6).

— *and to blindfold Him*—Matthew 26:68 and Luke 22:64 give the significance of the blindfold in that they say to Him, “*You Christ; who is the one who hit You?*”—From Luke, it seems the blindfold was after Peter’s denial, because Jesus looked at him from the high priest’s room.

— *and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, “Prophecy!”*—The rabbis taught the Messiah could judge by smell and did not need sight (Isaiah 11:2-4).

— *And the officers received Him with slaps in the face*—when the Sanhedrin were done mocking and hitting Jesus, they turned Him over to the guards, who continued to beat Him.

— Peter later wrote of Jesus, “*leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps...while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously*” (1 Peter 2:21-23).

Peter’s Denial of Jesus

At the very moment Jesus was being beaten in the house of the most powerful Jew in Israel, and suffering in silence, the prophecy that Peter would deliberately deny Jesus was being fulfilled below in the courtyard, Peter responding (in fear?) to a servant girl, a person of no power.

14:66—*As Peter was below in the courtyard*—returning to verse 54. Courtyards varied.

Archaeology discovered some rich houses were built in a square with a courtyard in the middle—Luke 22:55 [like the US Pentagon]. Jesus and the Sanhedrin were in an upstairs room (observable through the open window to the courtyard below, as Jesus saw Peter—see Luke 22:61).

— *one of the servant-girls of the high priest came*—during Jesus’ trial inside. She was *looking intently at him* [Peter] (Luke 22:56). She was *the slave-girl who kept the door...* (John 18:17).

14:67—*and seeing Peter warming himself* [*the slaves and officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves, and Peter was also with them* (John 18:18)], *she looked at him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Nazarene”*—at this point, Peter does not know if they are looking for Jesus’ disciples to also arrest them, or possibly they know he was the one to cut off the ear of the slave of the high priest (14:47). So he is fearful.

14:68—*But he denied it* (1),

— *saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are talking about”*—How can he be with the people who earlier arrested Jesus and not know anything about Jesus or what is going on? Instead of discouraging her, it encourages her to ask more questions.

— *And he went out onto the porch* [lit. “gateway”].

— Nearly all major ancient Greek manuscripts and early versions include the words “and the rooster crowed” (NIV marg., KJV) at the end of verse 68. Matthew 26:74; Luke 22:60; John 18:27 only

mention a rooster-crowing [obviously, the second one]. Mark mentions the significant second crowing (Mark 14:30; 14:72). At this time of year, the first crowing would be about 3 A.M.

14:69—*The servant-girl saw him, and began once more* [it seems to be the same servant girl who previously accused him] *to say to the bystanders, “This is one of them!”*—The first time, her comment was addressed to Peter, saying he was with Jesus, but this time, she talks to the others standing around the fire. She is certain. Peter is one of them! What does she want? For him to be arrested, too?

14:70—*But again he denied it* (2).

— *And after a little while*—*About an hour had passed...* (Luke 22:59).

— *the bystanders* [now the crowd, not just the woman] *were again saying to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too.”* Matthew 26:73 says, *for the way you talk gives you away*. Either his words or his accent during the hour (his general conversation with them) was giving evidence he was associated with Jesus (or so they thought).

An Application—Think of hearing someone from Michigan, from Alabama, from New York.

There is a similar situation in Judges 12:6, where how the people pronounced the word *Shibboleth* determined whether they lived or died. *But he said, “Sibboleth,” for he could not pronounce it correctly.*

14:71—*But he began to curse*—Gk. *anathematizing* = to deny any relationship of association with someone

— *and swear*—an oath, asking God to punish if it is not true—BUT it is not true!!

— (3) *“I do not know this man*—Peter does not even mention Jesus’ name, trying to keep himself as distant as possible. Compared to his statement to Jesus: *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God”* (Matt 16:16).

— *you are talking about!*—again, trying to distance himself from the one to whom they were referring—again, not even saying Jesus’ name.

— The first two times, Peter denied being identified with Jesus, but this last time, He denied Jesus Himself.

14:72—*Immediately*—Mark’s key word, especially meaningful here. The words were hardly out of Peter’s mouth when the rooster crowed.

— *a rooster crowed a second time*—the first time has not been mentioned.

— Luke 22:60-61 says, *while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter*—obviously not blindfolded at this time because Peter could see that Jesus saw him, out the window of the high priest’s house where He was being questioned.

— *And Peter remembered*—we are not told when the rooster crowed the first time, but it evidently did not stir Peter’s conscience, until the second time. Then he remembered the exact words Jesus said, a prophecy which he had just fulfilled (14:30). He did not feel guilty after the denials—only when he heard the rooster the second time.

— *how Jesus had made the remark to him, “Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times”*—Peter was outside fulfilling the very prophecy Jesus had foretold. While inside the room, they will blindfold Jesus and ask Him to prophecy who hit Him (v. 65).

— *And he began to weep*—the others do not know why he is weeping. They do not know of the accuracy fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy.

An Application—There is a distinction in Peter’s remorse, who turned back to Jesus, and the remorse of Judas, who ran away and killed himself (Matt 27:3-5).

Chapter 15

The Trial before Pilate

15:1—*Early in the morning* [after being up all night] *the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation*—Gk. “to plot against, often with a harmful or evil purpose.” It seems that Mark is simply bringing the reader back from the courtyard scene to the upper room where Jesus is in Caiaphas’ house.

- *and binding Jesus*—which gave the impression He was a dangerous criminal
- *they led Him away*—the Jews, concluding Jesus was blaspheming, claiming to be the Son of God, but they could not execute Him for that. They needed a Roman reason. So...
- *and delivered Him to Pilate*—Matthew 27:11-26 explains more of who Pilate was. He belonged to a special group of imperial Roman administrators [called governors or prefects]. He came to Judea in A.D. 26 and lived in Caesarea, on the Mediterranean coast. [A replica of an excavated pillar (with his engraved name) is on display there today.] He remained in office ten years. When in Jerusalem, he probably stayed in Herod’s palace, on the NW corner of the city.
- In the early Friday morning hours, Jesus is led from the high priest’s house probably to Herod’s palace, where Pilate interrogates Him. Although Mark does not mention Herod, the Jews made the charges known to Pilate.

15:2—*Pilate* [with absolute authority over Jesus’ fate under Roman law] *questioned Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?”*—Pilate is mocking Jesus: *Are You the King?*, as Jesus stands bound...kings come in chariots, with pageantry, etc.

- As “king,” it would be treason against Caesar, punishable by death.
- *And He answered him, “It is as you say”*—Jesus was allowed to speak in His own defense.
- John 18:34-38 records further conversation between Pilate and Jesus as to what kind of King Jesus is. He does not deny He is the “King of the Jews,” but it is not His preferred designation. He is the Messiah. He is the Son of God. He will be the Savior.
- It is interesting, though, that Pilate himself declared who Jesus was with his inscription over Christ’s cross: The King of the Jews (v. 26).

15:3—*The chief priests began to accuse Him harshly* [Gk. many more words]—*they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King”* (Luke 23:2). But Pilate is only interested in the serious “King” charge.

15:4—*Then Pilate questioned Him again, saying, “Do You not answer? See how many [same Gk word translated “harshly”] charges [accusations] they bring against You!”*—

15:5—*But Jesus made no further answer*—Mark uses a double negative [*ouketi ouden*], which in English is a positive, but in Greek it strengthens the negative. It is like *absolutely no answer*.

- *so Pilate was amazed*—He concludes that Jesus was not guilty.
- Only Luke recorded that Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, who was in Jerusalem at that time for the feast, because Jesus was a Galilean, and Herod ruled over Galilee (Luke 23:6-12). It seems Pilate wanted to avoid making a judgment against Jesus, but Herod then sent Jesus back to Pilate. So now is Jesus’ second appearance before Pilate.

Background information:

15:6—*Now at the feast he [Pilate] used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested*—this is a custom by Pilate unknown outside of the gospel accounts (Matt 27:15; John 18:39; Luke 23:17). However, there are writings of other Roman officials who also did it. But at this point, the crowds are not there to release Barabbas, but “a prisoner.”

15:7—*The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection*—this is important in Mark because it shows the injustice—a murderer, who took life, contrasted to the One who gave life, who raised people from the dead.

15:8—*The crowd went up and began asking him to do as he had been accustomed to do for them*—they seem to be there to request the customary amnesty from Pilate. There is no indication they were there because they knew of Jesus’ arrest or to observe the outcome of His trial. Their reason seems unrelated to Jesus. It is just the Sanhedrin who had interests in the trial.

Actually, the crowd did not seem to be there to release Barabbas either. It was Pilate who gave them the choice between Jesus and Barabbas, and the chief priests urged them to ask for Barabbas—v. 11. Several times Pilate said he found no guilt in Jesus (Matt 27:19; Luke 23:14; John 19:4, 6). So he contrasted Jesus vs. Barabbas (thinking the crowd would want to release Jesus, in whom he found no guilt).

15:9—*Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?”*

15:10—*For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy*—their motives were not loyalty to Rome, but self-seeking, popularity and authority over the Jews.

15:11—*But the chief priests stirred up the crowd*—this is not the crowd of 14:43, who arrested Jesus, who came from the chief priests [they would not need to be stirred up!]. Crowds are easily stirred up, especially when their religious leaders were among them spurring them on. The chief priests had already condemned Jesus to deserving death (14:64). Trials before Pilate and Herod did not condemn Him, so here was maybe their last opportunity to get Jesus killed.

— *to ask him to release Barabbas for them instead*—the crowd then asks freedom for a murderer

15:12—*Answering again, Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?”* If Jesus is not to be released, what should Pilate do with Him? Execute Him or send Him to prison? So he forces the crowd to make the decision, so he can literally wash his hands of the whole matter (see Matt 27:24), claiming he was “innocent.” But Jesus said, “*he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin*” (John 19:11), so God does not consider Pilate to be “innocent.”

15:13—*They shouted back, “Crucify Him!”*—the punishment that would have been given to Barabbas, as a murderer, is now given to Jesus. A decision not based on evidence but based on popular demand. If Jesus were to go to prison, there is a possibility of one day being released. The chief priests do not want that. They think death is the only thing that can contain Him—
WERE THEY EVER WRONG!!!!

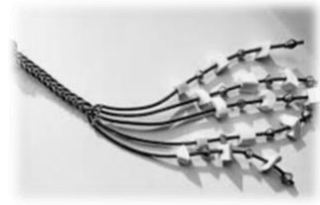
15:14—*But Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?”*—they do not answer him. Because they cannot answer him. They are in a crowd frenzy. Truth does not matter. Innocence does not matter. They are beyond reason.

— *But they shouted all the more, “Crucify Him!”*

15:15—*Wishing to satisfy the crowd*—he did not want them to complain to Caesar and lose his job (John 19:12).

- **Pilate released Barabbas for them**—a murderer goes free. [Wonder how many more people he killed in his lifetime.]
- Then Pilate publicly handed Jesus over—**and after having Jesus scourged**—a whip, made up of several leather straps to which were attached sharp, abrasive items, such as nails, glass, or rocks. It resulted in severe lacerations of the skin and damage to the flesh underneath, even to the bones and organs. Much blood and bodily fluid was lost. (Some died from the scourging, never getting to crucifixion.) Then the cross would rub against those open sores.
- Then Pilate, **he handed Him over to be crucified**—to the Roman soldiers who will do the crucifying. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, crucifixion was the worst form of death. [J.W. 7.6.4] The cross tortures for a long time those who are fixed to it. A long-drawn-out agony. It was not “on a hill far away.” People *were passing by* (Matt 27:39).

“Whenever we crucify the condemned, the most crowded roads are chosen, where the most people can see and be moved by this terror. For penalties relate not so much to retribution as to their exemplary effect.” [Josephus, J.W. 5.11.1, paragraphs 450-51]



The Mocking of Jesus

15:16—**The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium)**—traditionally, this would be the Antonia Fortress (near the temple).

- **and they called together the whole Roman cohort** [200 to 600 men].

15:17—**They dressed Him up in purple**—mocking color of royalty

- **and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him**—thorns in Israel are about 3 inches long. There is some evidence that the crown at that time covered the whole skull like a cap rather than a wreath shape. There would have been much bleeding as the scalp is one of the most vascular areas of the body.



15:18—**and they began to acclaim Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!”**—

15:19—**They kept beating His head with a reed**—His body already covered with open sores

- **and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him**—all treating Him with contempt

15:20—**After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him**—...*He became obedient unto death, even death on a cross* (Phil 4:8).

The Crucifixion

15:21—**They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene**—Cyrene was an important coastal city in North Africa and had a large Jewish population, so Simon was most likely in Jerusalem for the Passover. He probably stayed in the country because with all the people, there was no more room to stay in the city itself.

- **(the father of Alexander and Rufus)**—Only Mark mentions Simon’s sons, which suggests they were believers known to the believers in Rome, who would have read Mark (Rom 16:13).

- **to bear His cross**—usually the *patibulum*, cross piece. Jesus started carrying His own cross (John 19:17), but at this point, Jesus was probably too weak from the scourging to carry it any more.

15:22—**Then they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull**—



Ancient times, the cliff looked like a skull. Today the rocks have crumbled. At the top is a Arab cemetery and at the bottom is an Arab bus station. Nearby, is a garden tomb



15:23—They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it—

- There is a question of who “they” are. Traditions say it was some women who mercifully wanted to numb some of Jesus’ pain—but Jesus will not do anything to numb His pain. Or, it was the soldiers who gave it, to continue the mocking, as it was an expensive herb mixed with wine.
- Myrrh was a sap from a tree mostly grown in North Africa. It was most often used for embalming [such as what Joseph of Arimathea brought for the body of Jesus (John 19:38-42)]. Or even mixed in a perfume, for a sweet, smoky smell. It is also thought to fight inflammation.

15:24—And they crucified Him—Mark probably does not elaborate as his Roman readers would be very much aware of what crucifixion entailed.

- On the ground, they would feel for the depression at the front of the wrist, and drive a heavy square nail through the wrist into the horizontal piece of the cross, being careful to allow some flex and movement. The cross piece is lifted in place at the top of the vertical beam (not partway down—the vertical beams were permanent). Then the left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, with both feet extended, toes down. A nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees a bit flexed. As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain—the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As He pushes upward to avoid this torment, He places his full weight on the nail through His feet. Again, there is searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet.

At this point, as the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. Air can be drawn into the lungs but cannot be exhaled. Finally, carbon dioxide builds in the lungs and in the blood stream, and the cramps partially subside as He is able to push Himself upward to exhale. Hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from his lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins. A deep crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.

It is now almost over. The loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level. The compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues. The tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues.

[Constable, p. 223-24]

- ***and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take***—John 19:23-24 gives us more details: “*the soldiers...took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. So they said to one another, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be’; this was to fulfill the Scripture ‘They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots’*” from Psalm 22:18.

15:25—*It was the third hour when they crucified Him*—This was 9:00 A.M. Jewish time. But John 19:14 says “*about the sixth hour,*” noon, Roman time. The trials, the Roman mocking, the walk to the cross, all took time and could be included as part of the crucifixion, not the exact time He was nailed on the cross. So one could be a more general answer and the other a more specific answer.

15:26—*The inscription of the charge against Him read, “THE KING OF THE JEWS”*—What Mark put simply, John says in detail, the inscription was “*Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews*” and it was *written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek*” (John 19:19-20). The chief priests did not like that. They told Pilate to write, “*He said, I am King of the Jews.*” But Pilate answered, “*What I have written I have written*” (John 19:19-22). Luke says, “*This is the King of the Jews*” (Luke 23:38). Matthew wrote, “*This is Jesus the King of the Jews*” (Matt 27:37). While the exact wording differs in all four gospels, the main points are the same: Jesus, King of the Jews.

15:27—*They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left*—They were possibly robbers arrested with Barabbas. John 18:40 calls Barabbas a robber. The same Greek word. They were most likely sentenced along with Barabbas. But Jesus took Barabbas’ place (a substitute).
— One of them *was hurling abuse at Jesus, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!”* But the other robber said, “*Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong*” (Luke 23:39-41).
— Then the second robber said to Jesus: “*Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!*” [because what he knows about Jesus is “King” on the inscription and the mocking (23:32)] And Jesus said to him: “*Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise*” (23:43-44).

15:28—*[And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And He was numbered with transgressors.”]* Most ancient manuscripts of Mark’s Gospel omit verse 28.

15:29—*Those passing by*—the crucifixion took place in a public area, by the road going out of the city where people would pass by. It was a punishment but it was also a deterrent to future crimes.
— *were hurling abuse at Him*—Gk. “blasphemy.” In 14:64 Jesus is accused of blasphemy, claiming to be the Son of God, but now the crowds are blaspheming the Son of God.
— *wagging their heads*—fulfillment of Psalm 22:7
— *and saying, “Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days*—the high priests were inciting the crowds (v. 31), as they did before in v. 11, reminding us of the false testimony given to the chief priests in 14:58.

15:30—*save Yourself [physically], and come down from the cross!*—the mocking was how could He destroy and rebuild the temple in three days, He cannot even come down off the cross. The crucifixion appears to them to contradict Jesus’ previous teaching and prophesying.

15:31—*In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself*—This is called “situational irony.” There is a discrepancy between what they expect to happen (Jesus dead and gone) and what actually happens (He raises from the dead, with a better message than before!). The speakers are confident that what they express is true, but are unaware that the real situation is in fact the opposite.
[Constable, p. 226]

— In a sense, it is true and false. In the sense they meant it, that He does not have the physical power—it is false. He could come down off the cross. But in order to save others (like us), He cannot save Himself. His death was necessary for mankind’s redemption.

15:32—“*Let this Christ, the King of Israel*—Pilate put the sign over Jesus, “King of the Jews.” In fact, Jesus was interested in individual Jews. These chief priests were political, interested in the nation of Israel. They do not seem to be interested in individual people (whether they were healed, for example). They said, “*If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation*” (John 11:48).

- **now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!**—Because Jesus is not now saving Himself, the implication is that He probably did not save anyone else either. They were just rumors.
- But they are lying. If Jesus did come down from the cross, they would find other reasons to not believe Him. For example, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, *the chief priests...were saying, “...if we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him...so from that day on they planned together to kill Him*” (John 11:48-53). “Believe” is to understand something is true. Even if Jesus came down off the cross, they would find a reason to not believe He is truth.
- **Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him**—from the highest of the society, the chief priests, to the lowest in society, robbers on the cross—all insulting Jesus.

The Death of Jesus

15:33—*When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour*—this was 12:00 noon until 3:00 p.m. Jesus suffered in darkness. Pain feels worse in the dark.

- Some say Jesus suffered in the daylight the first three hours at the hands of humans (15:21-32). The second three hours of physical darkness He suffered being forsaken by God (v. 34).
- All three synoptic writers record the darkness (Matt 27:45; Luke 23:44). None of them explain it. It cannot be an eclipse as the Passover time of year there was a bright full moon. It did cover the whole land of Israel, not the whole earth. And it lasted for 3 hours, starting at the brightest part of the day, at noon. It was a supernatural act, associated with God’s judgment on sin.

An Application—At creation, *...darkness was over the surface of the deep...and God created light and saw the light was good* (Gen 1:2-3.) The 9th plague in Egypt was a plague of darkness, and it was followed by the death of the firstborn (Exo 10:22–11:9). Hell is described as a place of *outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matt 25:30). Believers are described as *...you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord* (Eph 5:8). At the fifth bowl plague of the tribulation, the antichrist’s *kingdom became darkened* (Rev 16:10). Jesus is “*the Light*”, and darkness will not overpower it (John 1:1-5). Unbelievers do not come to Jesus as the light because *they loved the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil* (John 3:19). [“Darkness” would be a good word study. These are just a few found in Scripture.]

15:34—*At the ninth hour* [3:00 P.M.] **Jesus cried out with a loud voice** [not weakly], “**ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?**” [in Aramaic] **which is translated, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN** [to desert, abandon, leave] **ME?”**—quoting Psalm 22:1.

- The members of the Trinity are forever united as God, but God the Father had *forsaken* Christ, i.e., He withdrew from communion with His Son, as *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf* (2 Cor 5:21), and a holy God cannot look with favor upon sin.
- Notice at this point, in paying for our sins, that Jesus called God “My God.” Yet in death, the price being paid, and returning to the Father, He says, “*Father, into Your hands I commit [to give over to] My spirit*” (Luke 23:46).

An Application—At his death from stoning, Stephen said a similar thing: “*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!*” (Acts 7:59). Jesus described the Rapture as, “*I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also*” (John 14:3).

15:35—*When some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, “Behold, He is calling for Elijah”*—the Hebrew *elahi* [My God] is similar to *eliyy* [Elijah], so the bystanders here would be Jewish, not the Romans. [Some Jews taught Elijah would come, Jesus spoke to Elijah on the Mt of Transfiguration (Mark 9:4), and He said John the Baptist, like Elijah, came to prepare for the Messiah (Luke 1:17), and it is prophesied that Elijah will come again some day (Mal 4:5-6).]

15:36—*Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink* [fulfilling another prophecy of Psalm 69:21], *saying, “Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down”*—John 19:29 says *they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth*. It seems this was a stimulant to prolong His life, to see if Elijah would come save Him.

15:37—*And Jesus uttered a loud cry*—this is unusual because often there was only a gasp of a dying man or they would be in a coma. Pilate is even surprised Jesus had already died (15:44). But here, it is like a shout of victory. The cross was over.

— *and breathed His last*—resurrection is ahead now.

— To speed up death so He would not be on the cross past 6:00 (the Sabbath), they would break the legs, but when they came to Jesus, He was already dead, so they did not break His legs (John 19:31-33). Exodus 12:46 describes the Passover Lamb, “*nor are you to break any bone of it.*” (Psalm 34:20). *For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed* (1 Cor 5:7).

15:38—*And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom*—All the synoptic writers record this. The priests would have been preparing the sacrifices in the temple when this occurred near 3:00 P.M. It was the veil separating the Holy Place (where the menorah, the table of shewbread, and the altar of incense were) from the Most Holy Place (where the Ark of the Covenant originally stood, representing the very presence of God) in Exodus 26:31-37. [BTW, when the Babylonians entered Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the Ark was gone. No one knows where it went. So the Holy of Holies was empty at the time of Christ.]

— It is significant that it was torn from top to bottom, something no human could do.

An Application—Hebrews 6:19-20; 9:1-14; 10:19-22 describes how the veil was a barrier to keep people away from the Ark, representing the presence of God. But now Jesus completely redefines a veil. Rather than blocking, Jesus as the veil now becomes a doorway into the presence of God. In essence, the OT Law was finished when the veil was torn. Now they do not need the Law to come to God, they will come through Jesus Christ.

15:39—*When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”*—Mark began his gospel with the words: “*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*” It is fitting for Mark to end Jesus’ life with those same words. Whether or not the centurion realized the full theological meaning of his words, for Mark, it was a true statement of the identity of the Man on the cross.

15:40—*There were also some women looking on from a distance*—the disciples had fled, but these faithful women were with Jesus in His final hours on the cross (see also John 19:25-27).

— *among whom were Mary Magdalene*—from the town of Magdala, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, between Tiberias and Capernaum. Luke 8:2 says Jesus cast seven demons out of her.

— *and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses*—“the less” could mean less known. She may be the “Mary the wife of Clopas,” who was near the cross, from John 19:25.

- **and Salome**—the wife of Zebedee, and mother of James and John (Matt 20:20; Mark 16:1), and sister of Jesus’ mother Mary (John 19:25).
- Mark does not mention Jesus from the cross giving His mother Mary into the care of His disciple John (John 19:25-27).

15:41—*When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women*—they see His death and are the first to see His resurrection.

- **who came up with Him to Jerusalem**—Jerusalem was in the hill country, 2,600 feet elevation. Galilee was 700 feet below sea level. So though Jerusalem was south, it is referred to as “up.” They had come for the Passover, not knowing Jesus would be the Passover Lamb that was sacrificed. Their devotion was greater than the 11 disciples who had deserted Him (14:50).
- It is an encouragement for women to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, in spite of what the men do, not because of what the men do.

An Application—John 19:30 records Jesus as saying after He received the sour wine, “*It is finished!*” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.” There is a parallel in creation. “*Thus the heavens and the earth were completed...By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done*” (Gen 2:1-2). Creation was finished. You do not add evolution to it. Now redemption was finished!!! You do not add works to it!!! When God does something, He finishes it. Who are we to think we can add to it!?!?

The Burial of Jesus

15:42—*When evening had already come*—evening is at sundown. Still dusk, before 6:00, probably around 4 or so, Jesus having died at the ninth hour (3:00) in v. 34.

- **because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath**—the Jewish day started at 6:00 P.M. So Sabbath started at 6 P.M. on our Friday evening. [Today, in Israel, sirens go off at 6 P.M. Saturday to celebrate the end of Sabbath, stores open, etc.]

15:43—*Joseph of Arimathea came*—also Matthew 27:57; Luke 23:51; John 19:38. There are variants of the name Arimathea, but it seems to be a place about 20 miles NW of Jerusalem.

- **a prominent member of the Council**—the Sanhedrin, who had put Jesus on trial.
- **who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God**—being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews (John 19:38). And he was rich (Matt 27:57). He was a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their plan and action)—Luke 23:50-51.
- **and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate**—to show favor for a condemned man could be dangerous, and could lead to negative consequences, both politically and religiously.
- **and asked for the body of Jesus**—He needed to be buried before Sabbath started at 6:00. Normally, members of the family would request the body, but Mary seemed to be too deeply upset to do it. And Christ’s disciples (except John) had fled. There is no evidence that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were in Jerusalem at the time of His crucifixion (as Jesus gave His mother into the care of the Apostle John, so it seems no brothers were around).

15:44—*Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead*—

- *The Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath [Deut 21:22-23]...asked Pilate that their legs might be broken...so the soldiers came...but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out (John 19:31-34).* Why the soldier did this is not known. There’s various reasons given

for blood and water—what we do know is they were physical and showed Jesus was dead. [Stay away from symbolic or allegorical meanings given for these!! Those are men’s ideas.]

15:45—*And ascertaining this from the centurion*—Pilate was probably very happy to have the corpse removed from public view.

— *he granted the body to Joseph*—suggesting he really did not believe Jesus was guilty of treason (vv. 14-15), as the body of a person condemned for treason would only be given to his family.

15:46—*Joseph bought a linen cloth*—being rich, Joseph most likely had servants to help him carry the body to the tomb. Nicodemus, a fellow Sanhedrin member, who came to Jesus by night (John 3:1), helped, maybe by pre-arrangement (John 19:39-40).

— *took Him down*—think of pulling out the nails, taking off the crown of thorns. His clothes had been taken by the guards, so He was in undergarments. His body had been scourged—full of cuts, blood, mangled.

— *wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock*—*in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore...since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there* (John 19:41). Matthew 27:60 says *Joseph...laid it in his own new tomb*.

— *and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb*—this will be significant in the discovery of the empty tomb.

— When John the Baptist was killed, his disciples buried his corpse. We would expect the same of Jesus’ disciples. But they are not to be seen at this moment.

Note: In the Old City of Jerusalem today, there is a traditional Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Inside there is a grotto they (the RC) claim is the burial cave. In an outer room is a slab, where many cry over and kiss. The Garden Tomb, near Golgatha, although it is much more realistic to the event, they claim the tomb is “like” this, not that this is the sight.



HE IS NOT HERE -
FOR HE IS RISEN



15:47—*Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on to see where He was laid*—so they could go “home” for the Sabbath and come back to the tomb with spices for a proper burial Sunday morning. Luke 23:56 tells us they went home to prepare the spices and perfumes, before the Sabbath began.

Chapter 16

The Resurrection

Now on the next day, the day after the preparation [the Sabbath, i.e., the day after the crucifixion] the chief priests...gathered with Pilate, and said, “Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I am to rise again.’ Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.” Pilate said to them, “You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how. And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone (Matt 27:62-66). It is quite unusual that they would come to Pilate on the Sabbath.

16:1—*When the Sabbath was over (the next day), Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome*—the three women Mark mentioned who were at the cross (15:40-41). Two had already visited the tomb late Friday afternoon, so they knew where He was laid.

- *bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him*—the Jews did not embalm. Because burials were in caves, the stench of decomposing bodies could be smelled (John 11:39), especially after the condition of Jesus’ body and the 3 days in the heat. Obviously, they were not expecting the resurrection, or the fulfilled prophecy: *God will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay* (Acts 2:28, quoting Psalm 16:10).
- Another interesting thing about burial caves is there was also an additional hole. A person may be thought to be dead, but in the coolness of the cave wake up (also, mystics said it was so the person’s “spirit” could get out). So with the hole they could yell out, or someone could look in. Even later in history, burial plots in cemeteries had a string with a bell in case the person was not dead. All this was before modern-day embalming.

16:2—*Very early on the first day of the week*—Sunday morning

- *they came to the tomb when the sun had risen*—they separate daybreak time from when the sun is risen time. This can be as much as an hour, depending on the time of year and the latitude of the location.

16:3—*They were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”* because two of them had seen Joseph rolling the stone in front of the cave late Friday afternoon (15:46). So they will have a problem even getting into the cave when they arrive. It is interesting that none of the male disciples was available to give assistance to the women.

16:4—*Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large*—much to their surprise. Their problem has been resolved, though they have no idea how it

happened. Mark makes no mention of how this happened. But Matthew 28:2-3 says, *a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.* Luke 24:3-4 and John 20:12 say there were two angels, obviously, Mark is mentioning the one doing the talking.

— They must have wondered what, if anything, happened to the body of Jesus. So they went in.

16:5—*Entering the tomb*—a burial cave often had a spot to the side where the bodies would lay, even more than one spot. Of course, the cave had to be big enough for people to bring the bodies into it. Also, because burial caves were so hard to make, they were usually reused over the years. The bones of the previous body would often be gathered into an ossuary jar. But Jesus was laid in “*a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore...since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there*” (John 19:41). Matthew 27:60 says *Joseph...laid it in his own new tomb.*

— *they saw a young man sitting at the right*—Mark does not identify him as an angel, but Matthew 28:2-5 does.

— *wearing a white robe; and they were amazed* [alarmed]—of course, they were expecting to find a dead body, not a live young man.

— “It may be suggested that the purpose of the angel’s presence at the tomb was to be the link between the actual event of the Resurrection and the women. Human eyes were not permitted to see the event of the Resurrection itself. But the angels as the constant witnesses of God’s action saw it, so the angel’s word to the women, “He is risen,” is, as it were, the mirror in which men were allowed to see the reflection of this eschatological event.” [EBC]

16:6—*And he said to them, “Do not be amazed*—or alarmed—that Jesus and/or His body was not there, and instead, there was a young man in a white robe sitting there. He tried to calm them.

— *you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene*—their question—Where is Jesus?

— *who has been crucified*—these very women witnessed the crucifixion and witnessed Joseph bring Christ’s body to the tomb, sealing it with the large stone. The historical person.

— *He has risen*—“*just as He said*” (Matt 28:6). The same historical person.

— *He is not here*—the absence of Jesus needed to be interpreted—what does it mean? Was the body stolen, as the chief priests thought it would be (Matt 27:64)? [Some skeptics even say the women went to the wrong tomb or that Jesus did not actually die but walked out of the tomb.] However, the angel gives the correct meaning. He has risen.

— *behold, here is the place where they laid Him*—it’s said that the stone was not rolled away so Jesus could get out—it was so the people could get in and easily see He was not there.

— The resurrection was God’s act, emphasized in the New Testament (Acts 3:15; 4:10; Rom 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor 6:14; 15:15; 2 Cor 4:14; 1 Pet 1:21).

— But now what should they do? The angel gives them instructions, a task to do.

16:7—“*But go, tell*—reminding us of our command in the church age, *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...* (Matthew 28:19-20).

— *His disciples and Peter*—This would be reassuring news to Peter, who had just a few days earlier denied Jesus. They failed Him at His crucifixion, but they will now see the resurrected Christ, and will be empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), to be witnesses for Him. And Peter emerges as the leading apostle to the Jews of the church age (Gal 2:8).

— *‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee*—as He had in His lifetime. Maybe the disciples had already left for Galilee, but Jesus will get there ahead of them!

— *there you will see Him*—the risen Christ. They are eye witnesses, not just hearsay from the report of the women.

- *just as He told you*’’— “*But after I have been raised*—they seemed to not even hear this statement. His death was not permanent. He will come back to life. Death is part of their experience. Resurrection is not (Mark 14:28).
- *I will go ahead of you to Galilee*—Jesus will continue His ministry to lead the disciples in Galilee, where they had lived and worked and were called and commissioned by Jesus to follow Him (1:16-20; 3:13-15; 6:7, 12-13) [Mark 14:28].

16:8—*They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone*—again, Mark uses the double negative (*ouden ouden*), “nothing to no one.” Why?

—*for they were afraid*—of the Jews, who killed Jesus, what would they say or do if these women claimed He was still alive? Mark often included fear as a response (5:33, 36; 6:20, 50; 9:6; 10:32; 11:32).

So Mark ends with the abruptness with which he began his book. In 1:9, *in those days Jesus came...*, and now Jesus has resurrected. The tomb is empty. But the resurrected Jesus will continue His ministry with the disciples (who become the apostles) in Galilee.

The oldest manuscripts end the book here. And the writings of some church fathers show they have no knowledge of these next verses. Also, the vocabulary, style, and content of these verses argue against Mark’s authorship of them.

Then where did they come from? Of course, some believe they were part of Mark’s gospel but had disappeared for a time and then reappeared. Some believe someone added verses 9-20 to give the Gospel a more positive ending (without Divine inspiration, in which case these verses lack the Divine authority of the rest of Scripture).

Then there are those who consider verses 9-20 to be written under the influence of the Holy Spirit and therefore have equal authority as the rest of Mark’s gospel. [There are a number of other verses that are similar, such as John 7:53–8:11, about the woman caught in adultery. These verses usually appear with brackets and explanations in English texts that they are not in the original manuscripts.]

I do not believe they are Scripture because the message it claims Jesus said is contrary to Scripture:

- (1) “preach the gospel to all creation” (v. 15). This belief led Francis of Assisi to preach the gospel to the birds.
- (2) “he who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved” (v. 16). This adds the work of baptism to belief for salvation. One believes to be saved. Baptism is a testimony to that belief.
- (3) “but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (v. 16). People are condemned because of their sin, not their disbelief. They are saved by their belief.
- (4) “These signs will accompany those who have believed” (v. 17). That is a promise to all who believe, but that has not happened.
- (5) “In My name they will cast out demons” (v. 17). Paul wrote for believers to stand firm against the schemes of the devil (Eph 6:11). Peter wrote, “*the devil...seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith...* (1 Pet 5:8-9). We are not commanded to cast out demons but to resist them, standing firm in our faith.

- (6) “will speak with new tongues”—an experience of Peter and the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2). But it was known languages. If there is “babbling tongues,” the rules are in 1 Corinthians 14. At most 2 or 3 in an assembly, and only if there is an interpreter. And no women are to speak. And Paul says it is much better to speak what people can understand with their minds.
- (7) “will pick up serpents” (v. 18). Needless to say, many have died, thinking they could pick up poisonous serpents. [A practice of some sects of Appalachia.]
- (8) “if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them.” Again, sadly, does not happen. You drink poison, you will die.
- (9) “they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” There are many “healers” today. Look on Justin Peters’ site, and he will give you the names of these charismatic charlatans.

The first-century apostles did do many miracles, to confirm the new message of the Gospel (Heb 2:2-4), but there is no Scriptural or historical evidence that miracles will continue among believers throughout the centuries. Once the New Testament was written, that became the authority for believers, not the miracles.

These verses are contrary to Scripture, and they are guarantees. They will happen. So if a person believes in these promises that do not actually happen, what will they believe when given God’s true promises?