

# MARK

FOR BEGINNERS

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THE URGENT GOSPEL

MIKE MAZZALONGO

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**Research Commentary:**

Commentary on the New Testament

R.C.H. Lenski

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# 1. Introduction and Background

## MARK 1:1-13

Mark's gospel is the "urgent" gospel because it is the shortest of the four gospel records, probably the first written and most borrowed from (the gospel of Luke contains 350 verses taken from Mark's account). Mark spends no time explaining Jesus' family background and provides no foundational material before announcing in the very first verse of the opening chapter that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

In order to establish some context for Mark's book let us briefly examine two major periods in the first century in which the gospel records were circulated.

**Oral Period - 33-66 AD** — During this time the gospel was preached orally by the Apostles and transmitted from disciple to disciple (Acts 8:4). Some of Jesus' sayings were circulated in short, written form (like tracts), carved on bowls and other types of containers, and inscribed on walls in places where the church met.

**Written Period - 60-100 AD** — As demand for more permanent records grew, the gospels were provided by God through various writers in order to meet this need. The number of eyewitnesses to His ministry and resurrection was declining and so their testimony needed to be recorded for future generations. The early church believed that Jesus was going to return in their generation so they did not see the need to make a more permanent record of His life and teachings. The majority of the gospel records and epistles (letters) were originally written and copied in the years between 60 and 100 AD. The gospel of Mark is one of the earlier texts written somewhere between 60 and 70 AD.

## **INSPIRATION**

Most Christians claim that the Bible's authority in moral and spiritual matters is based on the fact that it is inspired or authored by God and recorded by men under His divine control. We believe this for several reasons:

### **1. The Bible makes this claim about itself**

In the Bible we read that Jesus promised the Apostles that after His return to heaven He would inspire them to record His teachings and commands:

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

- John 14:26

Paul the Apostle also taught that the Bible (Scripture) was inspired:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

- II Timothy 3:16

Peter the Apostle claimed that every word contained in the Bible was from the Holy Spirit:

<sup>20</sup> But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

- II Peter 1:20-21

## **2. Fulfilled prophecy**

The Bible is the only book that contains hundreds of prophecies that were exactly fulfilled. One of these prophecies is contained in the book of Daniel where the prophet, Daniel, describes the exact order and nature of four world powers that would appear in the future (Daniel 2:1-35). His prophecy concerning these four historical empires (Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, Roman) was recorded 600 years ahead of time.

This is only one of the hundreds of examples of this phenomenon contained in both the Old and New Testament portions of the Bible. As one reads these he is naturally led to the conclusion that for this book to have so many fulfilled prophecies it must have a supernatural source, because only God knows the future.

## **3. Quality of the book**

The Bible is composed of 66 individual books written by more than 40 different writers, and spans a period of 1600 years. And

yet, when examined, one finds no contradiction or mistakes, and only one story being told by all of its contributors who, for the most part, did not know each other and lived in different eras and locations. This result could not be possible without divine guidance.

There are other reasons to believe in the inspiration of Scripture. Two of which are the witness of the risen Christ and the impact and longevity of this one book over a 2000-year period. When you take all of these reasons together they can only be explained in one way, and they lead to only one logical conclusion: this is not an ordinary book, it is a text inspired and produced by a Superior Being. That Being, we believe, is God.

## **JOHN MARK**

The Bible was inspired by God, but God used men to record His thoughts, words, and the history of His people in their own style and language. One of these men was John Mark, whose book is one of the gospels.

The book of Mark says nothing about its author, but early church tradition points to John Mark who was the son of Mary, a wealthy Jewish woman who lived with her family in Jerusalem. Mary was a friend of the Apostles and it was to her house that Peter went after he was released from jail (Acts 12:12).

John Mark was the cousin of Barnabas, who was very active in the early church, and it was through him that Mark met and began to work with Paul the Apostle. Mark's association with the Apostles covered more than a 30-year span:

### **30-40 AD**

- His mother and he were among the first converts (I Peter 5:13).
- His home was used as a meeting place for Apostles and early disciples (Acts 12:12).
- Some believe that he was the young man who ran away naked in the garden where Jesus was arrested (Mark 14:51-52).

### **40-50 AD**

- Saul and Barnabas deliver money for the poor in Jerusalem and take Mark with them back to Antioch (Act 12:25).
- Saul and Barnabas take him along on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:1).
- John Mark loses interest and returns to Jerusalem which causes him to lose favor with Paul, and contributes to a separation between the Apostle and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-38).
- Barnabas takes Mark with him to Cyprus (Acts 15:39).

### **50-60 AD**

- Mark is restored, Paul calls on him for help and commends him to the church as a faithful servant (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 23-24).

## **60-70 AD**

- Paul, near the end of his life while in prison, mentions Mark as a faithful co-worker (II Timothy 4:11).
- Mark is associated with Peter and serves as his secretary in recording the events and teachings Peter has seen and heard during his life as an Apostle (I Peter 5:13).

This has been over 30 years of service finishing with a text dictated to him by Peter, which we now refer to as the gospel of Mark.

## **THE GOSPEL OF MARK**

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We knew that Mark was an eyewitness of what happened during Jesus' ministry and the establishment of the church. Early church historians and writers tell us that he was Peter's secretary during the period before Peter's death in Rome in 68 AD. Mark's work is a record of what Peter said, saw and taught.

Jesus' family, the Apostles and the early church all knew Mark. They confirmed his presence and work in the church for over three decades. This means that he was a real person who lived and worked with Jesus and the Apostles, not simply a fictional character of religious literature.

Early church historians who recorded the persons and events surrounding the beginning of the Christian age all confirm that this text was written by John Mark (Papias 115 AD, Clement 180 AD, Origen 225 AD). Mark's gospel was widely circulated at the time and none of the church leaders disputed or criticized its content or author.

The reason for this review is to demonstrate that Mark's gospel met all the requirements to be recognized as an inspired book and thus included in the New Testament canon. This was important because there were many books circulating that claimed to be inspired but did not fulfill the criteria necessary for acceptance. These requirements were as follows:

- The writer had to be an Apostle or a contemporary of an Apostle.
- The work had to be sound doctrinally, historically, etc., and an authentic work (Mark really wrote it).
- The letter or book had to be widely circulated in the early churches and accepted as inspired by them at the time.

Of all the books written and circulated, only 27 passed the test. Mark's gospel possessed all of these features and was accepted as an inspired book of the Bible.

## **MARK - TEXT**

The text of Mark itself is straightforward, and free of abstract ideas (like the gospel of John), which would not appeal to the Roman mindset. It is direct and to the point.

The book was written while Peter was in Rome working with Roman Christians. It seems that Mark's gospel was aimed at people who did not have a Jewish background; this is why there was little reference to Jewish history. Unlike Matthew's gospel which was full of references to Old Testament passages and ideas since he was addressing his fellow Jews, Mark had no need to prove who Jesus was to a Jewish mindset. The typical Roman was

mechanically minded and wanted his information in summary form. Mark obliges by presenting a gospel record that is short and to the point providing them with a "big picture" point of view.

The book of Mark is a historical narrative that gives a description of Jesus' life, work and teaching, as well as His death and resurrection, with little background information or philosophizing. It is like a snap shot or a post card. Mark's gospel is totally Christ centered, telling the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and then it ends.

This gospel writer is not interested in character analysis or doctrinal development. His book is about action and reaction. A good example of this is that more space is given over to miracles in this book than in any of the other gospels. Eighteen out of the 35 possible miracles are described. Also, reactions of people to Jesus are carefully noted in Mark. Over 23 references to people who were amazed, puzzled, astonished, hostile, etc.

In summary, Mark's gospel is short, to the point, colorful and powerful. It tells the simple story of Jesus without much background information and then ends with a challenge; believe, be baptized and be saved, or disbelieve and be condemned. The reader is forced to deal with the facts by deciding.

The central theme of Mark is very clear: Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God. This is the point of the gospel and Mark divides his book into three simple parts:

- Introduction of the Divine Jesus (1:1-13).
- Proof of Jesus' divinity through His teachings and miracles (1:14-8:26).

- Proof of Jesus' divinity through His death, burial and resurrection (8:27-16:20).

This is a book that appeals to the practical mind.

## **USES OF MARK**

Each book in the Bible has a purpose and a particular audience. Mark's audience is the world. His attitude is: everyone needs to know, in no uncertain terms, that Jesus is the divine Son of God and the Savior of the world, and the world needs to deal with this truth.

The book of Mark is a great first book to read with a non-Christian. It is short, simple, and focused, and for these reasons appeals to those who do not have much general Bible knowledge.

## 2.

# Jesus the Divine

MARK 1:1-45

In the previous chapter I said that the text of Mark was divided into three main sections:

- **1:1-13** - Introduction of Jesus as the Divine Messiah.
- **1:14-8:26** - Jesus proves His divinity through His teachings and miracles.
- **8:27-16:20** - Jesus proves His divinity through His death, burial and resurrection.

A simple, straightforward book, whose only purpose is to present Jesus as the divine Son of God and leave the reader with a decision based on this truth.

## Introduction of Jesus — 1:1-13

<sup>1</sup> The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The author begins with a statement of the premise, the thing to be demonstrated, that Jesus is the Son of God.

<sup>2</sup> As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:  
“Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You,  
Who will prepare Your way;  
<sup>3</sup> The voice of one crying in the wilderness,  
‘Make ready the way of the Lord,  
Make His paths straight.’”

The link with the Old Testament is short, not like Matthew's preamble giving Jesus' genealogy from Abraham to His earthly father, Joseph. Mark simply states that this Jesus is the Messiah predicted by the Jewish prophets of old.

These verses help the reader get a historical and cultural fix on who and where this Jesus comes from. In the Old Testament the prophets were the ones who preached and spoke of Him to prepare the people for His eventual coming.

<sup>4</sup> John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup> John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.

He links these Old Testament prophets to a character in their own generation, a person they may have heard of, John the Baptist. The prophets said that before the Messiah would come, there would be a person who would come before Him to

announce that the arrival of the Messiah would be imminent. Mark says that this prophecy was fulfilled when John the Baptist arrived on the scene and began to preach. He dressed like the desert prophets of old, he lived and worked from the desert, and he preached a message of repentance and preparation for the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom.

7 And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. 8 I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

God offered forgiveness to all who received John's baptism because in responding to the Baptist's message, the people were anticipating, through faith, the redeeming work that Jesus had arrived to accomplish for them with His cross. To use a familiar phrase, in receiving John's baptism they were sending their sins forward to the cross for forgiveness.

John the Baptist said that when Jesus would come He would transfer other blessings that would not be given through water baptism but through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Later on at Pentecost, Peter will preach that both forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit (His dwelling within every believer) will be received through water baptism (Acts 2:38). However, power to overcome sin (Romans 8:13), power to do miracles (Acts 19:6), power to minister (I Corinthians 12:11), and the power to resurrect and live eternally (Romans 8:11), all of these are transferred to us through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus circumcises (baptizes) us with the Holy Spirit by preaching the Word to us (John 6:63), sending Him to dwell within us (Acts

2:38), and sealing us (to guarantee our authenticity) with Him (Ephesians 1:13).

<sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;

## WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED?

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup> But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" <sup>15</sup> But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him.  
- Matthew 3:13-15

John had to baptize all of those who were preparing for the kingdom of God. This action was a witness of their faith and repudiation of sin. Jesus was making His entry on to the world scene in order to establish His kingdom. His baptism was a witness of His own faith in connection with the kingdom. However, it was not a separation or repudiation of sin since He had no sin. His baptism signified His separation from family and the world in order to wholeheartedly pursue His ministry. Jesus' baptism also signifies the beginning of His public ministry and the end of His private life. His baptism legitimizes and blesses every one of John's baptisms.

<sup>11</sup> and a voice came out of the heavens: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”

John pointed to Jesus as the One who was spoken of, the One who was to come. Now the Godhead bears witness to this as all three are represented here:

1. The Father speaks - “beloved” because of who He is, what He will do and how it will affect others.
2. The Son is incarnate; He is visible as Jesus.
3. The Holy Spirit appears as a dove.

This is the only time in the Bible that all three appear and are manifested at the same time and in the same place.

<sup>12</sup> Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup> And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan;

Concerning Jesus' temptation in the desert, Matthew (Matthew 4:1) tells us that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert for 40 days and nights in order to be tempted by the devil. Luke (Luke 4:1-2) says that He was continually tempted while there. The wild beasts would be evil spirits.

The word "tempt" means to test or examine, not only to seduce. Satan examined Jesus concerning sin. Jesus, God's Son, could not fail in being able to resist sin, but He had to experience the suffering that goes along with the test. He was tested/examined like we are (Hebrews 4:15).

### **Physical Test:**

- Forty days and nights in the desert
- Hunger and weakness
- Loneliness
- Beasts

### **Moral Test:**

- Confrontation with Satan

A question that arises about this episode is the following, "If Jesus could not fail, then why the test?" The writer of the book of Hebrews deals with this question by saying that in order to become our High Priest or our intermediary, Jesus needed to experience human trials and sorrows, one of which was His temptation in the desert (Hebrews 4:14-16). Because of His human experiences, Jesus could then be the perfect representative for man before God. By virtue of His divine nature, He could come before God; by virtue of His sinlessness, He could offer a perfect sacrifice; by virtue of His human experiences, He could perfectly sympathize with men's problems.

The point of the testing was not to prove He could pass, the point of the testing was to permit Him to experience the test so He could represent and sympathize with weak human beings who faced similar tests.

<sup>13b</sup> and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.

God ministered to Him after the testing was over:

- **Food** - He suffered the physical effects of this experience.
- **Angels** - He suffered emotionally as well as spiritually and required the company of other beings who understood His dual nature and the ordeal He had just been through. At this point in time there was no human being who could provide this type of comfort.

Jesus' temptation offers several good lessons for us in our Christian walk:

- We are especially vulnerable after a spiritual / physical / emotional peak. Jesus' baptism was a peak in His life and the temptations followed right after. We need to remember that pride is always the danger that follows on the heels of great success.
- We are also vulnerable to temptation when we are sick, tired and suffering, as Jesus was after He was weak from fasting. Note that the devil saved his most powerful attack for the end of His fast when He was at his weakest, not at the beginning.
- When tested, we need to immediately rely on God and His Word for help and safety. We must not exclusively trust our own wisdom (I Corinthians 10:13). Jesus will provide the way of escape if we bother to ask.
- Jesus was prepared for His ministry through trial and testing, and so are we. We must not become angry, impatient or discouraged when things do not go our way. We need to allow time for the tests in life to do their work in order to help us become perfect in Christ.

Many times it is necessary to go through trials to show the quality of our faith (I Peter 1:6-7).

- God will provide for you during and after the trial if you lean on Him (I Peter 5:8).

Mark begins by introducing Jesus with only a few verses and immediately establishes Him as a divine being:

1. He arrives according to prophecy.
2. At His baptism there is a supernatural sign of His identity.
3. In the desert He demonstrates His power over sin and the devil.
4. He receives ministry and communes with angels.

At this point there is no doubt in the reader's mind as to what Mark is saying about Jesus: He is Divine.

## **JESUS' DIVINITY PROVEN THROUGH MIRACLES AND TEACHING**

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Jesus establishes His divine authority by announcing the time and the terms of man's salvation. After all, who would have the right to do this but God?

<sup>14</sup> Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

John preached, "Prepare, the time is coming." Jesus preached, "The time is now." The term "fulfilled" refers to a cup filled to the brim. Jesus begins His public preaching ministry after John's arrest.

The core of His message was, "The kingdom of God has now arrived, salvation is at hand." Response to Him and His message at that time: belief (verse 15), repentance (verse 15), baptism (John 4:1-2).

Today, the message is fuller and has more details, but essentially the same, "Now is the time that you can be saved." The response is basically the same as well: belief (Mark 16:16), repentance (Acts 2:38), baptism (Acts 2:38).

Jesus affirms His authority by announcing that salvation is at hand, and by establishing the proper response for receiving that salvation (faith, repentance, baptism).

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." <sup>18</sup> Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.

Remember, Mark is recording Peter's recollection of his life with Jesus. Here he briefly describes his own call along with his brother's, as well as other local fishermen who were summoned

by the Lord. Jesus' call had different stages. We see this in Peter's experience. What Mark describes was not Peter's first contact with the Lord. There were different stages in the call of Jesus:

1. General call to discipleship (John 1:35-42)
  - a. His first contact with Jesus was while he and his brother were disciples of John.
  - b. Jesus begins to teach them personally, His first disciples.
  
2. Jesus calls him to specific ministry (Mark 1:17)
  - a. The verb "follow" means to follow closely with a desire to find; to make a search.
  - b. At first he followed to be edified and taught, now He invites Peter to search Him, to find out who He really is.
  - c. In searching and finding who Jesus is (divine), he will become a "fisher of men." Peter and the others will want to tell others about Jesus' divinity, and they did.
  
3. Jesus confirms His call (Luke 5:1-11)
  - a. Jesus performs a miracle in Peter's own boat and this elicits the confession of faith in Jesus' divinity (calls Him Lord).
  - b. At this point they do not simply leave their boats, they leave everything to follow Him.

Some follow Jesus because His teachings are good, others follow because they are followers and Jesus is as good or a better leader than others. The Apostles and all disciples after them follow Jesus because they have come to believe that He is the divine Son of God who has power.

Here we begin the section where Jesus will demonstrate His divinity through a series of teachings and miracles. Mark alternates between these two aspects in his narrative on Jesus' life.

## TEACHING

<sup>21</sup> They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. <sup>22</sup> They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

His teaching in the synagogue was basically the material contained in verse 15. Mark records their reaction: amazed, which means to be struck by the extraordinariness or unexpectedness of something. This was always the effect of His teaching (Matthew 7:28, Sermon on the Mount; John 7:46, soldiers could not arrest Him because they were amazed).

They were not amazed at His style or delivery, they were amazed at the content and that He taught with the power of authority (He knew what He was talking about). The style of the rabbis was to argue back and forth quoting other rabbis in order to make their point (i.e. is it really sinful to carry two sticks on the Sabbath). Jesus brought higher, deeper and truer insights and thus spoke with power and authority.

# MIRACLES — 1:23-45

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The powerful teaching is now followed by a demonstration of five powerful miracles.

## Casting out an unclean spirit

<sup>23</sup> Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, <sup>24</sup> saying, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" <sup>25</sup> And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" <sup>26</sup> Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. <sup>27</sup> They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." <sup>28</sup> Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.

An unclean spirit is a demon, one without purity. The spirit speaks; the man is controlled by the spirit. This episode gives us some insight into demons: they have personality - it expressed itself, they have intelligence - it knew about Jesus, they have power - it possessed the man, they have will - it wanted something.

Jesus refuses to accept its testimony because demons are unworthy to do this. To permit this would confuse people about who Jesus is (He is not the leader of the demons).

With only one command this demon is removed. No incantations, potions, lights, yelling, manipulations, bargaining (give or offer something to God to defeat it). Jesus merely commands with authority and the demon obeys without a fight or a word.

The people are amazed, the same reaction they had when they heard His teaching. They are amazed because He teaches with power (truth fully expressed), and He defeats the most vicious demon with only a command.

## **Heals Peter's mother-in-law**

<sup>29</sup> And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. <sup>30</sup> Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup> And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them.

Peter is a married man (I Corinthians 9:5). The sick woman is immediately healed and begins serving. This demonstrates a complete healing in one moment (she is immediately well enough to take on the service of a house full of guests).

## **Heals all who come to Peter's house**

<sup>32</sup> When evening came, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup> And the whole city had gathered at the door. <sup>34</sup> And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons;

and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.

This is a short description of a great number of healing miracles. Jesus retreats to prayer in order to restore His spiritual energy. Ministry saps energy and prayer restores it, a good lesson to learn for Apostles as well as today's ministers.

## **Combination of teaching and confirming miracles**

<sup>35</sup> In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. <sup>36</sup> Simon and his companions searched for Him; <sup>37</sup> they found Him, and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." <sup>38</sup> 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." <sup>39</sup> And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.

Jesus' teachings established His identity and commands, His miracles were done to confirm His authority and power. Apparently demon possession was a great problem at that time and one that had baffled them, Jesus uses this to demonstrate His power.

## **Heals the Leper**

<sup>40</sup> 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." <sup>41</sup> Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched

him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." <sup>42</sup> Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. <sup>43</sup> And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, <sup>44</sup> 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." <sup>45</sup> But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.

Leprosy was a miserable disease. It was physically debilitating as sufferers declined in various stages where skin and body parts would have sores, dry up, even fall off. It was socially crippling as well. Lepers were not allowed in the temple, they lived their entire lives in quarantine and had to put a hand over their mouths and shout, "unclean" when in a public place.

This leper had great faith in Jesus' power and so, came to Jesus to be healed. Jesus touched him (which was not allowed) and the man was healed. Jesus not only healed his disease, but in doing so healed his self-esteem as well.

Jesus tells him to have his healing confirmed and certified by the priests before revealing how it happened (according to the Law concerning a healing from this disease, Leviticus 14:2). The priests were charged with the verification of a healing before granting permission for a return to normal society. Also, in doing this, it would provide Jesus with a testimony for a legitimate healing and miracle.

The man was so excited that he could not wait and in so doing created a stir among the public to the extent that Jesus could no longer go into heavily populated areas without being mobbed. As a result of this miracle Jesus established Himself as one who spoke with authority and demonstrated power. The people were now coming to Him to see what He did, and hear what He had to say.

In the next sections we will see Jesus continue this demonstration, but at this point the opposition to Him will grow and begin to attack.

# 3.

## Encounters and Parables

MARK 2:1-4:34

Mark has begun his gospel by quickly establishing several critical ideas:

1. He states his major objective in the very first verse of his gospel: demonstrating that Jesus is the divine Son of God.
2. He establishes the historical and cultural background of Jesus: He was a Jew living at the time of John the Baptist, and the one who fulfilled the prophecies of the Jewish Scriptures concerning the Messiah/Savior.
3. He describes the two aspects of Jesus' ministry that establish His claim of being the Son of God: His amazing teaching and miracles.

In the following chapters Mark will continue reciting the teachings and miracles of Jesus, and will add to these a

description of the people who opposed Him and would later plot His execution.

## ENCOUNTERS — 2:1-3:35

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The confrontations that Jesus has with different groups are recorded in a series of seven encounters described in the next two chapters.

<sup>1</sup> When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. <sup>2</sup> And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. <sup>3</sup> And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. <sup>4</sup> Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. <sup>5</sup> And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven.” <sup>6</sup> But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup>“Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?” <sup>8</sup> Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup> Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’? <sup>10</sup> But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, <sup>11</sup> “I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.” <sup>12</sup> 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."

The scribes accused Jesus of blaspheming because He forgave the paralytic's sins. They correctly understood that only God had the authority to do such a thing. What they did not accept was Jesus' implicit assertion that He was God.

Jesus' power was demonstrated visibly in order to prove that He also had the power to do things not visible to the human eye (i.e. remove sin through forgiveness). The charge that He was blaspheming was spurious since, as God, Jesus could not blaspheme against Himself.

<sup>13</sup> And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them. <sup>14</sup> As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" <sup>17</sup> And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

In this instance the scribes and Pharisees accused Him of having an immoral lifestyle because He ate with Publicans and sinners.

Jesus responded that His mission was to heal the spiritually sick, and for this work He needed to be among them. Jesus did not participate in immorality, He was among immoral people in order to preach the gospel to them.

<sup>18</sup> John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; 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?" <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. <sup>21</sup> "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. <sup>22</sup> 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."

Mark recounts another episode where the disciples of John, together with the Pharisees, accused Him of lacking spirituality because He did not encourage His own disciples to fast. Jesus uses this occasion to teach them that truly spiritual people know when to fast and when to feast. The fact that He, the Messiah, was among them was a cause for feasting, not fasting (in their feasting, His disciples were showing true spiritual discernment).

The patch and wineskin refer to Judaism and Christianity. You cannot repair Judaism by patching Christianity on to it; you must remove the old and use all of the new cloth. Similarly, you cannot preserve Christianity by putting it within the confines of Judaism because Christianity will grow out of these confines and a

rupture will occur. Christianity needed to be independent from Judaism because it was a growing thing and Judaism was not. With the coming of Jesus, Judaism had fulfilled the purpose for which it had been created (to establish a historical, cultural, religious stage upon which the Messiah would appear in human history).

<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> The Pharisees were saying to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" <sup>25</sup> And He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry; <sup>26</sup> 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?" <sup>27</sup> Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

This time the Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of disobeying the Law by picking grain on the Sabbath. The Law did teach that it was unlawful to work on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8), however, the Pharisees had created numerous definitions of what work was with the intention of limiting every possibility of breaking this commandment. The result was a set of rules that not only bordered on the ridiculous, but also created a heavy burden for the ordinary person who was sincerely trying to keep the Law. In this context even picking corn or a single fruit from a tree as a snack was seen as "work" by the fanatical Pharisees.

Jesus uses the example of King David (1 Samuel 21:1-9) and the time that he ate the sacred bread. The "Showbread" consisted of 12 loaves of bread baked and set in the place where the priests offered sacrifice. These were to be eaten only by the priests. There was a time when David, on the run trying to avoid capture by King Saul, came searching for food and was told by the priests that the only food available was the Showbread, so he took and ate these.

Jesus says that in doing so David did not sin because human need outweighs the requirements of ceremonial law. He explains that the Sabbath was created because man needed rest and spiritual renewal, not the other way around. Man was not created to be a slave to religious ceremony.

Jesus provides context by saying that, in effect, He was the Lord of the Sabbath (He was the One, along with the Father at the time of creation, who instituted the Sabbath, John 1:1-2). Paul, the Apostle, explains that everything was created by and for Jesus (Colossians 1:15-16), and that includes the Sabbath day. Now, as Messiah, Jesus was to fulfill all the requirements of the Sabbath (not the regulations added by man). He was, therefore, Lord of the Sabbath because He initiated it at the beginning and fulfilled its requirements at the end.

<sup>1</sup> He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. <sup>2</sup> They were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. <sup>3</sup> He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" <sup>4</sup> And He said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent. <sup>5</sup> After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man,

“Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. <sup>6</sup> The Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

Once more the Pharisees wanted to accuse Him of breaking the Sabbath by healing on that day. Jesus counters their accusation by asking them if it is ever wrong to do good? The true Law concerning the Sabbath had no regulation about healing on the Sabbath, this is what the Pharisees and scribes had invented. Notice how He heals the man with only His word. Jesus shows that it is always good to do good, even on the Sabbath.

<sup>7</sup> Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and also from Judea, <sup>8</sup> and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great number of people heard of all that He was doing and came to Him. <sup>9</sup> And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd Him; <sup>10</sup> for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him. <sup>11</sup> Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, “You are the Son of God!” <sup>12</sup> And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was.

Note that the demons would cry out merely at His presence, and there was no limit to His power to heal. Jesus quieted the demons because He did not want any affirmation or witness of His divinity coming from an evil source.

<sup>13</sup> And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. <sup>14</sup> And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, <sup>15</sup> and to have authority to cast out the demons. <sup>16</sup> And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), <sup>17</sup> and James, the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, “Sons of Thunder”); <sup>18</sup> and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot; <sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.

Jesus was constantly followed by crowds of people made up of the curious, those who wanted to denounce Him, and disciples at varying degrees of faith and commitment. At this point He selects 12 men that He will personally teach and train to be His witnesses after He is gone.

<sup>20</sup> And He came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. <sup>21</sup> When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, “He has lost His senses.” <sup>22</sup> The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.” <sup>23</sup> And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. <sup>26</sup> If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> "Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; <sup>29</sup> but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"—<sup>30</sup> because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

Jesus' family sees the crowds and the confrontations with dangerous enemies and try to remove Him from this environment, thinking that He has lost His senses. The situation becomes urgent as even more powerful adversaries arrive from Jerusalem. They accuse Him not simply of being unbalanced, but actually being possessed by the demon "Beelzebub," a name for the devil, and doing His work in cooperation with and under the power of Satan himself.

Jesus shows how illogical this is. He argues that if Satan is destroying demons, then he is destroying himself. It was true that demons were being destroyed (when He miraculously cast evil spirits out of people), but Jesus shows that this was not being done by Satan's power. The Lord was not doing Satan's work, He was destroying it.

Jesus adds the warning that blaspheming the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. According to the information in this passage, this blasphemy occurs when the ministry of the Holy Spirit is attributing to the devil. In other words, when someone declares that Satan is responsible for the work or blessing one has actually received from God, they are blaspheming the Holy Spirit. In the case where the scribes were confronting Jesus, they were saying that His teachings and miracles (both done through the power of the Holy Spirit, Acts 10:38) were actually done through the power of Satan.

To designate the Spirit as a devil, therefore, is to put ourselves beyond the teachings and witness of Christ, the very person and words that ultimately lead us to salvation (Romans 1:16). If, in one's mind, the work of the Spirit comes from the devil, then where does one go to find salvation? In doing such a thing the person who blasphemes destroys the very bridge that leads to salvation and thus is denied forgiveness, not by the will of God, but by denying the person who could have led him to repentance in the first place, the Holy Spirit (John 16:8).

<sup>31</sup> Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him. <sup>32</sup> A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You." <sup>33</sup> Answering them, He said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" <sup>34</sup> Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! <sup>35</sup> For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother."

Mark returns to the scene where His family wants to take custody of Jesus and bring Him home. Theirs was probably a sincere effort to protect Him from the danger He was clearly subject to.

Jesus responds to news of their efforts by talking about relationships. His earthly family believes that its family ties give them the right to advance on Him and tell Him what is right and prudent given the circumstances. Jesus does not defend His sanity or doctrine. He merely points to His real family, those who do the will of God. These, He says, are the ones related to Him and each other in the only way that counts, eternally.

# SUMMARY

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In this section Mark has described various confrontations with religious leaders as well as a difficult moment with His earthly family. During these times the gospel writer described the accusation and Jesus' response:

1. Blasphemy (disrespect for God)
  - a. He was God.
2. Immoral (associated with sinners)
  - a. He ministered to sinners.
3. Unspiritual (did not keep feasts and tradition)
  - a. He discerned the true will of God.
4. Disobeying the laws of their religion
  - a. He obeyed God's laws, not men's laws.
5. He was possessed by the devil
  - a. He was filled with the person and power of the Holy Spirit.
6. He was disloyal to His family because of His ministry
  - a. He put the kingdom of God first.

Does this sound familiar? Don't Christians in every generation go against man-made religious tradition and have problems with family or society? Are not the same accusations made over and over? If they are not, maybe something is wrong.

## TEACHING THROUGH PARABLES — 4:1-34

The miracles and teachings that provoke a series of confrontations are over and Jesus now shifts His style of teaching to avoid these. He continues to teach, but now in parable form so only His disciples and apostles will discern, and not the unbelievers or His enemies.

<sup>11</sup> And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, <sup>12</sup> so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven.”

The word parable means “to lay beside; to compare.” It is the putting of two things side by side in order to draw a lesson or gain some understanding. Jesus used stories that explained an idea or principle set in the physical world in order to help His listeners understand parallel ideas and principles set in the spiritual world. In other words, He used things that could be seen to explain things that could not be seen.

In order for the parable to be of value, the hearer had to understand the analogy. In most parables Jesus was using everyday physical and human situations to explain the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven. His purpose was to give the people practical information about this "spiritual" thing called the kingdom: what the kingdom was, who was in it, how it operated and how one functioned as a member of it.

The kingdom, as Jesus describes it, is made up of God and His people. It exists on earth for a time and in heaven for all time. While on earth Jesus was calling people to come into the

kingdom. This He did by preaching the gospel. He also described the nature of the kingdom and the lifestyle of those within it. This He did by using parables.

In chapter 4 Mark recalls four of these parables.

## **PARABLE OF THE SOWER AND THE SEED - 4:1-20**

<sup>1</sup> He began to teach again by the sea. 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. <sup>2</sup> And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, <sup>3</sup> "Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; <sup>4</sup> as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. <sup>8</sup> 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." <sup>9</sup> And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

<sup>10</sup> As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables.

<sup>11</sup> And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, <sup>12</sup> so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while

hearing, they may hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven.”<sup>13</sup> And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?<sup>14</sup> The sower sows the word.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy;<sup>17</sup> and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.<sup>18</sup> And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word,<sup>19</sup> but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.<sup>20</sup> And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

This parable describes how one will or will not develop in the kingdom (verse 20). He gives both the parable and its explanation because it is similar to many others: entry and growth in the kingdom are based on how well you react to God's word.

Those who do not enter or do well are those who have a hard heart or do not hear (because of a sinful life, disbelief, etc.); those who have no conviction and do not persevere in the Word; or those who have too much involvement in the world and forget or

ignore the Word. These people have a hearing problem and it prevents them from entering or remaining in the kingdom.

Those who enter and are successful in the kingdom are those who hear and respond properly to the Word. They understand, believe and respond in obedience to the Word. To the degree that they respond in faith and obedience, they are productive at various rates (thirty, sixty, a hundredfold are the rates of return possible based on the faithfulness and obedience of the hearers).

## **THE PARABLE OF THE LAMP - 4:21-22**

<sup>21</sup> And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand? <sup>22</sup> For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light.

In the following parable, Jesus continues to explore the idea of fruitfulness, but changes the figure in order to make another point.

- Obedience = Fruitfulness (sower and the seed)
- Fruitfulness = Witness (the light of a lamp)

He switches the imagery to lamps to explain that your fruitfulness in the kingdom will produce the light that is necessary to light up this dark world. The kingdom is a kingdom of light and your fruitfulness is what produces that light. Your fruitfulness has a purpose and its purpose is to give off light (which is the purpose of a lamp in the first place), therefore, the light of the kingdom is the fruitfulness of its members, and that light helps others find and enter the kingdom.

In verse 22 Jesus warns that nothing remains a secret forever. All that we do will either be revealed now or later at the judgment. The light of the gospel and the light produced by our deeds, as those who belong to the kingdom, provide the only light that the world has for now. When Jesus comes, however, He will search the hearts of all men with the light of truth.

## COMMENTARY BY JESUS - 4:23-25

<sup>23</sup> If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” <sup>24</sup> And He was saying to them, “Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides. <sup>25</sup> For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”

Between parables Jesus issues a warning to the ones listening to Him. If you hear, perceive or understand, then you will be rewarded based on the degree that you obey. If you respond with sincere obedience and submit patiently to the Word, you will produce at a rate of thirty, sixty or a hundredfold (depending on your maturity and spiritual skills).

If you hear, understand and perceive but reject it, or do not act upon what you hear, you will lose whatever understanding and enlightenment you once had. The less you have as a base of understanding, the less, therefore, you will be able to receive. Jesus is explaining to them that the ability to understand spiritual matters is like a bucket: if you do not fill it up and use it, God replaces it with a series of smaller and smaller buckets to the point where you will only be able to contain very little of what He has to give you, if anything at all.

## THE PARABLE OF NORMAL GROWTH IN THE KINGDOM

- 4:26-29

<sup>26</sup> And He was saying, “The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; <sup>27</sup> and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. <sup>28</sup> The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. <sup>29</sup> But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

The previous parable was about the different kinds of soils. This parable is about the seed itself and how it grows once sown. Jesus explains that once the seed is sown, man has no power over its growth. The growth takes place apart from man's effort which is, in the end, harvesting the results of the seed's growth. The sun, rain and cultivation help the growth, but the life is in the seed.

The spiritual parallel here is that the seed is the Word of God, and once it is planted in the heart by faith and watered by perseverance it grows within man to produce spiritual fruit. The Word has the life (power) that produces the spiritual fruit (love, joy, peace, patience, etc. - Galatians 5:22-23). Man harvests it (exhibits and uses the fruit), but he does not produce it through self-will or exercise.

## THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED - 4:30-32

<sup>30</sup> And He said, “How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? <sup>31</sup> 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,<sup>32</sup> 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.”

Jesus explained the good soil (believing heart) and the power of the seed (it produces the fruit, not man). Now He will explain the potential of the type of seed that He plants. In comparison to the plant that it produces, the seed of that plant is tiny but the plant itself is usually much larger and looks nothing like the seed that has produced it (i.e. the seed contained in an apple looks very different than the apple itself or the tree that grows from that tiny seed).

In the same way, the Word of God may seem small, and our reading of it and efforts at complying with it may seem humble, but look at the results throughout history as this seed has produced a kingdom that has surpassed all others and continues to grow unabated (Daniel 2:31-35).

## **SUMMARY - 4:33-34**

<sup>33</sup> With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; <sup>34</sup> and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

Mark repeats why the Lord's teaching has taken this form for now. Jesus is focusing on His disciples, those who believe. The ones who listened to Him but did not believe, as well as those who were waiting for an opportunity to attack Him could hear the words that He was speaking but could not grasp the meaning and, were thus, neutralized for now.

Through these parables, therefore, Jesus explained that the kingdom of God:

- Began with the preaching of the Word.
- Was established through belief and obedience to the Word.
- Grew through the power of the Word in men's hearts as they persevered in it (faithfully obeyed what it said).
- Has more potential than man realized (difference between apple seed and apple tree).

In addition to this, the news of a growing kingdom was given in parables in order to avoid the suspicion of Jewish religious leaders who would not tolerate any challenge to their positions of power within the Jewish religious system.

# 4.

## Jesus: Lord of All

MARK 4:34-6:56

In our study of Mark's gospel, we have seen that Jesus has begun to demonstrate His divine abilities and nature through His teachings and miracles. The reaction to Him by ordinary people and the Jewish leadership is strong but mixed with some believing, others skeptical and many among the leaders becoming confrontational. Mark describes seven instances where these scribes and Pharisees accuse Jesus of various sins including demon possession. After these confrontations, Jesus continues to teach His disciples, but in parable form, in order to create less turmoil among the crowds.

In the seven previous encounters that Mark described there was skepticism and disbelief, even accusations. In this next section, Jesus will interact with groups of people who witness His power and respond with belief. For these people Jesus is not only a great teacher and miracle worker, He becomes the Lord of hopeless situations.

## LORD OF NATURE

<sup>35</sup> On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." <sup>36</sup> Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. <sup>37</sup> And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. <sup>38</sup> Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" <sup>39</sup> And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. <sup>40</sup> And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" <sup>41</sup> They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

After a series of teachings and miraculous healings, Jesus sets off across the Lake of Galilee in a boat with His Apostles. Tired from His work, He falls asleep on a cushion. A storm comes up threatening to sink their vessel. It must have been a fierce storm because these are all experienced fishermen, used to the rough weather on this lake. They do not awake Him in order to ask for His help (after all, what would a carpenter or rabbi know about sailing a boat in a storm?), they wake Him up because He is sleeping and they believe they are about to die.

Upon awakening He calms the sea with only a word, and rebukes them for being afraid and having little faith. This miracle leaves them awestruck. They had no power over the storm and were at its mercy. However, by performing this miracle Jesus demonstrated that He had authority over the natural elements.

Their unstated conclusion was that only God could control nature at will, and they had just witnessed Jesus perform this feat.

## LORD OF THE SPIRIT WORLD

<sup>1</sup> They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. <sup>2</sup> When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, <sup>3</sup> and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones. <sup>6</sup> Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; <sup>7</sup> and shouting with a loud voice, he said, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" <sup>8</sup> For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" <sup>9</sup> And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many." <sup>10</sup> And he began to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. <sup>11</sup> Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. <sup>12</sup> The demons implored Him, saying, "Send us into the swine so that we may enter them." <sup>13</sup> Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea. <sup>14</sup> Their herdsmen

ran away and reported it in the city and in the country. And the people came to see what it was that had happened. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine. <sup>17</sup> And they began to implore Him to leave their region. <sup>18</sup> As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. <sup>19</sup> And He did not let him, but He said to him, “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.” <sup>20</sup> And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

Immediately after they reach the other side of the lake they are confronted by a man possessed of an unclean spirit. Jesus had cast out evil spirits in the past but some were unimpressed because the priests and Pharisees also handled these types of cases. This time, however, Mark describes a man possessed by many demons (a legion) who could neither be cured nor restrained by anyone. Again, Jesus cures him with simply a word and the demons are cast out.

This particular healing has some interesting features:

- Jesus has a dialogue with the demons. This was probably done to demonstrate to the man and His own disciples that He knew the problem and was without fear.

- Jesus sends the demons into a nearby herd of swine, perhaps to reassure the man that the demons were truly out of him and physically elsewhere.
- The destruction of the swine is sometimes questioned as wasteful, but a man's life is worth more than a herd of pigs.

The people of the town are angry and frightened. They do not demand compensation for the pigs, they simply want Jesus to leave. It is sad to note that they cannot see past the destruction of the animals to understand what has really happened.

The man is completely sane, dressed and at peace after years of insanity and torment. Jesus is about to leave and the man wants to come with Him but the Lord tells him to go to Decapolis (the ten city region) and proclaim the news of his cure. Later on, Jesus will return to this area and be met with great crowds of people largely due to the fact that this man went home to tell of his healing.

Jesus, after demonstrating that He had power over the natural world, shows His disciples that He has power over the spiritual world as well. He overcomes nature in the outside world, He overcomes the demons in the inside world. The reader is left with the conclusion that if only God has power over nature and demons, Jesus, therefore, must be divine.

## LORD OF ILLNESS

<sup>21</sup> When Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around Him; and so He stayed by the seashore. <sup>22</sup> One of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and on seeing Him, fell

at His feet <sup>23</sup> and implored 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.” <sup>24</sup> And He went off with him; and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him. <sup>25</sup> A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, <sup>26</sup> and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse— <sup>27</sup> after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak. <sup>28</sup> For she thought, “If I just touch His garments, I will get well.” <sup>29</sup> Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. <sup>30</sup> Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched My garments?” <sup>31</sup> And His disciples said to Him, “You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’” <sup>32</sup> And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. <sup>33</sup> But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup> And He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction.”

Mark combines two stories here, each showing Jesus' concern and power. At first, Jesus is confronted by a synagogue official (Minister in today's terms) whose daughter is ill to the point of death. He begs Jesus to come and heal her. Jesus agrees but on His way is interrupted by a woman who secretly touches His cloak with the hope of being healed from her own disease.

This woman suffered from continual uterine bleeding. Her condition had bankrupted her financially and, according to Jewish ceremonial law, did not permit her to attend temple worship because she was considered ceremonially "unclean." The woman is immediately healed, but Jesus forces her to acknowledge her illness, what she had done and the results. The reason for this was to publicly declare the miracle, and to verify that she was healed and could now return to worship in the temple.

This was a disease that had been treated unsuccessfully for years; that was not mental or spiritual in nature (i.e. demon possession); that was uniquely female in nature; and Jesus heals her without saying a word. In this we see that His Lordship was expressed by His mere presence.

## LORD OVER DEATH

<sup>35</sup> While He was still speaking, they came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, "Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?" <sup>36</sup> But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid any longer, only believe." <sup>37</sup> And He allowed no one to accompany Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup> They came to the house of the synagogue official; and He saw a commotion, and people loudly weeping and wailing. <sup>39</sup> And entering in, He said to them, "Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep." <sup>40</sup> They began laughing at Him. But putting them all out, He took along the child's father and mother and His own companions, and entered the room where the child was. <sup>41</sup> Taking the child by the hand, He said to her, "Talitha kum!" (which translated

means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”).

<sup>42</sup> Immediately the girl got up and began to walk, for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded. <sup>43</sup> And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this, and He said that something should be given her to eat.

Mark continues the narrative with the story of the synagogue leader's daughter. A report comes that she has died and the father gives up hope and is ready to accept this fact. Jesus offers him renewed hope telling him to believe and not be afraid. When He arrives at the house, the professional mourners are there along with a crowd of people who laugh as He announces that the child is not dead but only asleep. Jesus brings only those who believe (the Apostles and the parents) with Him to witness this tremendous miracle. Again, Mark demonstrates Jesus' Lordship over another powerful enemy of man: death itself.

These four episodes establish Jesus as one with divine power to overcome those things which man has traditionally had little or no control over: nature, the spirit world, illness and death. The conclusion we are left with is that only God can have and demonstrate this kind of power, therefore Jesus must be divine!

## **EXPANSION OF JESUS' MINISTRY — 6:1-56**

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Up to this point in his gospel record, Mark is describing isolated incidents of Jesus' preaching and miracles, and the various reactions to these. With time, however, His ministry began to expand and Mark will describe this development as well as the people's reaction to Jesus' increasing fame.

## JESUS' HOMETOWN

<sup>1</sup> Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. <sup>2</sup> When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? <sup>3</sup> Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. <sup>4</sup> Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household." <sup>5</sup> And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. <sup>6</sup> And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching.

The news of His teaching and miracles reaches His home town before Jesus does. The people respond with skepticism (how can someone from here be doing these great things?). They even mention Jesus as the local carpenter's son and one of many children in a local family. This time it is Jesus who is amazed at their unbelief and consequently does very little ministry (miracles) there but continues to teach in their synagogues. He was sent to preach the good news and He does this without accompanying miracles.

## SENDING OF THE TWELVE

<sup>7</sup> And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the

unclean spirits; <sup>8</sup> and He instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belt—<sup>9</sup> but to wear sandals; and He added, “Do not put on two tunics.” <sup>10</sup> And He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town. <sup>11</sup> Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.” <sup>12</sup> They went out and preached that men should repent. <sup>13</sup> And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.

There is much to do and He can only be in one place at a time so Jesus sends His Apostles out to replicate His ministry:

- He gives them the ability to do miracles.
- He gives them the charge to preach.
- He gives them instructions concerning their conduct and ministry.
  - He will provide for them so they are not to bring extra supplies.
  - They are to live in the place that will receive them. No begging from door to door.
  - If they are rejected, they are to leave.

This is an important phase of training for their future ministry as Apostles.

## JESUS AND HEROD

<sup>14</sup> And King Herod heard of it, for His name had become well known; and people were saying, "John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him." <sup>15</sup> But others were saying, "He is Elijah." And others were saying, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." <sup>16</sup> But when Herod heard of it, he kept saying, "John, whom I beheaded, has risen!" <sup>17</sup> For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. <sup>18</sup> For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." <sup>19</sup> Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not do so; <sup>20</sup> for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him. <sup>21</sup> A strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; <sup>22</sup> and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you." <sup>23</sup> And he swore to her, "Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom." <sup>24</sup> And she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." <sup>25</sup> Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." <sup>26</sup> And although the king was very sorry, yet because of

his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her.<sup>27</sup> Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison,<sup>28</sup> and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.<sup>29</sup> When his disciples heard about this, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.

At this point Jesus' fame reaches the top ruler of the area and Mark gives his readers some background information about Herod (one of the few times he does this in his gospel). Herod and his sons had gained power in the area through political collusion with Rome. The present Herod (Herod Antipas) was the son of the king who had the children in Bethlehem and surrounding area killed in an effort to eliminate Jesus when He was a baby (Matthew 2:16).

Herod Antipas had abandoned his wife and eloped with Herodias (who was already married at the time to his brother, Phillip) while visiting Rome. John the Baptist denounced this union and in so doing threatened Herodias' position as queen. Herod had John imprisoned but continued to listen to his preaching since he was familiar with Jewish law and custom, and understood what John taught.

During a supper given in honor of his noblemen, Herod was tricked into promising Herodias's daughter a special favor. She, manipulated by her mother, demanded John's execution, and in order to avoid embarrassment, Herod had John beheaded. When Jesus appears and develops a following even greater than John's, Herod imagines that He is the incarnation of John who has now come to haunt him.

Mark uses this flashback device to introduce an important character of that era and also to describe the circumstances that brought to an end the ministry of John the Baptist, a person he introduced earlier in his book. This is also a way to explain the growth of Jesus' ministry.

## **JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES — 6:30-56**

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The gospels of Matthew and John record long passages where Jesus is actually teaching His Apostles. They include much dialogue containing questions and answers between them. Mark's approach is to show Jesus teaching His chosen Apostles by doing, by giving examples, by sending them out to minister and then receiving their responses. We have examples of this in verses 30-56.

### **THE RETREAT**

<sup>30</sup> The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught.

<sup>31</sup> 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.) <sup>32</sup> They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves.

Upon their return from their first tour of ministry the Lord tries to bring the Apostles away for rest and refreshment. Mark tells us that they are eager to report everything that they did.

## THE RALLY

<sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.

<sup>35</sup> When it was already quite late, His disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and it is already quite late; <sup>36</sup> send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." <sup>37</sup> But He answered them, "You give them something to eat!" And they said to Him, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat?" <sup>38</sup> And He said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go look!" And when they found out, they said, "Five, and two fish."

<sup>39</sup> And He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup> They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. <sup>41</sup> And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food 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. <sup>42</sup> They all ate and were satisfied, <sup>43</sup> and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish.

<sup>44</sup> There were five thousand men who ate the loaves.

What begins as a retreat ends up being a rally as thousands gather together to hear Jesus. Jesus' miracles and teachings in addition to the recent preaching tour of the Apostles have stirred up the population who now come and hear Jesus for themselves. He is confined to out of the way places since He is not able to go

to the people in the crowded cities because Herod is now stalking Him, so the crowds begin to come to Him.

In this scene we see Jesus feed the people in two different ways:

1. He feeds them spiritual food in a natural way, by preaching.
2. He feeds them physical food in a supernatural way, by multiplying the fish and bread.

Jesus is teaching His Apostles two important lessons here:

1. Humans have both physical and spiritual needs that the Apostles must satisfy as ministers.
2. Jesus can fulfill both needs because with Him there is always more than enough.

Without Him, there were only five loaves of bread and two fish, but with Him, there was more than enough. The Apostles have ministered and done miracles on their first preaching tour but Jesus reminds them that He is the source of these things, not they themselves.

## THE WALKING ON WATER

<sup>45</sup> Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away. <sup>46</sup> After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray. <sup>47</sup> When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land.

<sup>48</sup> Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was

against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them. <sup>49</sup> But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; <sup>50</sup> for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid." <sup>51</sup> Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, <sup>52</sup> for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.

Despite the miracles that they saw and performed themselves, in this scene the Apostles demonstrate that they were slow learners. After the crowds were gone Jesus sent them across the lake by themselves. They were having problems with another storm but they had not yet called upon Him. When they see Him walking on water they were afraid. These men have seen Him exercise power over every natural and spiritual element and have heard His teaching, yet they still did not understand the conclusion that all of these things pointed to. Not that He was a man who did miracles, but that He was the divine Son of God, and each one of these signs were slowly bringing them closer to that realization.

## MORE MIRACLES

<sup>53</sup> When they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. <sup>54</sup> When they got out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, <sup>55</sup> 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. <sup>56</sup> 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.

When they reach the other side of the lake Mark describes, almost in an offhand manner, the many more miracles Jesus continued to do, even without speaking. His presence alone was now producing great healings. The Apostles, again witnessing this great display of power, were coming around to the idea of who Jesus really was.

## SUMMARY

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After this point in Mark's gospel Jesus will perform fewer miracles. The next two chapters will describe more of the confrontations that He has with His enemies and the final key miracles that He will perform, but the bulk of the teaching will now focus on preparing His disciples to understand and accept two great truths:

1. His true identity: Son of God and Messiah.
2. His true mission: the cross.

# 5.

## Truth, Tradition and Other Miracles

MARK 7:1-8:38

In the first six chapters of his gospel, Mark has established the case for the deity of Christ. He has shown that by His teaching, Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. He has described miracles done by Jesus that could only be performed by one having supernatural power. Even in describing the reaction of the people, there is the suggestion that they were impressed and believed the claims and miracles.

Mark also keeps us aware of the difficulties Jesus was encountering from various groups who witnessed these things but refused to accept or believe what was before their eyes. Some rejected and turned away while others attacked Jesus.

There is also the sub-story of Jesus teaching and developing the faith of His Apostles while preparing them to realize the truth of His mission. In chapters 7 and 8 Mark continues to describe Jesus' ministry among the people.

## RELIGIOUS TRADITION — 7:1-23

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Jesus was teaching His Apostles the very great difference between human religious traditions and the authoritative Word of God. The Pharisees had made a life's work out of creating and maintaining an intricate set of religious rules and traditions based on (but not authorized by) God's Word. For example, the Word said not to work (at one's regular job) on the Sabbath but to focus on the spiritual matter of one's relationship with God (Exodus 20:8-11). The Pharisees devised torturous definitions and rules to define what "work" was. Some of their definitions included the lighting of a fire or the carrying of more than one stick of wood, they even determined that walking more than a certain number of paces on the Sabbath would be considered as "work!" They explained that these rules guarded the people from breaking the actual laws of God. They considered these regulations a kind of hedge around God's laws so that the people would not even come close to violating a stated command of God. The Pharisees also appointed themselves as the guardians who interpreted and monitored these rules as well as punished those who violated them.

Chapter 7 describes a conflict between Jesus, the Apostles and the Pharisees over these rules.

<sup>1</sup> The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed.

A religious delegation came from Jerusalem to observe Jesus while He taught the people. They questioned the morality of the Apostles because they ate their food with unwashed hands or

"impure" hands. The implication was that by extension, Jesus, their teacher, was also impure. Their own teaching stated that if a Jew came into contact with a Gentile or something touched by a Gentile, the Jewish person would then be defiled or impure since the food they later touched and ate (without first ceremonially washing themselves) would transfer Gentile impurity onto themselves (like bacteria). Being impure meant that you could not participate in social interaction or public worship at the temple.

<sup>3</sup> (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; <sup>4</sup> and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.)

These rules for washing (Mark makes a parenthetical statement for the reader) were invented by the "elders" or Jewish teachers over the years. The Old Testament had rules about washing for the priests but did not have rules for the people in this regard. These were man made rules.

<sup>5</sup> The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?"

They challenge Jesus by accusing Him of setting aside these rules and traditions established over the years.

<sup>6</sup> And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me

with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me.  
<sup>7</sup> 'But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'<sup>8</sup> Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."

Jesus accuses them of being hypocrites. The word "hypocrite" used here refers mainly to religious hypocrisy (the root word in the original Greek language described an actor under a mask). The idea is that a hypocrite tries to act before men in the way he ought to be before God, and yet is not. The worst form of hypocrisy is when you begin to believe the deception yourself.

Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13 to describe two kinds of hypocrisy:

1. A person who honors God with his words but does not follow through with actions.
2. Teachings that are invented by men but are presented as being from God.

<sup>9</sup> He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. <sup>10</sup> For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, is to be put to death'; <sup>11</sup> 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),' <sup>12</sup> you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother; <sup>13</sup> thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that."

After denouncing them as hypocrites for saying and not doing, and teaching human doctrines as coming from God, Jesus gives an actual example of this type of hypocrisy as practiced by the Pharisees. He even adds one more condemnation saying that the only way they succeed in their imposition of human traditions is by first removing God's laws. In other words, they do not only teach men's laws, they remove God's laws in order to do it!

The example Jesus gives has to do with the responsibility of honoring one's parents in the form of parental care (Exodus 20:12). Their responsibility, by God's command, was to honor and care for their parents. The Pharisees taught that if someone pledged a certain amount of money to God (Corban), that money could not be used for anything else (this included assisting parents). The Corban exception did not mean that they actually gave the money to the Lord and by doing so lost access to it as happens when a charitable donation was made. Corban giving was like setting up a trust fund. In this way they actually froze this money so that it could not be used while parents lived, thus providing the excuse for not assisting their family. In this way their selfishness was wrapped in a cloak of charitable giving and false devotion to God.

Corban was not, in itself, a bad thing. After all, leaving money to the temple in one's will was a generous and godly thing to do. The problem was that the Pharisees would use this pledge as an excuse in refusing to help their parents ("Sorry mom and dad, can't help you because my money is tied up in a pledge to the temple."), and when the parents died they would often break their pledge and take this money back. Jesus tells them that this was one of many things wrong with their teachings and conduct.

<sup>14</sup> After He called the crowd to Him again, He began saying to them, "Listen to Me, all of you, and

understand: <sup>15</sup> there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. <sup>16</sup> If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” <sup>17</sup> When he had left the crowd and entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable. <sup>18</sup> And He said to them, “Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, <sup>19</sup> because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?” (Thus He declared all foods clean.) <sup>20</sup> And He was saying, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. <sup>21</sup> For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, <sup>22</sup> deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. <sup>23</sup> All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”

The Lord gives another example of this inconsistency by responding to the earlier accusations concerning washing and defilement. He explains that food does not have the power to make one pure or impure. Morality has to do with a person's heart, not food. Food is consumed and voided, it has no moral effect in and of itself.

Washing before eating did not increase or decrease one's standing with God from a moral perspective either. Morality and impurity were not like bacteria that could be transmitted by touch or contact. In saying this Jesus pronounced all foods clean. This meant that there was no moral value in eating or not eating certain foods.

Jesus goes on to explain that what causes impurity are things produced by the heart, spoken by the lips and carried out by the hands. In other words, what you think, say and do are the things that make you impure in God's eyes.

Once again Jesus declares that substituting man's word for God's Word is hypocritical and dangerous. Hypocritical because we begin to believe that our traditions are more important and effective than God's laws.

Dangerous because:

- We lose the power to change or effect our lives when we change God's Word for human tradition.
- We lose sight of what is important. We focus on keeping the man-made rules instead of knowing and obeying God's Word.
- We lose salvation because Jesus tells us that only those who obey the Word of God will enter into the kingdom.

At this point Jesus became a mortal enemy of the Pharisees because He not only answered their charge against Him, He also denounced and exposed them as hypocrites.

## **THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN — 7:24-30**

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Jesus has earned the wrath of the religious leaders by exposing them through His teachings. Now He will earn their undying opposition by performing a miracle on behalf of the ones that they had originally complained about. They argued that you could defile yourself simply by touching something that a Gentile

touched. Now Jesus is going to do a miracle that will heal a Gentile and this, in their eyes, would be a major breach of their laws. It was not a breach of God's laws because the Jews were supposed to be a light and blessing to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6) and Jesus was doing just that. However, the Pharisees had created so many rules designed to avoid the idolatry of the Gentiles, they lost any opportunity of actually winning them over.

<sup>24</sup> Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know of it; yet He could not escape notice.

Jesus leaves Capernaum and goes to the furthest border of the country in order to avoid the crowds and His enemies.

<sup>25</sup> But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet. <sup>26</sup> Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophenician race. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

The woman was a Gentile and a pagan but believed in Jesus' power. Note how her approach was different than that of the Jewish leaders.

<sup>27</sup> And He was saying to her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." <sup>28</sup> But she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs."

Jesus responds to her request by describing His primary mission: to feed the children (God's chosen people, the Israelites), and preach the good news to them first, according to the Word. In that society few families kept dogs as pets and when they did the animals were fed leftover scraps from the table. Jesus uses the word for "pets" in this passage and is saying, "Let the children eat first because it would not be right to feed the pets with the food meant for the children." The woman understands that righteousness must be fulfilled, first things first, but she pleads, "After the children are fed don't the pets usually get the leftovers?" She accepts her position in the order of things (the Messiah was sent to the Jews, not the Gentiles), but her desperate situation and belief in Jesus move her to ask Him for help anyways.

29 And He said to her, "Because of this answer go; the demon has gone out of your daughter." 30 And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having left.

Jesus performs a great miracle, this time at a distance, exercising only His will in casting out a demon. This is another example of Jesus addressing a common problem of that era:

- The gospels record 80 instances where He dealt with demons or evil spirits.
- Unlike their characterization in popular books and movies, the demons described in Scripture never manifested themselves as monsters or persons outside of the people that they possessed. Their presence was only known because of the suffering they caused and, at times, the brief utterances they made when confronted by Jesus.

## THE DEAF AND DUMB MAN — 7:31-37

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Jesus returns to the area where the demoniac had lived and this time the crowds are eager to see Him.

<sup>31</sup> Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis. <sup>32</sup> They brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they implored Him to lay His hand on him.

A crowd gathers and wants to see a miracle. They tell Jesus to lay His hands on the man to heal him. Jesus performs this miracle but He does so to prove who He is, not to put on a show.

<sup>33</sup> Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva; <sup>34</sup> and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, “Ephphatha!” that is, “Be opened!” <sup>35</sup> And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly. <sup>36</sup> And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it.

The man is confused, so Jesus takes him aside so they can be alone. The Lord needs to communicate to the man what He is about to do and uses various methods to accomplish this:

- His fingers on the man's ears to signal that the problem of deafness is recognized.

- He spits and touches the tongue to signify the same about the inability to speak.
- A sigh and look toward heaven to show where the solution is coming from. This was a way to communicate that the man's own prayers (sighing) were heard and were about to be answered.
- Jesus looks at him and says, "Be opened," and the fact that the man hears and responds is a sign that the miracle has taken place.

<sup>37</sup> They were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

Once again, Mark comments that the reaction of the people demonstrates that they were convinced that these were legitimate miracles.

## FEEDING THE FOUR THOUSAND — 8:1-21

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<sup>1</sup> In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and said to them, <sup>2</sup> "I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>3</sup> 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." <sup>4</sup> And His disciples answered Him, "Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people?" <sup>5</sup> And He was asking them, "How many

loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." <sup>6</sup> And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the people. <sup>7</sup> They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well. <sup>8</sup> And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. <sup>9</sup> About four thousand were there; and He sent them away. <sup>10</sup> And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha

<sup>11</sup> The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him <sup>12</sup> Sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, "Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." <sup>13</sup> Leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side.

<sup>14</sup> And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. <sup>15</sup> And He was giving orders to them, saying, "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." <sup>16</sup> They began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? <sup>18</sup> Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember, <sup>19</sup> 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." <sup>20</sup> "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." <sup>21</sup> And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

This is the second time that Jesus performs this miracle since Mark would not repeat the same event twice in his own gospel. It is similar in situation and outcome, but the people and location are different (verses 1-10). This miracle actually sets the stage for teaching that Jesus will give His disciples after they leave this place.

He warns them about the Pharisees' teachings and treachery now that He has incurred their wrath by exposing and condemning them publicly. He does this using a figure of speech comparing their evil to the leaven hidden in dough. The Apostles misunderstand His warning thinking that He is scolding them for forgetting to bring the bread left over from the miraculous feeding of the 4000. Jesus then chastises them, but not for forgetting bread. He rebukes them for failing to understand what all the miracles and teachings meant (that He was the Son of God).

## **CURING THE BLIND**

<sup>22</sup> And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him.

<sup>23</sup> Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" <sup>24</sup> And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around." <sup>25</sup> Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly.

26 And He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

In this passage Jesus performs another great miracle, healing a blind man. This miracle, like the one that cured the deaf and dumb man, was done in stages in order to help this person understand what was happening to him.

Jesus needs time and freedom of movement in order to complete His ministry in the region so He tells the man not to go public with the news of his healing.

## THE GREAT CONFESSION

27 Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 They told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." 29 And He continued by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ." 30 And He warned them to tell no one about Him.

It seems that the gradual opening of the man's ears and mouth along with the similar opening of the blind man's eyes symbolize the gradual opening of the Apostles' spiritual ears, mouths and eyes. Jesus now asks them directly who they think He is, and Peter acknowledges the conclusion that all the miracles and teachings point to: that Jesus is the Messiah. And with this confession, Jesus' first goal with His Apostles is reached. They believe the evidence before them and acknowledge the conclusion that this evidence points to.

Jesus warns them not to share this just yet. To preach what they believe to be true about Him now would cause riots. There is still another important goal of His ministry to be met, one that He begins to describe immediately after their confession of faith.

## THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP — 8:31-38

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<sup>31</sup> And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Jesus now reveals to them the purpose of His ministry, the reason that the Messiah had come and His final end.

<sup>32</sup> And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. <sup>33</sup> But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

Peter demonstrates that he has not fully grasped the meaning of what Jesus has just revealed to them. He sees the death of Jesus as a failure of His ministry and tries to talk Him out of such a notion. Jesus rebukes him sharply lest the other Apostles be carried away by his doubt and fear. At this point Jesus establishes the criteria for those who want to be disciples of the Messiah. They now believe that He is the Messiah, so as the Messiah this is what He demands of His followers and why:

- He demands that each choose who they will follow.
- If they follow Him, even to His death, He will save them.

- If they do not, there is no one to save them.

Until this time it had been a wonderful ride:

- He provided teaching that opened their eyes and hearts.
- He performed tremendous miracles that created wonder in them.
- He denounced the Pharisees who had restricted them for so long.
- He fed them, healed them and encouraged them.
- He took the brunt of the criticism and attacks from the people and the religious leaders.

After having ministered to them in this way, Jesus said to them, "It is time for you to make a choice, to take a stand; you are either with me or not with me, and the survival of your souls will depend on this decision." This, of course, is the choice of every disciple of Jesus Christ, then and now! Somewhere along the line everyone has to commit one way or the other.

After challenging His Apostles to a deeper commitment, Jesus will continue His work of miracles and teaching, opening their eyes even more as He leads them to the climax of His earthly ministry.

# 6.

## Advanced Training

MARK 9:1-10:52

In his gospel record, Mark is telling a story at three levels simultaneously.

1. There is the story of Jesus preaching, teaching and performing miracles for the masses (for example, the feeding of the 4000).
2. He also describes the on-going confrontations with the Jewish religious leaders.
3. Finally, there is teaching and training of His disciples in order to bring them to faith and eventually to a full understanding of His mission.

As we go from chapter to chapter we see Jesus working at each of these objectives. When we left off at the end of chapter 8, Jesus had brought His Apostles to the point where they acknowledged their belief in Him as the Messiah. In the closing verses He explained to them what being a disciple required of them.

In chapter 9 He will continue in the training mode, but will also begin to expand their understanding of who He is and the nature of His mission.

## TEACHING THE APOSTLES — 9:1-50

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### TEACHING ON THE KINGDOM:

<sup>1</sup> And Jesus was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

Jesus makes a prophecy, one that they did not understand at this point, but would realize later on. The prophecy was that some of them would actually see the kingdom come with power. The word Jesus used that is translated into the English word, "kingdom," meant "sovereignty or rule." The idea was that wherever God's rule was accepted and carried out, there existed the kingdom as well.

Using this definition, we can say that the kingdom exists on earth wherever God's people are carrying out God's will. In Mark 9:7 Jesus will declare that God's will is that we believe and obey Jesus Christ, therefore the kingdom of God on earth is made up of those who believe and obey Jesus. These people we commonly refer to as the church, the church that belongs to Christ.

There have been three main ideas put forth to explain how this prophecy has been fulfilled:

1. The kingdom will be established at the return of Jesus at the end of the world.

- This would not be possible since all the Apostles have already died and Jesus said that some would be alive to see this happen.
2. The kingdom was established when the city of Jerusalem, along with the nation of Israel, were destroyed in 70 AD.
    - The destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 AD by a Roman army was the judgment of God on the Jewish nation for having rejected their Messiah, not the beginning of anything. This was the fulfillment of a prophecy by Jesus (Matthew 24:1-44), but not the fulfillment of what He is saying here about the kingdom.
  3. The kingdom was established when Peter preached the gospel for the first time on Pentecost Sunday in Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension into heaven (Acts 2:1-42).
    - a. All were alive except Judas.
    - b. The power of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles.
    - c. God's will was being done by the fact that the gospel was being proclaimed.
    - d. The church began here as 3000 were baptized and added to the church/kingdom.
    - e. The Apostles saw all of this with their own eyes.

Jesus, in a prophecy, tells them that they will witness the beginning of the kingdom of God on earth, and they did on Pentecost Sunday when the church was established in Jerusalem as the result of Peter's preaching and the response of thousands of people.

## TEACHING ON HIS DEITY AND AUTHORITY

### - 9:2-8

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<sup>2</sup> Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them;

Jesus brings His inner circle of three Apostles to the mountain where He will be transfigured. Jewish law required two witnesses to confirm a deed, Jesus brings three to witness this transformation.

The Greek word translated into the English word "transfigured" is "metamorphose." It meant that something or someone was changed into another form (i.e. a caterpillar into a butterfly). This word was used because not only was Jesus' appearance changed, but He Himself was changed. In Luke 9:29 the writer says that His face changed.

<sup>3</sup> and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.

Mark reports that Jesus' clothing shone. Both Peter and John recall this experience in later writings (II Peter 1:16; Revelation

21:23). It is interesting to note that encounters with God involve light.

- Moses: his own face shone after speaking with God (Exodus 34:29-35).
- Paul: a light was around him when Jesus spoke to him (Acts 22:6).
- Matthew: Jesus' appearance at His resurrection was like lightening (Matthew 28:3).

What the Apostles saw was His divine nature shining through His flesh. Normally Jesus demonstrated His divinity through miracles and teaching; in this special case He allowed them to actually see a measure of His glorified nature.

4 Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.

One of the main Jewish attacks against Christianity was that it could not be the fulfillment of the Jewish religion because it violated the Law (i.e. Jesus was hung on a tree, Deuteronomy 21:23) and the Prophets (i.e. The prophets had no mention of the Messiah coming from Galilee, John 7:41-43). The appearance of Moses (who gave the Law to the Jews) and Elijah (a major prophet respected by the Jewish nation) confirmed that Jesus' coming and the establishment of the kingdom (church) were in accordance with both the Law and Prophets. In his gospel (Luke 9:31) Luke says that Jesus, Moses and Elijah spoke of His impending crucifixion. This reinforces the idea that His death was according to both the Law and the Prophets.

<sup>5</sup> 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." <sup>6</sup> For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified.

Peter does not know what to do because he is in awe of the heavenly vision before him. He says, "It is good for us to be here" meaning, this experience is as good as it gets, so he offers to build shelters (booths) for the three. Of course, this is foolish since they are heavenly beings, but he does not know what else to say. Some suggest that Peter wanted to build altars in order to worship the three, but the word for an altar to worship is different than the word for booths or shelters used in this passage.

<sup>7</sup> Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!" <sup>8</sup> All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone.

God's voice is present in a cloud and signifies that despite the appearances of Moses and Elijah, the Apostles are to obey only Jesus, His beloved Son.

This entire scene is a confirmation of Jesus' position over and in line with the Law and the Prophets which He perfectly embodied by taking on a human nature and coming to live, die and resurrect as the Jewish Messiah and Savior of the world.

## **TEACHING ABOUT THE MESSIAH**

<sup>9</sup> 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.  
<sup>10</sup> They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant. <sup>11</sup> They asked Him, saying, "Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" <sup>12</sup> And He said to them, "Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? <sup>13</sup> But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him."

In verses 9 to 13 we see that the Apostles are struggling to reconcile their concept of the Messiah with what Jesus is presently teaching them. The Old Testament said that a prophet like Elijah would come in advance of the Messiah, and they wondered if their vision of Elijah was the fulfillment of that prophecy (Malachi 4:5-6). Jesus confirms that the prophecy had already been fulfilled but not by this vision, rather by the appearance of John the Baptist. John was the prophet sent to prepare the way for the Messiah, and Jesus refers to the rejection and death that he suffered at the hands of Herod, a rejection and death that Jesus would also suffer in the near future.

The concept of the Messiah that the Jewish people had at that time was inaccurate and Jesus was trying to correct their misconceptions. Their vision of the Messiah was vastly different than what Jesus was teaching them and what the Old Testament actually said about this person. The term "messiah" meant "anointed one." In the Old Testament, priests and kings were the anointed ones (individuals who were selected or separated by God for special tasks). For example, Samson, Saul and David were all "anointed ones." When the New Testament was written in the Greek language, the term "Christ" was used for the word messiah or anointed one.

During the time when Jesus was on earth the people believed that a royal descendant of King David, the most dynamic and powerful of the Jewish kings, would come to save Israel from Roman domination, provide abundance and make Israel a ruling nation again. They firmly believed that the Messiah would bring peace and return Israel to its "glory" days.

Throughout history the Jewish people have had various ideas about their Messiah, even to this day. For example:

- Orthodox Jews: they are still waiting for an individual person to come as the Messiah.
- Conservative Jews: this group also believes in a personal Messiah to come.
- Reform Jews: these believe that the Jewish people, as a group, embody the notion of the Messiah and as such will eventually bring peace and a golden age of prosperity to the world where they will provide leadership. They also believe that their good works are a blessing to the world in this regard.
- Zionist movement: a political organization/view that believes that the land described in the Old Testament is theirs by divine right. This land was allotted to them in 1947 at the end of WWII with the help of Britain and other world powers.

Jesus was revealing Himself as the Messiah in line with the description of this person found in the Old Testament, the Messiah who would:

- Free them from sin and guilt.

- Regain for them the right to enter heaven and have a relationship with God.
- Provide a lasting peace of mind.
- Accomplish all of this, not through political or military means, but through His death on the cross and resurrection.

In the following section Jesus continues to slowly reveal His true identity to His chosen Apostles.

## TEACHING ABOUT POWER

<sup>14</sup> When they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. <sup>15</sup> Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and began running up to greet Him. <sup>16</sup> And He asked them, “What are you discussing with them?” <sup>17</sup> And one of the crowd answered Him, “Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; <sup>18</sup> and whenever it seizes him, 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, and they could not do it.” <sup>19</sup> And He answered them and said, “O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!” <sup>20</sup> They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling around and foaming at the mouth. <sup>21</sup> And He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. <sup>22</sup> It has often thrown him both into

the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" <sup>23</sup> And Jesus said to him, "'If You can?' All things are possible to him who believes." <sup>24</sup> Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief."

<sup>25</sup> When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." <sup>26</sup> After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead!" <sup>27</sup> But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up. <sup>28</sup> When He came into the house, His disciples began questioning Him privately, "Why could we not drive it out?" <sup>29</sup> And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."

<sup>30</sup> From there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know about it.

<sup>31</sup> For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later." <sup>32</sup> But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.

<sup>33</sup> They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" <sup>34</sup> But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. <sup>35</sup> Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." <sup>36</sup> Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, <sup>37</sup> "Whoever receives one child

like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.”

<sup>38</sup> John said to Him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us.” <sup>39</sup> But Jesus said, “Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. <sup>40</sup> For he who is not against us is for us. <sup>41</sup> For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.

<sup>42</sup> “Whoever causes one of these little ones 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. <sup>43</sup> If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, <sup>44</sup> [where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.] <sup>45</sup> 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, <sup>46</sup> [where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.] <sup>47</sup> 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, <sup>48</sup> where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. <sup>49</sup> “For everyone will be salted with fire. <sup>50</sup> Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

This passage begins with a miracle and ends with Jesus commenting on the source of spiritual power.

The story of the miracle is as follows:

- A man brings his demon possessed boy for healing to the Apostles, while a crowd gathers to observe.
- They fail to heal him and begin a dispute with the scribes.
- Jesus returns at this point along with the three Apostles who had been with Him on the mountain.
- He discusses the situation with the boy's father and grieves over everyone's lack of faith to which the boy's father utters his desperate cry, "I believe, help my disbelief."
- The Lord casts out the spirit and heals the boy, and then confers with the Apostles about the incident.
- The key question they ask Him afterward is, "Why could the Apostles not cast out the demon?"

Jesus provides three reasons why they failed to heal this boy:

## **1. The father lacked faith**

- The father did not bring the boy to Jesus because of his faith in Him. His actions were based on the need to seek relief for his son's suffering. He was willing to try anything, even the followers of the young rabbi (Jesus) everyone was talking about.
- After the Apostles failed to cast out the demon, he asked *if* Jesus could do it, revealing his doubt.
- The obstacle to the healing was not the illness itself but the weakness of the father's faith. He needed to

acknowledge his own need first (the need to grow in faith) before Jesus could deal with the child's need.

Jesus did not require people to believe in Him in order to perform miracles (e.g. feeding of the 5000, Mark 6:30-44). However, in this case He wanted to minister to both the boy and his father. Had the Apostles healed the boy, the father would have left without believing. Jesus first led the man to confess his own need and not only the need of his child. In this way both would be blessed because of their faith in Jesus confirmed by the miraculous healing.

## **2. Lack of prayer**

The Apostles believed in Jesus, but unlike Him they were not totally guided by God's will. Jesus worked miracles according to God's will, not according to the need of the moment or pressure from the crowd.

Jesus said to them that this demon would only come out by fasting and prayer. He did not mean that a certain type prayer would affect this demon in a particular way. He was explaining that prayer with fasting would enable them to discern God's will more clearly, and in doing so they might have known what to do when it came to this situation (i.e. they might have been given the insight concerning the father's need before ministering to the boy).

## **3. Lack of humility**

The last section in the chapter sees Jesus teaching them about the key events about to take place which would signal the end of His mission on earth, His death and resurrection. They clearly showed that they did not understand what was to happen and

the reason they lacked understanding, and the power that this insight would give them, was because of their pride. Jesus reveals that they have been discussing who was the greatest and who had the highest position among them. Perhaps the three that had witnessed His transfiguration were feeling superior after their experience on the mountain. Jesus teaches them that those who are great in His kingdom have the innocence of a child, the heart of a servant and the holy lifestyle of an obedient disciple.

## **SEX, MONEY, POWER — 10:1-52**

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This next chapter contains additional teaching that deals with the more practical issues of sex, money, power and how the "religious" people of that time misunderstood these things.

### **SEX**

<sup>1</sup> Getting up, He went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan; crowds gathered around Him again, and, according to His custom, He once more began to teach them. <sup>2</sup> Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife. <sup>3</sup> And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" <sup>4</sup> They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."  
<sup>5</sup> But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. <sup>6</sup> But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. <sup>7</sup> For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, <sup>8</sup> and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. <sup>9</sup> What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." <sup>10</sup> In the

house the disciples began questioning Him about this again. <sup>11</sup> And He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; <sup>12</sup> and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery."

At that time many rabbis taught that the repeated breaking up of marriages for any and all reasons was acceptable if one followed the legal procedures for divorce. Because of this teaching, many Jewish men (Jewish women could not legally initiate a divorce) were using this legal excuse to cover their sexual lust and lack of commitment towards their marriage partners. For example, when a man grew tired of his wife or desired someone else, he would simply divorce her using any excuse (i.e. didn't like her cooking, she didn't please him sexually, etc.) and marry another woman claiming complete innocence since he had acted according to the law

Jesus taught that God was the one who made the original law that governed marriage and that His laws superseded man's laws. Sex was created to be expressed by a man and woman within the union of marriage and marriage was a lifetime commitment. It could only be broken legally by death or the sexual infidelity of one of the partners (Matthew 19:9).

<sup>13</sup> And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them.

<sup>14</sup> But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>15</sup> Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all." <sup>16</sup> And He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands on them.

Blessing the children that approached Him immediately after this teaching not only confirmed the primary purpose of marriage but also indicated the attitude that one needed to have in receiving His teachings on this and other subjects. Innocent children trusted and obeyed without rebellion or hypocrisy, attitudes that were sorely missing among the Jewish leaders who challenged Him at every opportunity.

## MONEY

<sup>17</sup> As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>18</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments, 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" <sup>20</sup> And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." <sup>21</sup> Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." <sup>22</sup> But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. <sup>23</sup> And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" <sup>24</sup> The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." <sup>26</sup> They were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?" <sup>27</sup> Looking at them,

Jesus said, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God."

<sup>28</sup> Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You." <sup>29</sup> 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, <sup>30</sup> 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, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last, first."

<sup>32</sup> They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, <sup>33</sup> saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. <sup>34</sup> They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

The Jews equated wealth with blessings. In their opinion a man was rich because he was favored by God, and conversely the poor and weak were this way because of sin. The rich young ruler who asks Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life was just this sort of person. He was blessed with wealth and a good position, and was seen as a moral and law abiding citizen. Yet, there was something missing in his life, something his wealth or personal conduct could not obtain. His question to Jesus revealed that he lacked assurance of his personal salvation. In His response, Jesus shows this man that his attachment to wealth

was the obstacle to the hope of salvation he sought after. When he turns away from Jesus this fact is made obvious.

Jesus uses this opportunity to reveal that both rich and poor are in need of salvation, and the rich are at a disadvantage in this pursuit because of their attachment to wealth. The Apostles are amazed thinking that if the rich have a hard time being saved, how could the poor then be saved? Jesus reassures them that God had the power to save both rich and poor.

Peter responds to this with the comment that they, the Apostles, have become poor to follow Jesus. The unspoken point he makes is that they have done what Jesus asked of the rich young ruler but have not yet received any earthly reward (how they envisioned salvation). Jesus tells them that His disciples are rewarded here on earth with a new family (the church), more precious blessings (spiritual wealth like peace, joy, hope, etc. to various degrees), and in the end, eternal life in the world to come. All of these are things that earthly treasure could not buy. After saying this He reminds them once again of His suffering, death and resurrection to come, the things that He will have to give up in order to purchase these blessings on their behalf.

## POWER

<sup>35</sup> James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." <sup>36</sup> And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" <sup>37</sup> They said to Him, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory." <sup>38</sup> But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" <sup>39</sup> They said to

Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. <sup>40</sup> 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."

<sup>41</sup> Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. <sup>42</sup> Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; <sup>44</sup> and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

<sup>46</sup> Then they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. <sup>47</sup> When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>48</sup> Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>49</sup> And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him here." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you." <sup>50</sup> Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup> And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!" <sup>52</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road.

The mother of James and John (mentioned in Matthew 20:20-28) brings up an ongoing dispute among Jesus' disciples. She asks to have Jesus give her sons the highest positions in the kingdom. The fact that the other Apostles are upset shows that they still see the kingdom as an earthly, political structure with the possibility of them having "positions" of prestige and authority in it. Jesus dispels these ideas in two ways:

1. He describes the kingdom as a community of people who are as innocent as children and where the highest position is one of service. There is never any competition or prestige among slaves. All are equally under bondage to their master whom they serve. Lest there be any complaining or resentment Jesus uses His own life and ministry as an example. His kingdom is not of or like the ones in this world. The rewards are different and so are the relationships and activities. We are, He teaches, saved in order to serve in the kingdom.
2. The healing of the blind man, called Bartimaeus, summarizes this teaching on the nature of those in the kingdom. This blind person was rejected by society, had no money other than what he received as a beggar. He was not pitied or respected because when he cried out for help, he was roughly told to be quiet. And yet, despite all of this, Jesus healed him and in doing so restored him to normal life among his people. Bartimaeus was *last* of all, but because he believed and cried out in humility, he became one of the *first* to enter the kingdom and experience God's mercy and power.

# 7.

## Final Confrontations

MARK 11:1-12:44

In chapters nine and ten of his book, Mark describes Jesus' private ministry to His disciples, teaching them on a variety of subjects, warning them of the things to come, and revealing more perfectly His true nature and mission. In chapters eleven and twelve, Jesus will once again face the leaders in what will prove to be His final confrontation with them before His arrest and suffering.

### **THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM — 11:1-11**

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Until now Jesus has not announced publicly that He was the Messiah. He would use the cryptic term "Son of Man" or would instruct His Apostles to tell no one of their acknowledgement that He was the Son of God. Now, however, He is ready to reveal His true identity to both the masses and the religious leaders, and He does it in a dynamic way.

In Zechariah 9:9 there was a prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah and how He would bring peace and salvation. The prophet said that this savior would come riding on a colt (a young donkey) that had never been ridden. Jesus will fulfill this prophecy and lay claim to it before all the people. In their eyes the reason and message of this action would be quite clear.

<sup>1</sup> As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, <sup>2</sup> and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' you say, 'The Lord has need of it'; and immediately he will send it back here." <sup>4</sup> They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they untied it. <sup>5</sup> Some of the bystanders were saying to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" <sup>6</sup> They spoke to them just as Jesus had told them, and they gave them permission.

Jesus has either prepared for the use of this animal or uses His divine power to determine where and how the animal will be found.

<sup>7</sup> They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it. <sup>8</sup> And many spread their coats in the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields.

The use of their cloaks as a saddle and the laying down of the leaves for the animal to walk on are done as a way to honor Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; <sup>10</sup> Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!"

Hosanna means "save now" (Psalm 118:25). The people have rightly discerned that the kingdom that they anticipated would be ushered in by a king and so Jesus was addressed in this way. Whether or not they understood His true nature and mission, they were correct in addressing Him as the "anointed one," the one who was to come. Jesus showed His humble nature by riding in on a donkey and not a horse as worldly kings would have normally done.

Also, Matthew mentions (Matthew 21:1-11) that there were two donkeys. Probably the mother was along to steady this young colt who had never had anyone ride it, and never walked in a parade before. (For a children's book based on this event see "Arion: the Little Donkey" – BibleTalk.tv/arion).

<sup>11</sup> Jesus entered Jerusalem and came into the temple; and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.

Mark notes that His triumphal entry is not met by any delegation of priests or leaders. They are conspicuously absent from these events. The people acknowledge and praise the Lord but the leaders purposefully ignore and reject Him.

Once inside the city, Jesus simply examines the situation and returns to Bethany where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived since it was too late to do anything on that day. However, this scene carefully sets up what is about to happen in the next few passages.

## THE FIG TREE

<sup>12</sup> On the next day, when they had left Bethany, He became hungry. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And His disciples were listening...

...<sup>19</sup> When evening came, they would go out of the city.

<sup>20</sup> As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. <sup>21</sup> Being reminded, Peter said to Him, "Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered." <sup>22</sup> And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. <sup>23</sup> Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. <sup>24</sup> Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.

<sup>25</sup> 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.

<sup>26</sup> [But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.]"

Jesus and the disciples spend the night at Bethany and leave early the next day for their return to Jerusalem. Jesus sees a fig tree (Matthew records that this tree was situated by the road, Matthew 21:18-22). It is important to note that this tree belonged to no one, it was on public property. Mark says that

Jesus sees that the tree has leaves which means it should also have figs. Once near the tree Jesus finds that it is not bearing any figs so He pronounces a curse on the tree. The next day they return to this same spot and notice that the tree has withered and died. Based on this episode Jesus will teach His Apostles a significant lesson on the subject of faith. Some who read this story are disturbed and question why Jesus would destroy a little tree. This is a valid point and an explanation is required.

What Jesus saw was a fig tree in full foliage. Fig trees normally produce three crops: one in June, August and December. They also produce the fruit first and then the leaves come out to announce that the fruit is ready. This event took place in March which was a long time before the first crop usually appears suggesting that there might still be fruit left from the December crop. The other trees did not have foliage at this time because it was too early for the first crop, and the final December harvest may have all disappeared. The point here is that this tree advertised something that it did not have. The accusation that in cursing the tree Jesus destroyed someone else's property is not true since the tree was on public (by the road) property and belonged to no one. Also, because this particular tree produced a full foliage without bearing fruit meant that it would continue to be fruitless in the future and thus worthless as a fig tree.

Later on when Mark describes Jesus' cleansing of the temple we will see that the figless fig tree will serve as a good illustration of the nation of Israel and its reaction to the coming of its Messiah. The nation had a full foliage in the sense that it had great religious history, ceremonies, an ornate temple, etc. but no spiritual fruit (faith, obedience, good works and the recognition of Christ). When the Messiah came to the nation in order to seek its fruit, He found none there. It was only a pretense and a

promise, and for this reason God destroyed it just as Jesus destroyed the figless tree with a curse.

However, when the Apostles ask about the fig tree and its destruction, Jesus teaches them a lesson about the necessity of faith. Peter asks Jesus, "How is it possible that the tree was completely destroyed so quickly?" Jesus uses Peter's lack of faith (he doubted that at Jesus' word the tree would wither so quickly) to teach him and the others that unlike the lack of faith represented by the figless tree, they must continue to bear the fruit of faith.

The Apostles would need great faith because the obstacles that they would face in carrying out their mission would seem like an impossible mountain to climb. However, if they asked in faith and continued in love (demonstrated by forgiving their brothers) then God would grant their prayers according to His will. Their task would be to preach the gospel to the whole world and establish the church in one generation. This mission would seem, at times, as impossible as moving a mountain. In order to accomplish this, considering the obstacles and adversaries they would face, they would require great faith. The miracle of the fig tree was done to demonstrate that with faith in Him, they could achieve what seemed impossible.

## THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

<sup>15</sup> Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out 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; <sup>16</sup> and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. <sup>17</sup> 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'? But you have made it a robbers' den." <sup>18</sup> The chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.

The Old Testament prophets described the Messiah as one who would cleanse the temple (Malachi 3:1-3). Jesus fulfills this prophecy in this passage. The Jews were defiling the temple in various ways. The temple was where the sacrificing of animals was done and the temple tax was paid. In order to do this there were many merchants who sold sacrificial animals and changed currency for those pilgrims who came from other countries and did not bring animals or Jewish money with them. Usually these merchant booths were located outside the temple walls as worshippers entered in.

The temple had several courtyards surrounding it and one of these was the courtyard of the Gentiles. This area was reserved for those who had been converted to the Jewish faith from other nations. They worshipped the God of the Jews but were not themselves descended from Abraham. These Gentile converts could not enter the courtyard reserved for the Jews, nor could they enter the inner courtyard where only the priests could go, or the Holy of Holies where only the high priest could enter, once per year, to offer sacrifice on the Day of Atonement.

Unfortunately, with time the Jewish leaders allowed the merchants and money changers into the Gentile courtyard to do their business thus defiling this part of the temple and restricting the Gentiles' opportunity to worship. Jesus said that the temple was, "The house of prayer for all nations." Jesus charges the leaders with not only impeding the Gentiles' worship, but also

defiling the temple by permitting dishonest business practices there.

This direct rebuke of the priests' management of the temple was the last straw for the leaders. He was now a marked man. For the people, however, this arrival and zealous act was powerful and courageous, especially in defense of the Gentile courtyard. Mark mentions that after this scene Jesus and His Apostles leave and return the next day.

## THE CHALLENGE OF THE PRIESTS

<sup>27</sup> 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, <sup>28</sup> and began saying to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?" <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me." <sup>31</sup> They began reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Then why did you not believe him?' <sup>32</sup> But shall we say, 'From men'?"—they were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet. <sup>33</sup> Answering Jesus, they said, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

<sup>1</sup> And He began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard 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 and went on a journey. <sup>2</sup> At the

harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. <sup>3</sup> They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>4</sup> Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. <sup>5</sup> And he sent another, and that one they killed; and so with many others, beating some and killing others. <sup>6</sup> He had one more to send, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' <sup>7</sup> But those vine-growers said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!' <sup>8</sup> They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. <sup>9</sup> What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. <sup>10</sup> Have you not even read this Scripture: 'The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner stone; <sup>11</sup> This came about from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes?'"

The next day the priests confront Jesus with righteous indignation, "How dare you? Who gives you the right? Who gave you this authority?" they say. Jesus could have performed a miracle at this point in order to demonstrate His authority (He chose not to since the Jewish leaders were predisposed not to believe no matter what He did), instead He forces them to choose which side they are on. He asks if John's baptism (meaning his preaching, his call, his pointing to Jesus) derived its authority from God or man? They plead ignorance which neutralizes their moral authority and defeats their attack on Jesus who does not dignify their questions with an answer.

Having silenced them, Jesus then proceeds to teach a parable that describes their attitude and eventual punishment. The parable is about a vineyard left in the care of managers by an owner who sends a number of slaves to verify the progress and profit of his business. These messengers are chased away by the managers. Finally the owner sends his son to sort things out but he is killed by the vine dressers in a bid to take over the vineyard for themselves. Jesus concludes the parable by saying that the owner returns to execute the managers and installs new people who will do his bidding. Of course the parallel between the story and the priests is obvious. They are incensed and want to seize Him immediately but could not, fearing the retaliation of the crowd.

## THE PHARISEES CHALLENGE

<sup>12</sup> And they were seeking to seize Him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And so they left Him and went away. <sup>13</sup> Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement. <sup>14</sup> They came and said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? <sup>15</sup> Shall we pay or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at." <sup>16</sup> They brought one. And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" And they said to Him, "Caesar's." <sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at Him.

The objective of the Pharisees in this dialogue with Jesus is to trap Him by building a case that accuses Him of undermining Roman power or discredits Him with the people. Herodians were a political group that zealously supported King Herod's rule. They were afraid that Jesus' actions would cause trouble and jeopardize the king's position with the Roman government.

This question seemed impossible to answer. If He said yes, they would denounce Him as being sympathetic to a cruel pagan ruler. If He said no, they would accuse Him to the Romans as a rebel and tax evader. Jesus puts the question into the right perspective. In the hierarchy of responsibility, taxes were within man's responsibility since God gave to government the right to rule and collect taxes. In this divine arrangement man (government) received taxes, and God received worship.

Mark says that even the Pharisees were amazed, not able to trap Him and receiving a teaching that they had not considered before (this teaching even lifted their burden of guilt for paying taxes to a pagan king).

## THE SADDUCEES CHALLENGE

<sup>18</sup> Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Jesus, and began questioning Him, saying, <sup>19</sup> "Teacher, 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. <sup>20</sup> There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children. <sup>21</sup> The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; <sup>22</sup> and so all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also. <sup>23</sup> In the resurrection, when they rise

again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her." <sup>24</sup> Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God? <sup>25</sup> For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. <sup>26</sup> But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? <sup>27</sup> He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken."

The Pharisees believed that heaven was much like earth, just better. The Sadducees, on the other hand, scorned this idea and wanted to pit Jesus against the Pharisees. They used the story of a woman married successively to seven brothers (the Law said that a surviving brother had to produce an heir for his dead sibling if no heir existed). Their question, meant to humiliate the Pharisees was, "In heaven which of the brothers will be her legitimate husband?" With this question the Sadducees also hoped that Jesus would either agree with them (deny the resurrection of man) or try to explain the foolish ideas of the Pharisees.

Jesus replies that both they and the Pharisees are wrong because of their ignorance of the Scriptures. He shows that the Scriptures say that God is (present tense) the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The point is that if He is their God now, this means that they are alive at this moment. If this is so then the logical conclusion is that according to the Scriptures that they believed and studied, there is life after death. Jesus also demonstrates His divine knowledge by telling them that people who are in heaven are like angels and have no need to marry.

He highlights their ignorance and then demonstrates His own divinity by revealing only what a person who comes from heaven could reveal, what beings in heaven are really like!

## THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

<sup>28</sup> One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?”

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; <sup>30</sup> and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ <sup>31</sup> The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” <sup>32</sup> The scribe said to Him, “Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that He is One, and there is no one else besides Him; <sup>33</sup> 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, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” <sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

So far Jesus has had confrontations with the politicians (Pharisees and Herodians) and the aristocrats (Sadducees). Now He deals with the lawyers, the scribes. There were 248 positive and 365 negative commands concerning matters of the Jewish law. Their writings, teachings and debates were based on the relative merits of these. They ask Jesus which of these is the greatest.

Jesus quotes the "Shammai" (a combination of Deuteronomy 6:45 and Leviticus 19:18) to synthesize the composite teaching of the Old Testament law. With this answer Jesus summarized all of the commands without diminishing any. The scribe was so impressed that he repeated it so as to fix it securely in his own mind. This scribe was sincere and probably tried to obey these rules. He was close to, but not yet in the kingdom. In order to be in the kingdom he had to realize that he could not be righteous by keeping God's laws perfectly but rather needed to seek salvation by faith in the One God had sent, Jesus Christ.

## WARNING AGAINST THE SCRIBES

<sup>35</sup> And Jesus began to say, as He taught in the temple, "How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? <sup>36</sup> David himself said in the Holy Spirit, "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet."

<sup>37</sup> David himself calls Him 'Lord'; so in what sense is He his son?" And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him.

<sup>38</sup> In His teaching He was saying: "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places, <sup>39</sup> and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, <sup>40</sup> who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation."

Jesus has dealt with one learned and sincere scribe who was at least respectful if not yet believing. He rebukes the scribes who used God's Word as a way to control people and exalt themselves (what religious leaders have done throughout history):

- First, He shows that they, like the Priests and Pharisees, were mistaken about their understanding of the Word. The Scribes taught that the Messiah would simply be a human descendant of David. Jesus shows that David himself wrote that the Messiah would be divine, referring to Him as "Lord," "The Lord (God) said to my Lord (Messiah)" (Psalm 110:1).
- Secondly, He reveals their hypocrisy in acting pious and desiring honor for their spirituality but in reality cheating the elderly out of their money and homes under the pretext of ministering to them.

Jesus tells the people that the condemnation and punishment of these religious leaders would be severe because they covered their pride and greed under the guise of sincere religion.

## WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNED

<sup>41</sup> And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. <sup>42</sup> A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. <sup>43</sup> 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; <sup>44</sup> for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."

The Apostles witnessed Jesus' confrontation and condemnation of each segment of Jewish leadership, this final episode tries to summarize what they should have learned from all of this.

The court of the women had 13 trumpet shaped offering receptacles built into its walls. Jesus observed the rich who paraded in and with much fanfare deposited their money (the ones with the largest gifts were permitted to be first in the giving line). The widow, who was last, gave two leptons (one eighth of a cent) which was the smallest coin in circulation at that time. What Jesus saw, however, was the heart. The rich gave a portion to demonstrate their piety, but in reality the amount that they gave did not affect their lifestyle. In contrast to this the widow, by faith, gave all that she had, and in doing so increased her personal financial hardship. Jesus explains that it was her attitude (sacrificial giving based on faith) that was acceptable before God not the amount she gave while the others, because of their attitude (giving to impress others), were rejected.

The Apostles were to face these very same people in the future. They would be judged and harassed by them so Jesus reveals their hypocrisy in advance and demonstrates, through the widow, that He searches for sincere and faithful followers.

# 8.

## Final Teachings

MARK 13:1-14:72

Mark tells his story on three levels and we have to keep our eyes on these while going through his book:

1. Jesus' ministry to the masses.
2. Jesus' ministry to the disciples.
3. Jesus' confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders.

Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, which declared His true identity to the masses, is followed by His final confrontation and rebuke of the leaders. There remains one last opportunity for ministry to His disciples during which He will instruct them concerning three issues:

1. The judgment on the nation of Israel for rejecting its Messiah.
2. What will happen to Him in the near future.
3. How they will commemorate His life, death and resurrection.

## **JUDGMENT ON THE NATION — 13:1-37**

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Many who read chapter 13 are not exactly sure what Jesus is talking about: the final end of the world or the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred in 70 AD. The key to understanding His teaching is found in the first four verses which then set the rest of the passage into context.

<sup>1</sup> As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” <sup>2</sup> 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.”

The Apostles are referring to the temple, a structure that was restored after 40 years of on-going construction. Jesus tells them that the temple is going to be destroyed. For the people of that time the temple represented and embodied the Jewish religion and nation. The Apostles do not yet understand that Christianity will supersede Judaism, and the total destruction of the temple and the city where it stood will be a sign of this.

<sup>3</sup> As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, <sup>4</sup> “Tell us, when will these

things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?"

Several of the Apostles were distressed about this idea, and questioned Jesus specifically about it. They wanted to know when this would happen and what signs would accompany this event. The response that Jesus gave was in answer to their questions.

The Lord's answer was difficult to understand because He used "apocalyptic" language (similar to the language used in the book of Revelation). This meant that only those who were familiar with this cryptic style, and knew the original question by the Apostles along with Jesus' answer, would be able to discern the meaning of the entire passage. The key, however, was that His answer described the events surrounding the future destruction of Jerusalem.

Jesus began, therefore, by mentioning the several phases that led up to this terrible end:

## THE FALSE PROPHET AND RUMOR STAGE

<sup>5</sup> And Jesus began to say to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. <sup>6</sup> Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He!' and will mislead many. <sup>7</sup> When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end. <sup>8</sup> For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

After Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:9-11), many false prophets did arise and preach "end of the world" scenarios. Josephus (a Jewish historian of that period) writes about these and how they were killed or faded away. In addition to this, the Jewish nation was often at odds with King Herod and Rome, and there were many upheavals (political and military) going on all of the time. Jesus warns them not to panic when these type of things occurred.

## THE PERSECUTION STAGE

<sup>9</sup> "But be on your guard; 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. <sup>10</sup> The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. <sup>13</sup> You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

Soon after Pentecost some of the Apostles were imprisoned by Jewish authorities (Acts 4) and later on Paul and his associates were persecuted by both Jews and the Romans (Acts 17; 23; 26). We also know that Paul and Peter were both martyred in the city of Rome (between 62-67 AD) as a general persecution of Christianity occurred throughout the Roman Empire. Jesus tells His Apostles that even these terrible events would not fulfill the judgment that He was talking about.

## THE SIEGE STAGE

<sup>14</sup> "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. <sup>15</sup> The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; <sup>16</sup> and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. <sup>17</sup> But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! <sup>18</sup> But pray that it may not happen in the winter. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days. <sup>21</sup> And then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ'; or, 'Behold, He is there'; do not believe him; <sup>22</sup> for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. <sup>23</sup> But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.

The term, "the abomination of desolation" was used by Jesus to refer to the sign that would indicate that the final destruction of the city was at hand. In Luke 21:20 Luke says that the surrounding of Jerusalem by the Roman army with their idolatrous shields desecrated the city and temple, and was thus the fulfillment of this prophecy. Jerusalem remained under siege by the Roman army for four years with its final destruction coming in 70 AD. Jesus warns them that when they hear the news that the temple has been desecrated, it will be time for them to flee the city.

History records that the Christian community living in Jerusalem at that time did escape and fled to Pella (a city located across the Jordan River) during a lull in the siege when the Roman army pulled back for a short time. The historian, Josephus, reports that there were many "prophets" claiming victory or encouraging their followers to remain in the city during this period, but Jesus warns His Apostles and future Christians who would be living in Jerusalem in the future to avoid these and simply escape.

After the Roman army had starved out the inhabitants they then charged into Jerusalem and massacred everyone left in the worst recorded bloodbath in history. In order to retain a remnant of Jewish people alive through the ordeal, Jesus says that God "shortened" those days in the sense that He permitted some to survive.

Jesus warns the Apostles that these things will happen and they now know when to escape (when the temple is desecrated).

## THE GOSPEL STAGE

<sup>24</sup> "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, <sup>25</sup> and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. <sup>26</sup> Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup> 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.

In apocalyptic language (a literary style used to describe terrible wars, national tragedies and God's judgments) the idea of the heavenly bodies falling or changing meant that one period had

ended and a new one had begun. Jesus was telling them that with the destruction of the city and temple, an era and a nation would come to an end. The time when the Jewish people were considered God's chosen people based on their relationship to Abraham would end with this destruction. After Jesus' resurrection and the preaching of the gospel, God's people would be those who believed and followed Him, regardless of their culture, gender or position in society (Galatians 3:28-29).

"The Son of Man coming" is Old Testament imagery (Isaiah 19:1) describing God's visitation upon a nation for the purpose of judgment. In the Bible we see this happen as God visits the Assyrians, Babylonians, the Medes, Greeks, and now the Jews for the purpose of judgment. John, in the book of Revelation, will describe how God will also visit the Romans in order to judge and punish them in the future.

Jesus also describes the new gospel age where the angels (messengers/apostles) will go preach to all people in order to bring them into the kingdom (His elect are those who respond to the gospel since the Jews are no longer His elect, having rejected Christ).

"The farthest ends of heaven" may refer to the martyrs who are part of the kingdom.

## **FINAL WARNING**

<sup>28</sup> "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. <sup>29</sup> Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. <sup>30</sup> Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things

take place. <sup>31</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. <sup>32</sup> But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

<sup>33</sup> “Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come. <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> 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— <sup>36</sup> in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. <sup>37</sup> What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’”

He has warned them, given them specifics and assured them of several things:

- All of these things are going to happen in their generation. He is referring to the end of Jerusalem, not the end of the world.
- Nothing can stop it. There will not be a prophet or another opportunity to repent.
- No one but God the Father knows when these things will take place. Their task is simply to be ready.

## **THE PASSOVER MEAL — 14:1-42**

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Jesus was a Jew, and as a Jew He observed the Passover. The Passover commemorated the time when the angel of death destroyed every firstborn in Egypt but spared the Jews who were

in captivity there (Exodus 12:1-14). They were spared because they obeyed God's instruction to sprinkle the blood of a lamb on their doorposts and remain in their homes to partake of a special meal. Since that time, each year (in the spring) the Jews would offer a sacrificial lamb and share a special ritual meal in order to commemorate their freedom from Egyptian slavery. This was the meal that Jesus was preparing to share with His Apostles.

Normally, the father, the head of the household or the teacher would be the one who would preside over the Passover meal. As the scene opens in chapter 14 Jesus is with His disciples, two days before the Passover, visiting Simon the leper.

<sup>1</sup> Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread were two days away; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill Him; <sup>2</sup> for they were saying, "Not during the festival, otherwise there might be a riot of the people."

Mark notes that He was in danger, but His attackers would leave Him alone during the Passover festival for fear of the people.

<sup>3</sup> While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured it over His head. <sup>4</sup> But some were indignantly remarking to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted? <sup>5</sup> For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they were scolding her. <sup>6</sup> But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me. <sup>7</sup> For you always have the poor with you,

and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. <sup>8</sup> She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. <sup>9</sup> 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.”

Mark also tells the story of the woman who anointed Him with costly oil. Many who were there complained that this was a waste (especially Judas who saw a lost opportunity to sell the perfume and pocket the money). Jesus put her action into context, saying that it was not just a waste of oil poured on His head to make Him smell good, she was actually anointing His body in preparation for His death. The Jewish custom was to cover dead bodies with perfumed oil in order to cancel out the smell, and out of respect for the deceased. The difference here was that the anointing was being performed before He died as an act of prophecy, not respect. Jesus commended the woman's act and used it to alert His disciples of His death which was to happen very soon.

<sup>12</sup> On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed, His disciples said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?” <sup>13</sup> And He sent two of His disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; <sup>14</sup> and wherever he enters, 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?”” <sup>15</sup> And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; prepare for us there.” <sup>16</sup> The disciples went out and came to the city, and found it

just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

During the time of Jesus, the Passover had grown into a week long celebration which began with the eating of the sacrificial Passover lamb. This particular year, the Passover fell on a Thursday. Two Apostles were sent into the city to purchase and sacrifice a lamb at the temple and make ready the room where they would eat the meal. No name was given concerning the owner of the room or its location in order to maintain security (Jesus knew of Judas' intention to betray Him).

<sup>17</sup> When it was evening He came with the twelve. <sup>18</sup> As they were reclining at the table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me." <sup>19</sup> They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, "Surely not I?" <sup>20</sup> And He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl. <sup>21</sup> For the Son of Man is to go just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

Judas was with them at the meal when Jesus announced that there was a traitor among them. For all those who speculate about what happened to Judas, if he was saved or not, note what Jesus said about the one who betrayed Him.

<sup>22</sup> While they were eating, He took some bread, and after a blessing He broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is My body." <sup>23</sup> And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. <sup>24</sup> And He said to them, "This is

My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. <sup>25</sup> 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.”

<sup>26</sup> After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The normal Passover meal was a ritual where the leader ate the meal in stages and the others followed his lead: some unleavened bread (representing the haste that the people experienced in their departure from the land of captivity) was dipped into the bitter herbs (which represented their experience of suffering in Egypt) and eaten along with some of the meat from the lamb (representing the sacrifice made that spared their lives when the angel of death passed over their homes and took the life of every "firstborn" child and animal in Egypt).

Later on the people added wine to the meal which represented the blessings they enjoyed in the Promised Land that God gave them. The meal would proceed as the father would eat and drink each of these elements with the family following his lead. At one point someone (usually a child or a young person) would ask the father or teacher what all of these things meant, and this would provide an opportunity to recount, once again, the ancient story of God's liberation of the Jewish people from Egyptian captivity. Prayers and songs were interspersed between the courses until the commemorative meal was over.

At the point where there was only some bread and one last portion of wine remaining (there were usually two to three portions), Jesus changed the significance of the Passover meal and the significance of the elements. The bread would no longer represent their haste to leave Egypt, but would now represent His body and the pain He would endure on the cross. The wine

would no longer represent the blessings of the Promised Land, but would now represent His blood (or His life) which would be sacrificed for the sins of mankind.

Jesus, after speaking of His death, tells them that He will once again drink wine with them when the kingdom (the church) will be established. This prophecy is fulfilled every time the church gathers to share the communion in remembrance of Christ.

The custom of the Passover was to sing the "Hallel," a series of Psalms (Psalm 113-118), which they do. After this they leave for the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane which was a public park about a mile outside of the city often used for quiet meditation.

27 And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, because it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.' 28 But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." 29 But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not." 30 And Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times." 31 But Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all were saying the same thing also.

Once again, Jesus warns them that not only will one betray Him, but when it happens they will all run away. Peter insists that he will not and Jesus tells him that he will do so even before the day begins (when the cock crows). Note that all the Apostles join Peter in promising to be faithful.

<sup>32</sup> They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed."

<sup>33</sup> And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. <sup>34</sup> And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." <sup>35</sup> 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. <sup>36</sup> And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will." <sup>37</sup> And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?"

<sup>38</sup> Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." <sup>39</sup> Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. <sup>40</sup> And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. <sup>41</sup> And He came the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup> Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

It was named the Mount of Olives because of the grove of olive trees on its slope. The adjacent park at the top of the hill was used by travelers to rest before going the last mile into the city of Jerusalem and was called Gethsemane (meaning "oil press") because a press was situated on its grounds. It is interesting to note that the Apostles slept during Jesus' period of agony here in the garden as well as His period of glory on the mountain during His transfiguration (Luke 9:32). Mark describes the struggle and

final acceptance of the suffering that Jesus' human nature was trying to avoid (naturally).

<sup>43</sup> Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, who were from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. <sup>44</sup> Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard." <sup>45</sup> After coming, Judas immediately went to Him, saying, "Rabbi!" and kissed Him. <sup>46</sup> They laid hands on Him and seized Him. <sup>47</sup> But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. <sup>48</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as you would against a robber? <sup>49</sup> Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures." <sup>50</sup> And they all left Him and fled. <sup>51</sup> A young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him. <sup>52</sup> But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked.

Judas leads a mob of temple guards and rabble rousers to arrest Him. One of Jesus' Apostles (Peter) raises his sword and cuts the ear off the high priest's servant (Malchus). Luke says that Jesus then healed the man of this injury (Luke 22:50). Mark mentions a young man running away leaving his clothes behind. Scholars believe that this was Mark himself since he knew the Apostles and lived in Jerusalem at that time.

<sup>53</sup> They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together. <sup>54</sup> Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire.

<sup>55</sup> 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. <sup>56</sup> For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. <sup>57</sup> Some stood up and began to give false testimony against Him, saying, <sup>58</sup> "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'"

<sup>59</sup> Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent. <sup>60</sup> 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?" <sup>61</sup> But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" <sup>62</sup> And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." <sup>63</sup> Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? <sup>64</sup> You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. <sup>65</sup> Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers received Him with slaps in the face.

The problem for the High Priest and the Sanhedrin was to find a serious enough charge against Jesus to warrant the death penalty. They wanted to kill Him themselves but were unable to

do so because only the Roman government could order an execution. They settled on the charge of blasphemy which, according to Jewish law, was punishable by death but not according to Roman law. Note that they had nothing to accuse Him with until Jesus Himself acknowledged the truth about Himself. Note also that they had no legal reason to put Him to death but used political and mob pressure to do so.

<sup>66</sup> As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, <sup>67</sup> and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene." <sup>68</sup> But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." And he went out onto the porch. <sup>69</sup> The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is one of them!" <sup>70</sup> But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too." <sup>71</sup> But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!" <sup>72</sup> Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep.

Peter was in the court of the High Priest (the front yard) because he was with another disciple who was known by the High Priest's people and allowed in. Peter, when confronted by the servants of the High Priest and others about his association with Jesus, not only denies it but curses and swears that he did not even know the Lord. Perhaps Peter followed to see if Jesus would perform a miracle and confound the Jewish leaders once again. He may have thought that this was the beginning of the

revolution, however, when He saw Jesus tied and tortured he became afraid, confused and discouraged.

People do awful things when they are under pressure or are afraid. Peter, who swore he would even die with Jesus, fell victim to his weak and sinful nature. As the cock crowed and the morning dawned, Peter realized what he had done and was immediately despondent. He had done something that he could not take back, could not fix nor could he pay for. Only Jesus could make this right and, as we will see, He did.

# 9.

## The Passion

MARK 15:1-16:20

Each gospel is different in that it is written by a different person, records the life of Jesus focusing on different events, or records the same event with more or less detail. Each gospel is similar however, in that it tells the same story, follows the same sequence of events and finishes with a description of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

Mark leaves off telling his story from the three levels we have been tracking (ministry to the masses, to His disciples, confrontation with Jewish leaders) and now focuses entirely on the final hours of Jesus' life, what some writers called the "Passion."

All the events, prophecies, teachings and promises have been leading to this moment in time.

### **JESUS BEFORE PILATE — 15:1-15**

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The problem for the Jewish leaders was that they wanted to execute Jesus but had neither a valid reason nor the authority to

do so. Under Roman law only a Roman official could mete out the death penalty.

<sup>1</sup> Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate. <sup>2</sup> Pilate questioned Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him, "It is as you say." <sup>3</sup> The chief priests began to accuse Him harshly. <sup>4</sup> Then Pilate questioned Him again, saying, "Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" <sup>5</sup> But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.

Pilate was the procurator (Rome's military representative) in Judea from 26 AD to 36 AD. His normal residence was in Cesarea by the coast, but he was in Jerusalem to keep order during Passover season.

That morning the council met again to confirm their decision and formulate their strategy in bringing Jesus before Pilate. Since Pilate would only consider political matters, the Jews framed their accusation of blasphemy in a political context: Jesus was claiming that He was the "King of the Jews." This represented a direct threat to Caesar's authority and would have to be dealt with.

Mark does not provide the remarkable dialogue between Pilate and Jesus that is included in John's gospel (John 18:28-40). He is content to give the briefest of descriptions. Pilate questions Jesus as to His defense or explanation of these charges but Jesus remains silent, simply acknowledging the charge. The other gospel writers explain Pilate's dilemma in realizing Jesus' innocence while being pressured by the Jewish leaders and the

crowd. Mark simply records Pilate's overall reaction to Jesus, that of amazement.

<sup>6</sup> Now at the feast he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested. <sup>7</sup> The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. <sup>8</sup> The crowd went up and began asking him to do as he had been accustomed to do for them. <sup>9</sup> Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" <sup>10</sup> For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. <sup>11</sup> But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas for them instead. <sup>12</sup> Answering again, Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?" <sup>13</sup> They shouted back, "Crucify Him!" <sup>14</sup> But Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify Him!" <sup>15</sup> Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

The custom at the time (to gain popularity with the Jews and to participate in their most important feast) was to release one prisoner of the people's choosing during the Passover. The crowd was shouting for Barabbas, a guerrilla fighter who was part of a Jewish faction that wanted their nation free from Roman domination. Barabbas was in prison because he had killed someone during one of their uprisings.

At this point Pilate makes three attempts to free Jesus:

1. He tries to give the crowd a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. One, a killer and troublemaker; the other, a person who was very popular and had done much good for the people. Pilate probably thought this would circumvent the plot of the leaders by getting the crowd to select Jesus. The leaders responded by stirring up the mob so that they would choose Barabbas over Jesus.
2. Pilate then defers to the crowd asking them what they wanted done to the "King of the Jews." Did they not realize what choosing Barabbas would mean? The crowd shouted back their desire in the plainest of language, "crucify Him!"
3. Finally, Pilate appeals to their sense of justice asking them why should Jesus be condemned? He reminds them that Jesus had not been convicted of anything. The mob does not even answer his question, they just want Jesus dead.

Of course, Pilate could have simply released Jesus since there was really no case against Him, but because he wanted the favor of the people he condemned a man to death that he knew to be innocent. An innocent man is substituted for a guilty man, and Jesus is now turned over to the guards for torture (scourging is whipping) and execution.

## THE CRUCIFIXION — 15:16-41

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<sup>16</sup> The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort. <sup>17</sup> They dressed Him up in purple, and

after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him;  
<sup>18</sup> and they began to acclaim Him, "Hail, King of the  
Jews!" <sup>19</sup> They kept beating His head with a reed, and  
spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him.  
<sup>20</sup> 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.

The Palace/Praetorium was the Antonia castle and the guards were located in a plaza that was part of this complex. A cohort is about a thousand soldiers. They played the "game of the king," a cruel psychological sport used to demoralize prisoners. The idea was to destroy the condemned psychologically and emotionally before destroying them physically. This scene, however, illustrated how close they were in actually declaring the true nature of Jesus.

<sup>21</sup> They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.

There were other references to Alexander and Rufus in the New Testament to suggest that they became Christians (Romans 16:3).

<sup>22</sup> Then they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. <sup>23</sup> They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it. <sup>24</sup> And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take. <sup>25</sup> It was the third hour when they crucified Him. <sup>26</sup> The inscription of the charge against Him read, "THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Myrrh was an opiate given to the condemned in order to dull their pain at the point of actual crucifixion. It made the prisoners easier to handle as they were nailed to the cross. Jesus refused it because He had accepted to drink the full cup of suffering for man and thus wanted to remain clear headed for the important things that were yet to take place.

The ancient writers never mention a loincloth and so the deduction is that Jesus was crucified naked, and His clothing divided up between His executioners. All prisoners had the charges against them posted on the cross beam above their heads. The one on Jesus' cross simply stated, "King of the Jews," a title that was meant to offend the Jews.

<sup>27</sup> They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. <sup>28</sup> [And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."] <sup>29</sup> Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, <sup>30</sup> save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" <sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

The final insult that Jesus had to bear was seeing those who were supposed to welcome Him now ridiculing and tormenting Him. Note also that both thieves crucified next to Him were also hurling insults at this point.

That Jesus was crucified along with thieves became a stumbling block to the Jews who heard the gospel later on since they could not accept that their Messiah would die in this shameful way. Mark mentions, however, that all of this was according to their Scriptures.

The people who came to see the sad spectacle challenged Him to do another miracle by coming down from the cross, and the leaders felt smug because they thought that they had finally silenced Him. They even used the fact that Jesus remained on the cross as justification for their own disbelief.

<sup>33</sup> When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. <sup>34</sup> At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" <sup>35</sup> When some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, "Behold, He is calling for Elijah." <sup>36</sup> Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down." <sup>37</sup> And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. <sup>38</sup> And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> 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!"

<sup>40</sup> There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. <sup>41</sup> When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

Jesus was crucified at 9:00 AM (third hour) and from 12:00-3:00 PM there was a darkness that signaled His death and God's displeasure. By His crying out we know that this was the moment of His greatest suffering. He experienced the punishment for the sins of all mankind, separation from God. This painful separation from the Father and subsequent death was the price He had to pay for our sins.

Those who heard His words turned and mocked Him. In Hebrew, the name for God when spoken out loud sounded similar to the name of the prophet Elijah. The Jews believed that Elijah would come to announce and witness the arrival of the Messiah. Jesus, however, taught His Apostles that John the Baptist had fulfilled that role. These men heard only the first two words of His cry and made fun of Him by saying, "This man is dying but He is still calling on Elijah to come and witness that He is the Messiah." They tried to revive Him to see what would happen concerning His call to Elijah.

Jesus died after crying out, and several things happened at this point. Mark only mentions two that were significant to both Gentiles and Jews:

1. The veil of the temple between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was torn in two. This signified that the separation between God and man had been removed. People no longer needed the High Priest to enter the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifice for sin on their behalf. Jesus removed that barrier by offering Himself for sin once for all. Everyone could now go directly to God for salvation at any time, not just once per year.

2. Mark notes that a Roman centurion confessed the name of Jesus. This would be significant as a witness to future non-Jewish readers of this gospel.

Mark also mentions the names of the faithful women who supported His ministry and who silently watched His execution.

## THE BURIAL

<sup>42</sup> When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, <sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. <sup>44</sup> Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. <sup>45</sup> And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup> Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. <sup>47</sup> Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph were looking on to see where He was laid.

The body was taken down and buried before sundown and the beginning of the Sabbath day. This took boldness on the part of Joseph of Arimathea because the Romans' custom was to leave the bodies on the cross until they decayed. As a believer, Joseph wanted to bury Jesus' body out of respect for his Lord and, as a Jew, he wanted to complete the burial before nightfall in order to avoid the defilement of the land (Deuteronomy 21:23). The linen cloth was a shroud into which spices had been folded. Jesus was

hastily wrapped in this and laid in a new tomb with a stone rolled over the entrance.

## THE RESURRECTION — 16:1-8

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<sup>1</sup> When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. <sup>2</sup> Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. <sup>3</sup> They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" <sup>4</sup> Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. <sup>5</sup> Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. <sup>6</sup> And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him. <sup>7</sup> But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'" <sup>8</sup> They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of James and Salome, have seen the death and the burial. They return to the tomb in order to finish the cleaning and anointing of the body. Mark describes the resurrection through the eyes of the women who are first to witness the empty tomb. They are met by an angel who has rolled away the stone. He instructs them to tell the Apostles, especially Peter (Jesus wants him to know that he is still

included), to go to Galilee where He will meet them. Mark mentions that they are frightened, but we know from the other gospels that they did do what the angel instructed.

This first appearance to women was significant to Jews and Gentiles because in both cultures women were treated as inferior (less so in Jewish culture than in Gentile) and especially in religious matters where they were segregated (e.g. Court of the women). The false notion that somehow God preferred men was shattered here.

## **JESUS' APPEARANCE AND INSTRUCTIONS**

### **— 16:9-20**

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Most of the manuscripts used to translate this gospel into English either omit these verses, have them contained in some form of brackets or provide a brief explanation for them. The reason for this is that this section is not included in several of the oldest manuscripts of Mark's gospel, but appear in other, later documents.

Explanations:

- The original ending by Mark was lost and this is a summary of the endings found in Matthew, Luke and John.
- It was added by a scribe because Mark died before he could finish it.
- Various other endings appear on different manuscripts.

Why is it included?

- Several manuscripts do have it.
- It is completely accurate according to every other New Testament book and teaching.
- It was not rejected by the early church or Apostles.
- We do not have the exact identity of the writers of Hebrews, but because it was accepted by the early church and perfectly accurate according to all teaching, we accept its inspiration.

<sup>9</sup> [Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. <sup>10</sup> She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. <sup>11</sup> When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.

<sup>12</sup> After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country. <sup>13</sup> They went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either.

Mark provides a quick summary of different appearances to Mary and the disciples on the road to Emaus.

<sup>14</sup> Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. <sup>15</sup> And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. <sup>16</sup> He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. <sup>17</sup> These

signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; <sup>18</sup>they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

<sup>19</sup> So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. <sup>20</sup> And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.] [And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.]

This is a description of an appearance (not necessarily His last one) where there is a summary of His final teaching to the Apostles:

- He rebukes them for their unbelief, even after His resurrection.
- He charges them with the responsibility to proclaim the gospel to the world.
- He also describes some of the miracles they will be able to do as a result of the Holy Spirit empowering them.
- On Pentecost we see the beginning of the manifestation of these powers in order to confirm that their message was legitimate.

There is a brief description of His ascension to heaven and the subsequent ministry carried out by the disciples in Jesus' name. Mark mentions that the Lord's promise of spiritual power was fulfilled as the Apostles began spreading the gospel.

Mark completes his gospel record in much the same way as he started it, brief declarative statements summarizing the final words of Jesus to His Apostles and their obedient response in carrying out their mission to the world.



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