

# The Gospel According to Mark

## Notes and Commentary



Siege of Jerusalem (70) The destruction date according to the Hebrew calendar was the 9th of Av, also known as Tisha B'Av (29 or 30 July 70). Wikipedia Public Domain

**By Jim Wilsford**

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## Introduction to the *Gospel according to Mark*

Luke first introduces Mark with Barnabas and Paul, as they leave from Jerusalem on their return to Antioch, after distributing financial assistance from Antioch to the famine-stricken churches of Judea in Acts 12:25: "25 When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark."

Earlier in Acts 12:12-15, an angel delivered from prison by an angel, appeared at the house of mother of John Mark:

12 When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. 13 Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

15 "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

This passage shows us that John Mark's family was wealthy, with both Jewish and Roman histories, by his name John, Jewish and Mark, Roman. The house had a large gathering room, and an outer entrance, implying a courtyard. A servant answered the door. Mark's family as wealthy Jews with Roman history is consistent with the status of Mark's cousin, Barnabas. According to Col 4:10, He was Mark's cousin: "10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)" And according to Acts 4:36-37, Barnabas, himself, was wealthy enough to have and sell property for the good of the saints in:

36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), 37 sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Peter, by tradition, deeply influenced Mark, calling him in 1 Peter 5:13-14: "My Son":

"13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love."

Many believe that Mark, who was not an eyewitness to the Lord, recorded many of the incidents in his Gospel from conversations with Peter while together in Babylon. Some incidents in Mark's gospel, however, seem to come from other eyewitnesses; such as the following personal account told to him perhaps by James, brother of the Lord. Only an eyewitness, family member could give some of the details found in Mark 3:21-22

21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."

And concluded in Mark 3:31-32:

31 Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

Luke first noted John Mark's work with Paul in Acts 13:5: "When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper." Described as helper here, John quits the group in Acts 13:13, "13 From Paphos, Paul

and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.” Although we do not know, the dispute was probably a disagreement with Paul on the issue of the obligation of Gentiles to keep the Law of Moses. Mark, known by his Jewish name John turned back. We also learn that Barnabas also had reservation on the issue of how binding is the Law of Moses. In Gal 2:13, Paul said, “13 The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.”

The issue of circumcision and the Law of Moses boiled over; and in Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas took the issue to the elders and apostles in Jerusalem. It is interesting that Luke last called Paul by his Jewish name in Acts 13. In Acts 15:12-13, Luke records, “12 The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.”

After the issues were resolved and a letter written to the Gentile churches, Paul and Barnabas prepare for another missionary journey at express wishes of those in Jerusalem in Acts 15:25-26:

25 So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark once again desires to go. Paul resisted in Acts 15:37-39

Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, 38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. 39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus.

By Col 4:10, Paul mentions Mark directly: “10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) Paul’s endorsement of Mark included paving the way for him with the Gentile churches. In Philem 24, Mark is a fellow worker with Paul, right there with Luke: “24 And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.”

The conclusion of the story of Paul and Mark is happy and encouraging, recorded in 2 Tim 4:11-13:

11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. 12 I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. 13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

However, Mark’s association with Peter most probably resulted in the *Gospel According to Mark*. 1 Peter 5:13-14, concludes what we already know.

13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my **son Mark**. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love.

## Mark 1: The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

### *The Beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ*

Mark 1:1-3

1 *The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

2 *It is written in Isaiah the prophet:*

*"I will send my messenger ahead of you,*

*who will prepare your way" –*

3 *"a voice of one calling in the desert,*

*'Prepare the way for the Lord,*

*make straight paths for him.'"*

The Gospel by Mark begins with Jesus and John the Baptist. Matthew and Luke cover much more of the Lord's early life and matters of importance to many of their readers: genealogies, the virgin birth, the nativity, and days in the temple. Mark's narrative starts at the beginning of the Gospel, focusing on Jesus' life as one who demonstrates the power of God and one who teaches the will of God.

Mark chooses two prophecies foretelling the coming of John the Baptist. The first in verse 2 is from Mal. 3:1, and the second in verse 3 is from Isa 40:3. Both Matthew and Luke quote the Isaiah passage, but much later in their gospels (Matt 3:3 and Luke 3:4-6). Luke's reference includes the follow-up verses, which illuminate the great importance of John's message and the coming of the messiah:

*"A voice of one calling in the desert,*

*'Prepare the way for the Lord,*

*make straight paths for him.*

5 *Every valley shall be filled in,*

*every mountain and hill made low.*

*The crooked roads shall become straight,*

*the rough ways smooth.*

6 ***And all mankind will see God's salvation.***" [Emphasis added.]

Mark 1:4

4 *And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*

John came immersing—the proper English word for baptism. Strong gives the meaning:

baptizo (bap-tid'-zo); from a derivative of NT:911; to immerse, submerge; to make overwhelmed (i.e. fully wet); used only (in the N. T.) of ceremonial ablution, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian baptism: Baptist, baptize, wash.

(Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

In keeping with the very sense of baptism as immersion only, John used the Jordan River. Lest one make too much of a desert area, lacking water for immersion, note that desert area more likely means deserted area. This necessity of enough water to immerse was a requirement in John 3:22-24:

22 After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. 23 Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.

The baptism of John is definitive in mode, immersion; qualification, repentance; and purpose *for (unto)* the remission of sins. Baptism is never *because of* the remission of sins as taught by modern adherents of faith only. Again, Strong clarifies:

eis (ice); a primary preposition; to or into (indicating the point reached or entered), of place, time, or (figuratively) purpose (result, etc.); also in adverbial phrases:

(Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

John's baptism comes up two different times in Acts. In both cases, the recipients were baptized once again in Christ's baptism. The examples speak for themselves: Acts 18:24-26 reads:

24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

Acts 19:1-7 reads:

19 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples 2 and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

3 So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

4 Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. 7 There were about twelve men in all.

### ***The Baptism of John and the Baptism of Jesus Christ***

Mark 1:5-8

5 *The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.* 6 *John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a*

*leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

John's message had such great impact that all the people came out to hear him. The participial use of *confessing their sins* with the implied subject of all these people makes confessing their sins and repentance of their sins prerequisites to baptism by John. In Christ's baptism, confession will be the good confession with the mouth that Jesus is the Christ the son of the living God. 1 Tim 6:12-13 describes the good confession made only after Christ himself declared it on the cross:

Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession . . .

It is this confession, of Christ as Lord that people must now make to be saved. Rom 10:10 teaches: "10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

John came not in pomp and ceremony as mighty scholar and teacher, but he came dressing simply and eating simply. The character of his life was match by his humility toward the Lord as the statement implies: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie." The humble statement occurs also in Matthew where John shows his deep humility toward Jesus when Jesus comes to be baptized in Matt 3:13-15:

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

Mankind today should view baptism as Christ did: God commands it; and to do it, fulfills righteousness. The answer to the question—why were you baptized?—is not, "So I can be saved." Although, indeed, baptism is essential to be saved, we must do it because God told us to do it, making it a righteous act—yes, and it is a proper act.

Mark 1:9-11

*9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

There are only two examples in the New Testament describing scripturally approved baptism—Christ here and in Matt 3 and the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8. The language in all three reports makes baptism immersion, which is exactly what the word means. Compare the language of the three examples:

Mark 1:10: As Jesus was coming up out of the water

Matt 3:16:10: 16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water.

Acts 8:38-39: Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water . . .

They went down into the water, and they came up out of the water necessarily inferring that they were immersed. This certainty and the certain meaning of the word *baptism* makes

binding that baptism is immersion and these scriptures “cannot be broken.” John 10:35. God, openly and before many witnesses, endorsed his Son here at his baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration. At the Mount of Transfiguration, God the Father added the important clause: Listen to him! Mark records that example in Mark 9:2-8:

2 After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. 4 And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

5 Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." 6 (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

7 Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

8 Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

Mark 1:12

*12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, 13 and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.*

Mark mentions briefly the temptation of Jesus. However, Matt 4:12-11 offers a detail account of the conversation between the Lord and Satan.

### **Getting Started: The Time Has Come**

Mark 1:14

*14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"*

As Jesus began preaching the good news of God (the gospel), he preached that the time had come. Older version use the expression the time is fulfilled. The expression—*time has come*—when combined with the expression—*the kingdom of God is near*—make Jesus’ time both the beginning and end of God’s eternal plan. Paul described the certainty of the times in Gal 4:4: “4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law.” Various millennial theories would have this plan of God at the fullness of time fail, and replace it with some speculative and mystical return of the Lord and some future date. Mark is clear and plain: “The time has come; the kingdom of God is near.

The times command urgent and immediate action in obeying the Lord by repenting and believing and being baptized.

Mark 1:16-20

*16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." 18 At once they left their nets and followed him.*

*19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*



Jesus also began to enlist those to be his apostles. Simone (Peter) and Andrew are told that the Lord would make them *fishers of men*. This beautiful metaphor for all those who teach and preach has become universally known.

The Lord chose common people to do the greatest work. That they could do so well astonished those who heard. Later, as the apostles would begin their work, those who were leaders of the Jews, learned and bright, marveled that common men could speak so well. Luke captured their astonishment in Acts 4:13: "13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."

### ***The Authority of Jesus***

This section illustrates the vast power of Jesus from God the Father. He immediately demonstrates his power over evil spirits and disease. Later in the book, Mark will chronicle his power over nature and sin. John describes the unlimited nature of Jesus' gift in John 3:34-35: "34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. 35 The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands."

### **Authority in Teaching and Power over Evil Spirits**

Mark 1:21-28

*21 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. 23 Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, 24 "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!"*

*25 "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" 26 The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.*

*27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." 28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.*

Jesus spoke the certain truth of God; and because he did, he came across to his audience "as one who had authority." This appearance of truthful speaking and teaching is *ethos* a Greek word meaning moral nature. Jesus authority was evident in what he said and did.

Even the evil spirit knew that Jesus had come to destroy such agents of the devil, and he knew that Jesus was the "Holy One of God." James confirmed this awareness of demons and evil spirits in James 2:19: "19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder." The casting out of the demon gave added credence to Jesus' authority. Indeed, the miracles of Jesus strengthened the faith of those who saw them. In fact, John recorded the miracles of Jesus in his gospel so that people might believe in Jesus. John 20:30-31 reads:

30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

As will become evident, Jesus often healed because of his great compassion toward the afflicted.

## **Power over Disease**

Mark 1:29-37

*29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30 Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.*

*32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.*

*35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"*

Simon here is the name used for Simon Peter, and the episode produces an interesting and important point—Peter was married, for he had a mother-in-law. Paul also noted this marital situation of Peter in 1 Cor 9:5: “5 Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas [Peter]? The fact that Peter and the rest of the apostles were married exposes the fallacy of the Roman Catholic doctrine of celibacy, which forbids the clergy to marry.

This episode confirms Jesus as the Holy One of God, since Jesus now forbids them to speak.

That Jesus sought solitude to pray, but Simon and his companions came looking for him, is an example of Mark's relationship to Peter, whom he mentions specifically. The others, who Mark calls Peter's companions, would be the other disciples who also became apostles.

## **Jesus Came to Preach**

Mark 1:38-45

*38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.*

*40 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."*

*41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.*

*43 Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 44 "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." 45 Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.*

Jesus reply, “That is why I have come,” focuses on his mission—preaching and teaching. However, the leper sparks the compassion of Jesus as he unequivocally believes that Jesus can heal him. Often times, Jesus will respond in a way that shows accommodation. One example is when he turned water in wine at the request of his mother (John 2:1-11); another is when he raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-45). In all cases, the miracles testify that he is the son of God.

The healed leper spread the word about Christ abroad causing the Lord to stay outside the towns in lonely places. The chapter closes with the Lord empowered to perform miracles

beyond human imagination. However, Jesus is a Lord, who came to teach and preach, as his primary mission. Luke recorded the Savior's own words describing this mission in Luke 19:9-10:

9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

## Mark 2: Jesus Demonstrates Power over Sin and Calls Sinners

Mark had recorded in chapter 1 how John the Baptist, came preparing the way for Jesus. John was baptizing in Bethany beyond Jordan when Jesus came to be baptized. When Jesus came up out of the water, “. . .the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’” Jesus went into Galilee preaching that the time had come and that the kingdom of God was at hand. In the first chapter, Jesus also selected disciples, whom he promised to make fishers of men. It was also in the first chapter that Jesus amazed the people because he spoke as one with authority. Finally, the chapter closed with Jesus claiming that he came to preach. The chapter concludes with Jesus teaching: “21 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.”

In chapter 2, Jesus returned to Capernaum and emphasized immediately his power over sin; his calling sinners to the gospel; his power over disease and illness; and his Lordship over matters of the law.

The center of Jesus early activity will be in Galilee and Capernaum, placing him on the crossroads of the travel in the world of his day. The Great Trunk Road passed through the area and then on to Damascus and Babylon. Travelers from all over the Roman world will hear the teaching of the Lord from this vantage point.

### Power over Sin

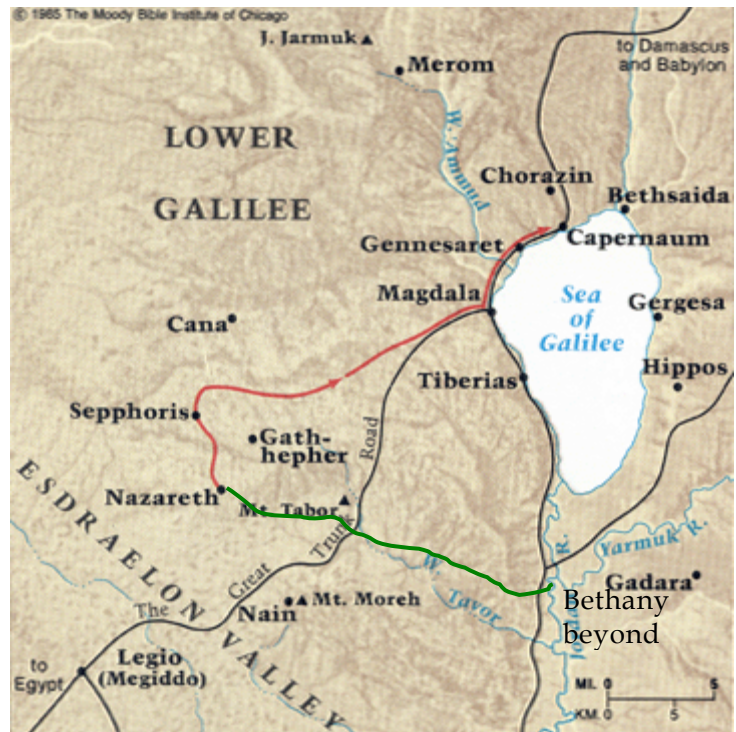
Mark 2: 1-5

2 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2 So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. 3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. 4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they

made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralytic was lying on. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

As the large crowd gathered Jesus “preached the word to them.” Undoubtedly, this word is the same message preached in Mark 1:14-15:

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"



This map via BibleSoft PC Study Bible V. 5 with Modifications

The men who brought the paralytic could not get in because of the crowd, and therefore, they lowered the man through the roof. When Jesus saw their faith, he did not instantly heal the man; but he forgave him his sins. This demonstrated the power of Jesus over sin—a power evident from the beginning of his ministry. With this power is evident his desire to see the sins of all mankind forgiven.

Mark 2:6-7

*6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*

The Lord forgiving sins is the point of conflict with the teachers of the law. They immediately accuse the Lord of blaspheming.

Mark 2:8-12

*8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? 9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" He said to the paralytic, 11 "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"*

Jesus also had the power to know their thinking and discern what is in their hearts. Jesus then clearly states that his healing the paralytic was to demonstrate that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Jesus gave the incident focus when he presented the teachers of the law with the dilemma: which is easier to forgive sins or heal paralytic? The people understood that the power of Jesus was the power of God and it was He whom they praised.

The use of the phrase “Son of Man” will become the common way the Jesus refers to himself (The phrase is used 86 times in the New Testament with all but four are used by Christ in reference to himself). The phrase, used often in the Old Testament to refer to men, seems in the New Testament to express the human part of Jesus. Even his contemporaries wondered of its meaning in John 12:34:

34 The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"

In Matt 8:20, the term spoke of the lowliest side of the Lord's earthly existence: “20 Jesus replied, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.'”

At times the term includes all the is powerful in the Lord as he extended salvation to Zacchaeus in Luke 19:9-10: “9 Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.'”

## **Jesus Calls Sinners**

Mark 2:13-14

*13 Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. 14 As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.*

Indeed, sinners like Levi were lost. Jesus, who continued to teach, saw Levi. Since Roman tax collectors were unscrupulous their greed and extortion, and since they used their position to abuse the people, it was significant that the Lord chose Levi. What better example of reaching out to a sinner could one find?

Mark 2:15-17

*15 While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"*

*17 On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Jesus ate with sinners and people of ill repute, like tax collectors. What a stir this caused among the Pharisees, who were known for their self-righteous attitudes. Jesus taught them plainly: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." The Lord repeats this teaching in Luke 19:9-10 quoted here and above: "9 Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.'"

### ***New Wine into New Wine Skins***

Mark 2:18:20

*18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"*

*19 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. 20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast."*

Fasting was a common practice under the Mosaic Law. John was living and preaching under the law; and therefore, he and his disciples would have kept the Law. When they asked why the Lord's disciples did not fast, they gave the Lord opportunity to teach the first lesson on the advent of the church, the bride of Christ.

The forecast is clear; the bridegroom will be taken away, to gloriously return in the last day. The metaphor of the bridegroom will weave throughout the New Testament to *The Revelation* at the end. In John's account of the gospel, John the Baptist had already established the metaphor. John 3:29-30 reads:

*29 The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. 30 He must become greater; I must become less.*

In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, Jesus taught about the unexpected return of the bridegroom in Matt 25:1-ff. He begins: "25 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise."

Paul presented the church as the pure virgin waiting for the bridegroom, Christ, in 2 Cor 11:2: "2 I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him."

This concept, introduced by the Lord in the gospels, grows full flower in the revelation where the bride and bridegroom are joined in victory and majesty on high. Rev 19:7-8 reads

7 Let us rejoice and be glad  
and give him glory!  
For the wedding of the Lamb has come,  
and his bride has made herself ready.

8 Fine linen, bright and clean,  
was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

John witnessed this beautiful bride in Rev 21:2: "2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." Rev 21:9 teaches clearly whose wife it is: "9 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.'" Finally at the very end of the Bible the Lord's teaching comes to be in Rev 22:17: "17 The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Mark 2:21-22

*21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. 22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."*

Jesus introduces a metaphor that at first notice seems incongruent with the context. But the context was about fasting and keeping the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law is the old garment and the unshrunk cloth is the gospel of Jesus. If the gospel is sewn to the Law, the garment will fail. Similarly, if the gospel (new wine) is poured into the Mosaic Law (old wineskins) the old wineskin will break. The new wine, the gospel, must be poured into new wineskins, the New Testament.

### ***The Son of Man is Lord Even of the Sabbath***

Mark 2:23-28

*23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"*

*25 He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? 26 In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."*

*27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."*

Once again, the Pharisees test Jesus. Why are his disciples working on the Sabbath? After citing the example of David, Jesus makes one of his most important claims: He is Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus had taught from the beginning that he had come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. Matt 5:17 teaches: "17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the

Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” Just as with the bridegroom teaching had its complete fulfillment, this teaching about the Law had its fulfillment. Paul wrote in Col 2:13-15:

13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Thus, it was to be the Lord of the Sabbath took the Law away; and Paul in retrospect could write in Col 2:16-17:

16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

That the Sabbath was only a shadow of the Lord of Sabbath, who is the reality, puts this entire episode in perspective.



### **Mark 3: Jesus Demonstrates Power and Contends with the Pharisees**

In Mark 2, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, questioned Jesus' actions and impugned his motives. During Mark 3, they become even more contentious and belligerent. In Mark 2:6-7, teachers of the law accused Jesus of blaspheming because he had claimed the power to forgive sins: "6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Toward the end of the chapter, they questioned Jesus' about his disciples picking heads of grain. Mark 3:23 reads:

23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

Finally, in Mark 3, the Jews start plotting to kill Jesus.

#### ***Jesus Tests the Sabbath and the Jews Plot to Kill Him***

Mark 3:1-12

*Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2 Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3 Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."*

*4 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.*

The use of *the synagogue* shows this to be same synagogue previously visited. *Some of them* are no doubt the teachers of the law and Pharisees of chapter two. They were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus; one might say that they were out to get him. Jesus once again foils them by presenting two rhetorical questions, neither of which they could answer from their stand on Jewish traditions. If they said that it was lawful to do good, it would be approved to heal. If they answered to save a life, then one could heal diseases.

Mark 3:5-

*5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.*

Perhaps the Pharisees could see their position on keeping traditions eroding from the force of Jesus teaching. Whatever the case, their ire was such that they joined with the Herodians to plot how they might kill Jesus. Jesus will explain what was wrong with their teaching in Mark 7:5-6:

5 So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"

6 He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

"These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.

7 They worship me in vain;

their teachings are but rules taught by men.”

In Mark 7:13, Jesus concluded his teaching: “13 Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.” As Mark’s gospel story develops, the Pharisees and the Herodians continue to conspire against the Lord. They will test him again in Mark 12:13-17:

13 Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. 14 They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? 15 Should we pay or shouldn't we?"

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." 16 They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they replied.

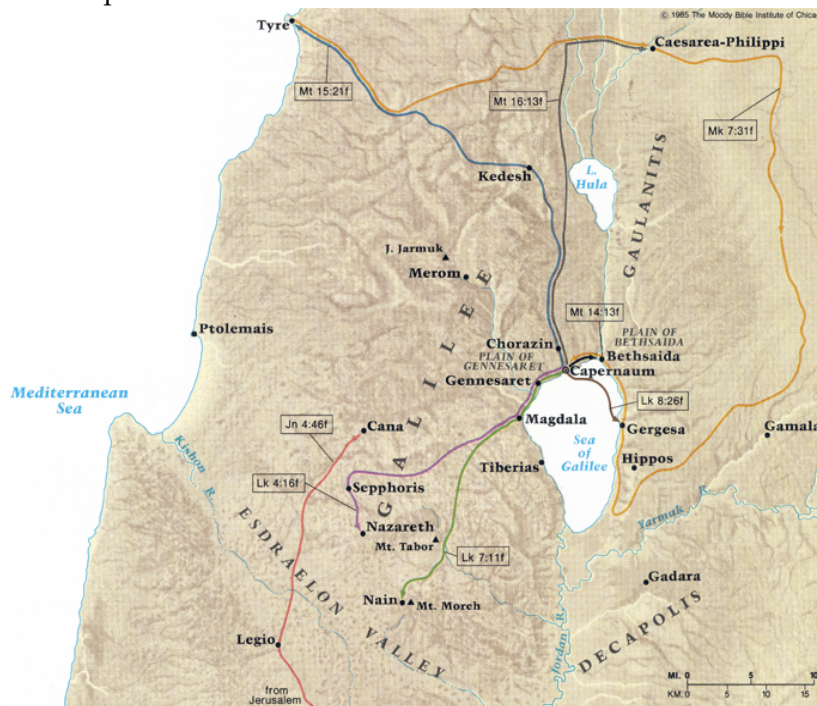
17 Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."

Neither the Bible nor recorded history tells any more about the Herodians. Some think they were followers of Herod the great; others think they were a sect of the Pharisees, and that Paul, before his conversion was one of them. This latter view, scantily held, arises from Paul’s statement about a relative in Rom 16:11: “11 Greet Herodion, my relative.”

### **Power over Disease and Evil Spirits**

Mark 3:7-12

7 Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. 8 When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. 9 Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. 10 For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. 11 Whenever the evil



### **Jesus' Ministry in Galilee**

- Jesus' headquarters
  - ▲ mountain peak
  - Jesus preaches in synagogue at Nazareth
  - Jesus heals in Lower Galilee
  - Jesus returns from Jerusalem and heals in Cana of Galilee
  - Jesus preaches in district of Caesarea-Philippi
  - Jesus crosses over Sea of Galilee to country of Gergesenes
  - Jesus journeys into district of Tyre and Sidon
  - Jesus preaches in Decapolis
  - Jesus performs wonders near Bethsaida
- (from The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands. Copyright © 1985 by the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)

*spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." 12 But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.*

As Jesus continued to heal the sick and cast out demons, the crowds keep following him. They came from regions far away by the travel requirements of the day: Jerusalem to the South and Tyre and Sidon to the West and from the lands across the Jordan River. To keep the people from crowding him, they boarded a small boat.

Perhaps the most interesting part of this episode is how the evil spirits continue to recognize and fear Jesus, falling down and worshiping him saying that he was the Son of God as if to say that they knew the time of their end had come. In fact, in Mark 1:23-24, a demon had asked Jesus if he had come to destroy them:

23 Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, 24 "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!"

There are only 22 mentions of evil spirits in the New Testament and many are repetitive. Two citations are instructive as the fate of these beings: The Lord in Luke 11:24-26 tells what happens when they are thrown out:

24 "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' 25 When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. 26 Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first."

Rev 18:2-3 speaks of the end of demons:

2 With a mighty voice he shouted:

"Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!

She has become a home for demons

and a haunt for every evil spirit,

a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird."

Later on in the chapter (Mark 3:23-29), Jesus will speak of tying up the strong man in an analogy that can only be applied to his binding the Satan, forecasting the overpowering evil spirits and the domain of the devil.

### ***Jesus Designates Those to Be His Apostles***

Mark 3:13-19

*13 Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. 14 He appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons. 16 These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); 18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*

Within what constitutes a naming of the 12 apostles, Mark imbeds important information about their mission and power. The Lord appoints them apostles and so they will remain until the last one dies—John in 96AD. Many today claim apostleship, but they were not with the Lord from the beginning. The conditions for apostleship are spelled out in Acts 1:21-22:

21 Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.

Their powers continued with them while with the Lord and after he departed. This account by Mark parallels Matt 10:5-9 – sometimes referred to as the limited commission: Matt 10:5-9

5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. 7 As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

Mark's account of the great commission shows these powers continuing with the apostles after the Lord ascended in Mark 16:15-18:

15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

Mark 16:19-20 follows to show that the apostles obey the Lord in preaching the Lord's words, and the signs confirmed his words:

19 After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. 20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

In summary, the apostles were appointed by the Lord, preached the Lord's word, and confirmed his words with signs.

### ***The Pharisees Accuse Jesus of Being of Beelzebub***

Mark 3:20-21

*20 Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. 21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."*

This passage begins one of the more personal stories about Jesus, making it one that had to come to Mark from one of the Lord's family, perhaps James, his brother. When the family heard about what Jesus was doing, they gave a response that one might expect from a family: "He is out of his mind?" In verse 31, they will come, undoubtedly, to take charge of him.

Mark 3:22

*22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."*

At this point, teachers of the law from Jerusalem accuse him of being possessed by Beelzebub. Matthew, Mark, and Luke call Beelzebub (who is mentioned only 7 times), prince of demons. Beelzebub appeared in the Old Testament only in 2 Kings 1:2-13 when Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice and injured himself: "So he sent messengers, saying to them, 'Go and

consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to see if I will recover from this injury.' In 2 Kings 1:3-4, the angel of the Lord appeared to Elijah and said:

"Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? 4 Therefore this is what the Lord says: 'You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!'"

Two sets of fifty soldiers were killed trying to take the message, with the third set returned to issue the warning, where upon Ahaziah died. Although this is the only mention of Baal-Zebub in the Old Testament, he is the namesake Baal, who appears 90 times, leading the children of Israel away from Jehovah on many, many occasions.

In the New Testament, the name, Beelzebub, appears in this same context 7 times in Matthew, Mark and John; they each label him, prince of demons. In context, these passage help explain the sin against the Holy Spirit, the discussion of which follows.

### **Jesus Foretells of the Binding of Satan**

Mark 3:23-27

*23 So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. 27 In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house.*

Christ gives the truth of this parable at the beginning: neither kingdom nor house divided against itself can stand. Abraham Lincoln seized upon this eternal principle and quoted in his speech by the same title. Lincoln quoted the passage since it was familiar to his audience and illustrated national unity at a time of great discord. However, Christ made the statement to illustrate that he could not be of Satan or the prince of demons, Beelzebub. That truly would be a kingdom against itself. Christ then took the principle a step further illustrating that to go in the house of a strong man (Satan in this case) and take his possessions without tying him up would be impossible. Rev 20:1-2 confirms that Christ bound Satan:

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

Mark 3:28-30

*28 I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. 29 But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin."*

*30 He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit."*

The Lord then pronounces another principle eternal: ". . . all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. 29 But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." Jesus gives us the exact meaning of this statement: ". . . 30 He said this because they were saying, 'He has an evil spirit.'" What did they do? They said the work of the Spirit of God was the work of Beelzebub saying Jesus had an evil spirit. The application for today is clear: anyone who says that the work or word of God is the work of Satan sins against the Holy Spirit.

Mark 3:31-35

*31 Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."*

*33 "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked.*

*34 Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."*

Mark 3 closes with Jesus mother and brothers sending to get him. Remember they supposed that he was out of his mind. Again, Jesus seizes on the situation to teach another spiritual lesson. The true family is the family of God, and our relationships, like the Lord's are spiritual. The principle is certain: Whoever does God's will is the brother, the sister, or the mother of the Lord.

## Mark 4: Jesus Begins Teaching Many Things by Parables

So far, Mark has focused on the miracles of Jesus. Of special notice have been his healing power and his power to cast out demons, both of which disturbed the leaders of the Jews who are all ready plotting to kill him. Jesus had insisted that he had come to teach in Mark 1:38, saying: "38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." In Mark 3, he had introduced his approach to teaching, which used parables to convey spiritual truths. In Mark 3:23-25, Mark recorded:

23 So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

A parable is a story from ordinary life that presents a profound, spiritual truth. The components of a parable are always true to life in every respect, unlike a fable, which may have talking animals and other features, which are not true to life. There is nothing in all of secular history to match Jesus teaching and his parables; of course, he was empowered with the Holy Spirit without measure and spoke the very words of God: "34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit." John 3:34-35

Mark opens with the Lord teaching many things by parables.

### Introduction

Mark 4:1-2

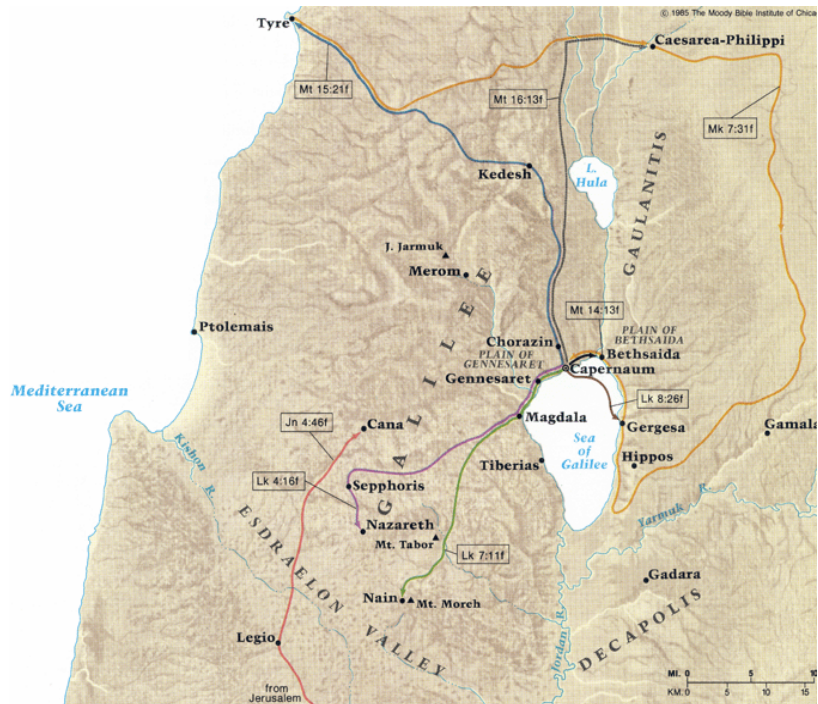
4 Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. 2 He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said:

With Capernaum so near the Sea of Galilee, it is easy to imagine that going to the sea, standing in a boat, and preaching to the multitudes on shore found the Lord with a perfect place to preach. What he taught them he did so using parables. This chapter continues with one of the most famous parables—the parable of the sower.

### The Parable of the Sower

Mark 4:3-8

3 "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew



*up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times."*

The parable of the sower speaks clearly for itself even though the listeners had difficult understanding them. This difficulty was, perhaps, because the spiritual concept of the kingdom of God was so foreign to them. In Mark 4:13-20, the Lord gives his apostles and those accompanying him the clear meaning of the parable.

### **Why the Lord Used Parables**

Mark 4:9-12

*9 Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

*10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. 11 He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12 so that,*

*"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,  
and ever hearing but never understanding;  
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"*

Mathew's account of this set of parables adds to the importance of hearing the Lord. Matt 13:16-17 reads:

*16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. 17 For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.*

The Lord gave the secret of the kingdom to the apostles and those near him. For those outside this group, he gave parables, and they would become the fulfillment of Isaiah 6:9-10. Their failure to perceive and understand would keep them from turning and being forgiven. Of course, the corollary to this principle is that those who perceive what they see and understand what they hear, may turn, and be forgiven.

### **The Parable of the Sower Explained**

Mark 4:13-20

*13 Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? 14 The farmer sows the word. 15 Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. 16 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 17 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. 20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop – thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown."*

The teacher may teach, but it is the student who must learn. What mother or father when teaching a child has not chided them: "Don't you understand?" After his rhetorical question, Jesus proceeds to explain the parable of the sower:

- Satan appears immediately to take the word from some people.



- Some receive the word with joy, and then last just a little while until when persecution and troubles hit, they fall away.
- Others hear the word but because of worries of this life, the deceitfulness of sin, or the desires for other things, they become unfruitful.
- Others hear the word, accept the word, and produce a crop.

Embedded in this parable is the principle of the instrumentality of God's word. God acts upon the hearts of people through his word. The apostles carried this principle into their own writings. Paul wrote in Rom 10:14:

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

Again in Rom 1:16: "16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." James and Peter taught that the new birth was by the word of God. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:22: "23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." James agreed with this writing in James 1:18: "18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."

### ***Bringing the Light into the Open***

Mark 4:21-23

21 He said to them, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand? 22 For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

Verse 21 is reminiscent of Matt 5:14-16:

14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Verse 22 presents a kingdom of heaven open, hiding nothing. People of today often want to suppose that there are great, unrevealed mysteries yet to come. While it is presumptuous to think that we know what God intends, it is not presumptuous to take the clear teaching of the apostles and prophets. Paul declared that Eph 3:4-5:

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

The church, of which we are members, has the *manifold wisdom of God*, according to Eph 3:10-11:

10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

One may only conclude that whatever was hidden, whatever was concealed, God has revealed in Christ. Anything beyond what God revealed is bogus. There are neither later day revelations nor interpretations.

## **Using What We Have**

Mark 4:24-25

24 "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you – and even more. 25 Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."

This teaching echoes the principles of the parable of the talents found in Matt 25:14-30. This teaching and the parable of the talent have had such profound affect on our culture that the original meaning of talent as *a measurement of weight* has given way to the metaphoric meaning of talent as *ability*:

Middle English, from Old English *talente*, from Latin *talenta*, plural of *talentum* unit of weight or money, from Greek *talanton* pan of a scale, weight; akin to Greek *tlēnai* to bear; in senses 2-5, from the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. *Webster's Online Dictionary*.

## **What the Kingdom of God Is Like**

Mark begins here with a set of parables from Jesus that explain the kingdom of heaven is by comparison to everyday matters with which his listeners are very familiar.

Mark 4:26-27

26 He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. 27 Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. 28 All by itself the soil produces grain – first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. 29 As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

This parable of growing seed illustrates that seed planted is always working, first spouting, then stalk, then head, and finally full kernel. When the grain is ripe, the harvest comes. This teaching runs like a fine thread throughout the New Testament. Paul eloquently used the analogy in 1 Cor 3:6-9:

6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

*The Revelation* explains the harvest with vivid imagery in Rev 14:15-16:

15 Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16 So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

However, in Matt 9:37-38, the Lord expressed the need for more harvesters:

37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Mark 4:30-32

30 Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. 32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden

plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."

Regardless of what we think about the size of the church, the kingdom of heaven, it is enormous. Rev 7:9 describes the extent of the great kingdom:

9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

Mark 4:33-34

33 *With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. 34 He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.*

The Lord explained everything to the disciple while he was with them. In Luke 24:25-27, Luke records a scene where the Lord is explaining the scriptures concerning himself:

25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

When the Lord left, he sent the Holy Spirit, whose work it was to inspire these men. The Lord taught them this in John 14:25-26:

25 "All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

### **Jesus' Power over Nature**

Mark 4:35-41`

35 *That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." 36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. 37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"*

39 *He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.*

40 *He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"*

41 *They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"*

Previously, Mark has shown the Lord using his power over sin, disease, and demons. Now he shows that the Lord has power over nature. Mark 6:47-50 is another account of this power:

47 *When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. 48 He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, 49 but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, 50 because they all saw him and were terrified.*

Each time the Lord conquered nature, the disciples became terrified.

## Mark 5: Jesus Continues His Miracles and Raises Jarius' Daughter from the Dead: Mark 5

Although Mark 4 focused on how Jesus used parables to teach the mysteries of the kingdom of God, the chapter closed with a vivid demonstration of his power over nature. Mark 4:39-41 reads:

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Our study of Mark 4 concluded, "Each time the Lord conquered nature, the disciples became terrified." Mark 5 proceeds with ever more powerful miracles that Jesus performed.

### Jesus Casts out Many Demons from One Man

Mark 5:1-5

5 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. 2 When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. 3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. 4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

This trip was evidently to Gergesa on the east bank of the Sea of Galilee. The scene itself is unsettling. A man living in tombs who could not be bound cries out continually and cuts himself with stones. The scripture clearly states: "A man with an evil spirit

### The Demons Know Who Jesus Is

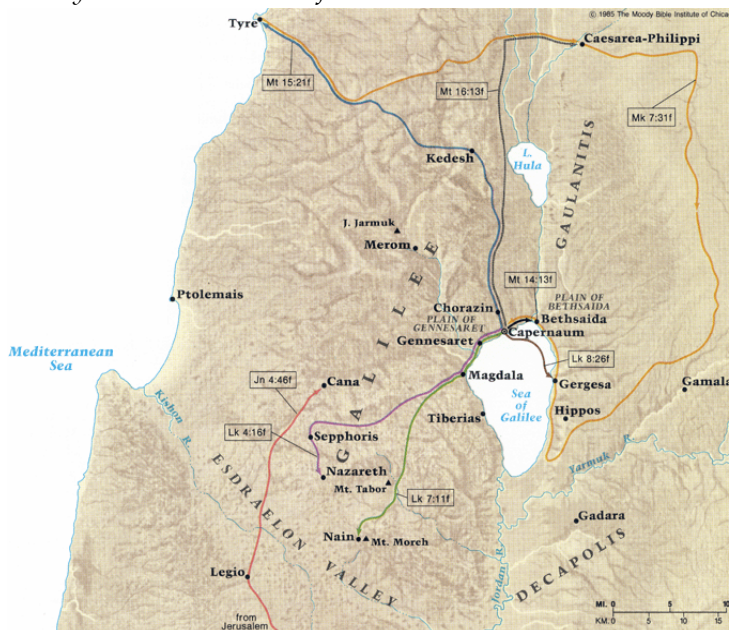
Mark 5:6-10

6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. 7 He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!" 8 For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!"

9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." 10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

Of first importance is the continuing fact that these evil spirits know Jesus. This one fell down on his knees to address Jesus. He expected Jesus to torture him and worse yet send him out of



the region. When asked for his name, he replied, "Legion for we are many." More significantly, the evil spirit begged that Jesus not send him out of the region. The fact that evil spirit was many and the fact that he did not want to be sent out of the region agree with Luke 11:24-26:

24 "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' 25 When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. 26 Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first."

For the evil spirit not wanting to leave speaks to how horrible their normal haunt is – a place described in Rev 18:2:

"Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!  
She has become a home for demons  
and a haunt for every evil spirit,  
a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.

### **Jesus Sends the Demons into a Herd of Pigs and the Pigs Drown in the Lake**

Mark 5:11-13

*11 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. 12 The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." 13 He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.*

As an alternative, the evil spirits begged that the Lord send them into a nearby herd of pigs, which he did. The pigs rushed into the lake and were drowned. The adage is true here: be careful what you ask for.

### **How the People Respond to Jesus' Miracle**

Mark 5:14-17

*14 Those tending the pigs ran off and they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man – and told about the pigs as well. 17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.*

Those who tended the pigs and the people who heard about the miracle of pigs running into the lake and the man, once demon-possessed, now dressed and in his right mind, were a afraid. The people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. This seems like an odd turn of events: why were the not welcoming the Lord warmly? One need only to look back to Mark 3:21 where his family seemed just as mystified by what he was doing: "21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind.'"

### **Jesus Instructs the Man**

Mark 5:18-20

*18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. 19 Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done*

*for you, and how he has had mercy on you." 20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.*

The demon-possessed man begged to go with Jesus, but Jesus sent him home to tell what the Lord had done for him. The man spread the word in the Decapolis (that is, five cities). All the people were amazed.

### **Jesus Goes to Jairus' Dying Daughter**

Mark 5:21-24

*21 When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. 22 Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet 23 and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." 24 So Jesus went with him.*

Mark now comes to Jairus' dying daughter. This miracle will extend the examples of Christ unlimited power of the Holy Spirit to the power over death. If seeing one raised from the dead will not produce faith in those witnessing it, what will? The Lord pronounced an interesting and profound eternal principle in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:27-31:

27 "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

29 "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'

30 "'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

31 "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Thus far, Mark's account has illustrated the Lord's power over sin, disease, evil spirits, nature, and death.

### **Jesus Heals a Woman Bleeding for 12 Years**

Mark 5:24-34

*A large crowd followed and pressed around him. 25 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. 26 She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. 27 When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." 29 Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.*

30 At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

31 "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"

32 But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. 33 Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

Jesus power is greater than that of all the doctors that she had seen. She approached the Lord with confidence in his power, thinking only to touch his clothes. Matthew has two accounts of this same unconditional faith when approaching the Lord. Matt 8:2-3 is an occasion where Jesus healed a leper:

2 A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

3 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy.

In Matt 8:5-13, Jesus healed the servant of a centurion without ever going to the servant. The Lord declared the greatness of the centurion's faith:

10 When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. . . . 13 Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very hour.

The miracles of the Lord were never dependent upon the faith of the subjects, since the power of the Holy Spirit resided in him without limitation. However, the object lesson here is that when we ask of the Lord, we should hold no doubts. James 1:6-8 teaches:

6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

## **Jesus Raises Jarius' Daughter**

Mark 5:35-43

35 *While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?"*

36 *Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."*

37 *He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. 38 When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. 39 He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." 40 But they laughed at him.*

*After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha kum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). 42 Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. 43 He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.*

The narrative switches back to Jarius' daughter, as men come from the house to Jarius, saying his daughter is dead. Once ore, Jesus focuses Jarius on his faith. "Just believe," the Lord said.

What follows is an intimate account of the raising of this girl. Mark must have gotten the details from Peter, his mentor and eyewitness. The witnesses among the disciples were restricted to Peter, James, and John. The people in the homes actually laughed at the Lord when he said that she was not dead. Further, the group of witnesses was restricted to these disciples plus the father and mother. That Mark knew that exact words spoken only before this limited group attests to Peter as his source. The Lord raises the girl; the chapter ends, leaving the people amazed, frightened, and laughing at the Lord – a bewildered lot, indeed.

## **Mark 6: Jesus in His Hometown, the Limited Commission, the Death of John, the Loaves and Fishes, and Walking on Water**

Once upon the west bank of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus proceeds to his hometown, Nazareth. The home folks meet him in ways one might not expect. Before going to the Nazareth episodes, it will help to summarize the attitudes of the people that he has met so far.

- Mark 1:22-23: "22 The people **were amazed at his teaching**, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law."
- Mark 1:27: "27 The people **were all so amazed** that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."
- Mark 2:6-7: "6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, **thinking to themselves**, 7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? **He's blaspheming!** Who can forgive sins but God alone?"
- Mark 2:12: 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. **This amazed everyone and they praised God**, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"
- Mark 2:23-24: 24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, **why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?**"
- Mark 3:2-3: 2 Some of them were **looking for a reason to accuse Jesus**, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath.
- Mark 3:6: 6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.
- Mark 3:21: 21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, **for they said, "He is out of his mind."**
- Mark 3:22: 22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "**He is possessed by Beelzebub!** By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."
- Mark 5:15-16: When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and **they were afraid**.
- Mark 5:17: Then the people began to **plead with Jesus to leave their region**.
- Mark 5:39-40: 39 He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." **40 But they laughed at him**.

The longer Jesus is around the more disenchanted the people become. In spite, of the great wonders performed, the beginnings of rejection and ultimate assassination emerge. He will find it doubly so in his hometown.

### ***Jesus in His Hometown***

Mark 6:1-3

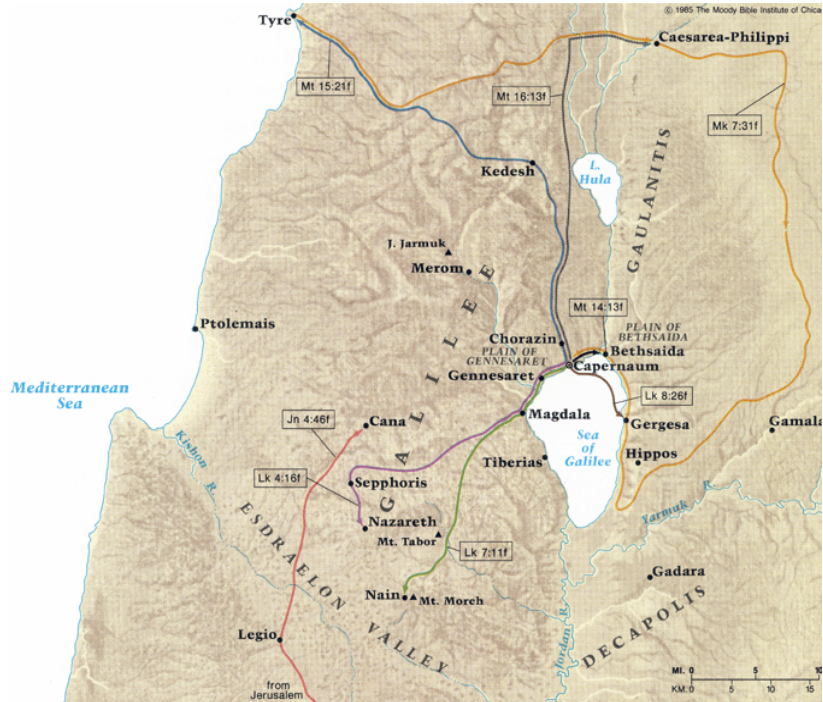
*6 Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. 2 When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.*



"Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! 3 Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

The people at the hometown synagogue were amazed, but in this case, the amazement led to six rhetorical questions. As with others they noted his wisdom, wondering where he got the things that he said. And oh, yes, he even does miracles. How astounded they sound. They recognized him as the carpenter, the son of Mary, brother of Mary's other son and the brother of her daughters. How can he be anyone special, they seem to be saying. "And they took offense at him" may indicate that the thought him to be uppity.

"Isn't this the carpenter," states an acknowledgement by the people of Jesus as a common tradesman, following his father Joseph in that profession. That carpentry in that day required the strength to fell trees and dress lumber



by hand testifies to the fact that Jesus must have been physically strong and muscular; and not weak and slight as some artist depict. Luke describes Jesus as he grew up in Luke 2:52: "52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and **stature** and in favor with God and men." Jesus was physically strong enough to single handedly drive those selling in the temple and the money changers with them out of the temple. John 2:13-16 offers the most details of his strength and commanding presence in driving out these people:

13 When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. 15 So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16 To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"

Mark 6:4-6

4 Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor." 5 He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. 6 And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.

In his wisdom, Jesus lays down a precept true for all time. John had recorded the principle in words that are used commonplace today in John 4:44-45: "44 (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.)" Now it is Jesus turn to be amazed, because of their lack of faith.

## **The Limited Commission**

Mark 6:7-13

*7 Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.*

*8 These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. 9 Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. 10 Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. 11 And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them."*

*12 They went out and preached that people should repent. 13 They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.*

The limited commission sent the apostles two by two to preach that people should repent. The Lord gave them authority over evil spirits and power to heal people. These miraculous gifts were to confirm that their word was truly the word of the Lord. The limited commission stands in contrast to the great commission where the apostles were to preach the gospel to the whole creation. The two commissions have in common the accompaniment of the spirituals to confirm their preaching as the true word of God. Mark records in Mark 16:20: "20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it."

The instruction: "11 And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them," holds true today. We must preach and teach, but we cannot compel people to obey.

## **King Herod and John the Baptist**

Mark 6:14-16

*14 King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."*

*15 Others said, "He is Elijah."*

*And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago."*

*16 But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!"*

The story of the death of John the Baptist is at once compelling and interesting and at the same time gruesome and wicked. Perhaps there is no story so shrouded with evil. King Herod, who was awful in his wickedness, was a son of Herod the Great and tetrarch of Galilee, according to Luke 3:1-3:

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar – when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.

The subdividing of the kingdom of Herod the Great had left Herod's son Antipas the tetrarch in position to play a historic role in the demise of both John the Baptist and Jesus the Lord and Savior. In the present context, Herod has John beheaded. Later he will play a significant role in the death of the Lord, according to Luke 23:6-12:

6 On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. 7 When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

8 When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. 9 He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. 10 The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. 11 Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. 12 That day Herod and Pilate became friends – before this they had been enemies.

This very act of belittling the Lord and playing up to Pilate will lead to the downfall of Herod, since it placed him on the side of Tiberius the reigning Roman. Later, when Tiberius died Caligula became Emperor, and his own nephew Agrippa, brother of Herodias, he made king of Antipas' extended territory. Antipas was exiled to Gaul, The place of his exile is given by Josephus' *Antiquities* as "Lugdunum" in Gaul. (This may mean the city of Lugdunum now known as Lyon.)

Herod, showing his superstition insisted that Jesus was John the one whom he had beheaded raised from the dead.

Mark 6:17-26

17 For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. 18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, 20 because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

The rub with John whom he liked came about when John preached against the adulterous marriage to Herodias. Antipas had married the daughter of King Aretas IV of Nabatea. On a visit to Rome he stayed with his half-brother Herod Philip II and there fell in love with Philip's wife, Herodias. Herod feared and protected John against the grudge held by Herodias.

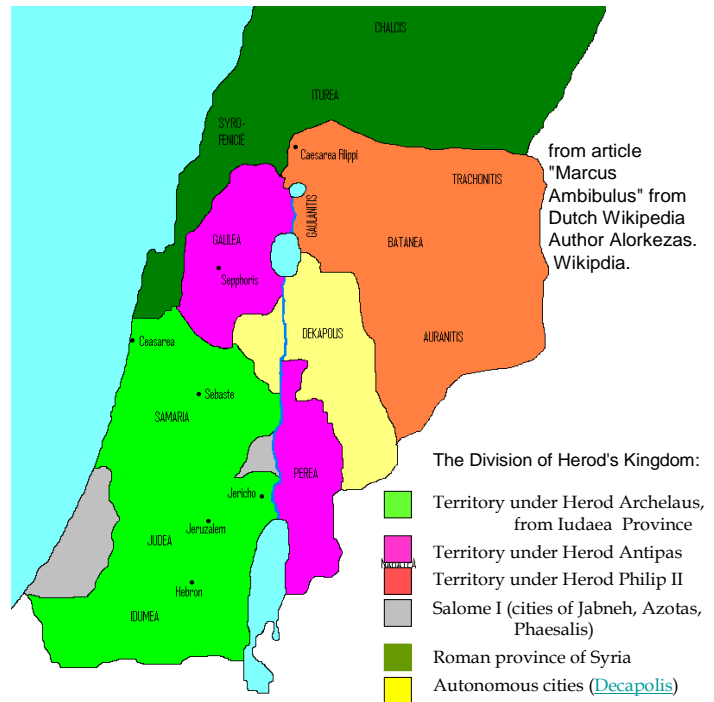
Mark 6:21-29

21 Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. 22 When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." 23 And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom."

24 She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?"

"The head of John the Baptist," she answered.



25 *At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter."*

26 *The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. 27 So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, 28 and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. 29 On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.*

The story speaks for itself. Herod was willing to give up to half his kingdom for the favor of Herodias' daughter. All of this occurred prior to Christ expressing his intent to build his church. In Matthews account, the beheading of John the Baptist occurs in Matt 14. Matthew 14:13ff tells the story. However, in Matthew 16, Jesus says that he will build his church. In Matt 16:18-20, the Lord declared his intent:

18 *And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

Chronologically, there is no way that John the Baptist could have founded the church.

### ***The Return of the Apostles***

Mark 6:30-36

30 *The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. 31 Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."*

32 *So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. 33 But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.*

35 *By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. 36 Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."*

One can only imagine the scene—the apostles returning, people gathering around, the Lord listening to their report. They were so busy and pressed by the crowd that they did not even have a chance to eat. Then Jesus realized their need for rest and quite. The lesson is clear for today: Christians must take time to rest. *Burning the candle at both ends* is always a mistake even if we do it in the name of the Lord. Rest and recreation are an important part of the Christian life.

However, the people ran ahead of them and Jesus began teaching. The disciples notice that it was late in the day and implored that he send the people away to buy them something to eat.

### ***The Miracle of Loaves and Fishes***

Mark 6:37-44

37 *But he answered, "You give them something to eat."*

*They said to him, "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"*

38 "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see."

When they found out, they said, "Five – and two fish."

39 Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. 41 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. 42 They all ate and were satisfied, 43 and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. 44 The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

This example of Jesus power is accentuated by the number of people fed (5,000) from five loaves and two fish. Now we see Jesus with power over matter and the ability to create new matter in vast quantities. From nothing came something. No big bang, no slow evolution of those loaves and fishes; but they appeared by Christ's power of creation. This miracle, more than any other, demonstrates the power of the eternal son of God: the power to create the heavens and earth. John wrote in John 1:1-3:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning.

3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

In Mark 8:1-10, Jesus will present another miracle of creating bread and feeding 4,000 people

### **Walking on Water**

Mark 6:45-56

45 Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46 After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

47 When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. 48 He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, 49 but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, 50 because they all saw him and were terrified.

Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." 51 Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, 52 for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

53 When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. 54 As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. 55 They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he went – into villages, towns or countryside – they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

The miracle of walking on the water demonstrates Jesus power over the laws that govern the material world. In this case, he has power over gravity, which would demand that he sink, being heavier than the water that holds him. These miracles taken together show how hard it was to get the disciples to believe. In verse 50, when they see him, they are terrified. In verse 51, they were completely amazed? In verse 52, they did not understand about the loaves, because their hearts were hardenend.

Mark 6 closes with Jesus continuing to heal the sick wherever he goes.

## **Mark 7: Holding on to the Traditions of Men, What Is Clean and Unclean, Visit to Tyre and Return to Galilee**

This chapter contains comprehensive teachings of the Lord that cut to the very heart of Jewish error, as they had departed far from the teachings of the Old Testament in favor of their traditions. The principles taught here by the Lord are as applicable to 21<sup>st</sup> century religious error as they were to the teaching of the Jews in Jesus time. When testing false teachings in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one ought to ask, "Is this teaching from God or men.

### ***The Traditions of Men***

Mark 7:1-4

*7 The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and 2 saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," that is, unwashed. 3 (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. 4 When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)*

The Pharisees and some teachers of the law had come all the way from Jerusalem. Mark previously has recorded how they were always out to get him. Here they are testing Jesus and once again trying to entrap him. The disciples were eating food without the ceremonial washing of their hands as Jewish tradition demanded. The ceremonial washing of hands and cooking utensils was not a requirement of the Law of Moses. This passage adds many details about the tradition of the Jews not found in Matthew 15:1-10, a parallel passage.

Paul also taught that we should not follow the traditions of men in Col 2:8:

8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

In fact, Paul extended this prohibition to the ceremonial requirement of the Old Testament in Col 2:16-17:

16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Many are the traditions of men practiced today—Easter, Christmas, infant baptism, instrumental music, clerical vestments, separation of clergy and laity—the list is endless.

Mark 7:5-8

*5 So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"*

*6 He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:*

*"These people honor me with their lips,*

*but their hearts are far from me.*

*7 They worship me in vain;*

*their teachings are but rules taught by men.'*

*8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."*

Why did the disciples of Jesus not keep the traditions of the Jewish elders is the question that they raise. Jesus quoted Isaiah and applied the prophecy to these Jewish leaders. The point Jesus makes is that teaching and rules of men creates vain (empty) worship. The application is clear: one cannot keep the commands of God and hold to the traditions of men. An easy test of truth versus tradition is a simply question: where is that in the word of God.

Mark 7:9-13

*9 And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' 11 But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), 12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. 13 Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."*

In his refutation, Jesus picked a tradition that more than any other established the reputation of the Jews as being greedy and unscrupulous. Their unscriptural religious ceremony would actually excuse them from scripturally caring for their needy parents. Jesus notes that they do many things like that. How different is the teaching of Jesus? Paul taught in 1 Tim 5:7-8:

7 Give the people these instructions, too, so that no one may be open to blame. 8 If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Matt 23 is an entire chapter where Jesus preaches against the traditions of the Jews, pronouncing woe upon woe on them for these departures from the word of God.

What can be wrong with these additions in faith and practice, one might ask? The answer is that human traditions nullify the word of God. If by tradition, men insert a new baptism, a new name, a new item of worship, etc., they "nullify the word of God."

### ***What Is Clean and Unclean***

Mark 7:14-19

*14 Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. 15 Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'"*

*17 After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. 18 "Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? 19 For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.")*

By this teaching, Jesus declared all foods "clean." He thus set the stage to focus on the inward man and on what comes out of the inward man. The Lord repeats this lesson in order to convince Peter to take the gospel to the Gentiles whom the Jews considered unclean. The lesson to Peter came in the form of a dream, which he had three times in Acts 10:9-15ff:

9 . . . Peter went up on the roof to pray. 10 He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. 11 He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. 12 It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. 13 Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

14 "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

15 The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

This declaration of the Lord to Peter, as the one in Mark, declares all food clean.

Mark 7:20-23

20 He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' 21 For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. 23 All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"

All these sins are sins of the heart, and they make a person unclean. To find a sin not included in this list seems impossible.

What Mark recorded here, Matthew recorded in Matthew 15. Moderns often teach that Jesus did not forbid homosexuality and other forms of sexual permissiveness. *Sexual immorality*, coming from the Greek root that gives us our word *pornography*, includes all sexually immoral acts. Strong summarizes these:

porne (por'-nay); feminine; a strumpet; figuratively, an idolater: KJV - harlot, whore.

porneuo (porn-yoo'-o); to act the harlot, i.e. (literally) indulge unlawful lust (of either sex), or (figuratively) practice idolatry: KJV - commit (fornication).

porneia (por-ni'-ah); harlotry (including adultery and incest); figuratively, idolatry: KJV - fornication.

(Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

Sexual immorality is only illustrative here. Jesus forbade all these evils. His teaching and its meaning is as true today as it was when he taught it.

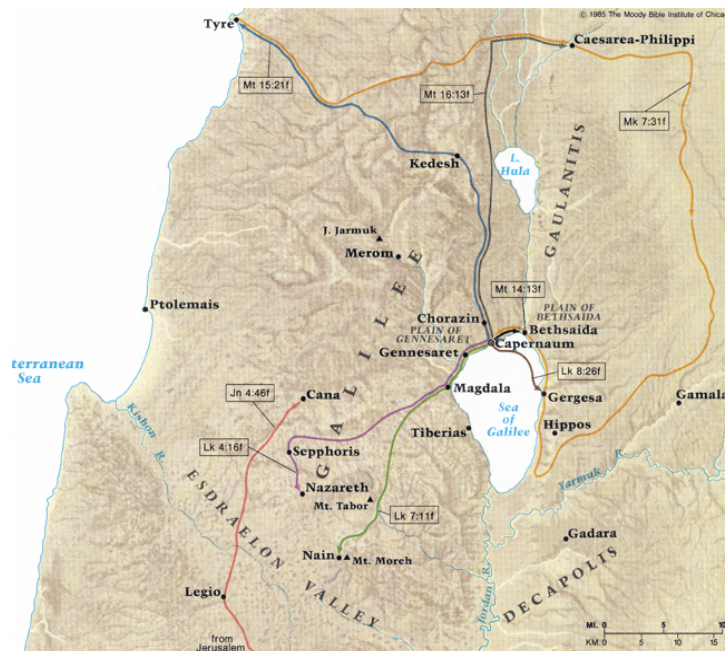
## Visit to Tyre

Mark 7:24-30

24 Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. 25 In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. 26 The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

27 "First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."

28 "Yes, Lord," she replied, "but even the dogs under the table eat the children's





crumbs."

29 Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter."

30 She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Jesus once again seeks solitude, perhaps to rest. Perhaps he was trying to escape the frantic crowds attracted to him, or to escape the notice of the Pharisees and leaders of the Jews stalking him. He is in a city, Tyre, which is not predominately Jewish. In fact, the woman was a Gentile of Syrian Phoenicia. Even as a Greek, she fell at Jesus feet and begged him to drive out the demon from her daughter. These facts are necessary to understand the allegory that follows.

Jews considered all Gentiles as dogs, one of the most derisive, contemptible insults possible (Muslims still refer to Christians as dogs). In the allegory, the children are the children of Israel. The bread is the bread of life. The dogs are the gentiles. Jesus used this same figure of bread in John 6:32-33:

32 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Thus, he raises the issue of whether his word should go to the Gentiles before the Jews have all they want. Ordinarily, the answer, given the contempt of the Jews for the Gentiles, would be *no!* The desperate woman extends the metaphor by saying that in real life the dogs are allowed the crumbs from the children's table. The woman's desperation is akin to that of a starving dog eating crumbs as if to say, "Give me this one crumb from your table, Lord."

Jesus responded to her answer and her child was healed

## **Return to Galilee**

Mark 7:31-37

31 Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. 32 There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man.

33 After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. 34 He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means, "Be opened!"). 35 At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

36 Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. 37 People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Sidon was about thirty miles north of Tyre. Jesus took a route that led him through Sidon to the Decapolis (a region of ten independent cities).

Mark 7 concludes with Jesus healing the deaf man, amazing and overwhelming the people by his power.



## Mark 8: More Loaves and Fish, Yeast of the Pharisees, His Impending Rejection, and “Take up My Cross”

Mark 8 opens with another miracle of loaves and fish. Mark recorded the first in Mark 6:33-44. It was after this first miracle, where Jesus had created enough to feed, a group of 5,000 men (Woman and children were not included.), that he had questioned the disciples’ faith. Mark 6:50-52 records the incident:

Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." 51 Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, 52 for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

In spite of being eyewitnesses to his power, they failed to believe and understand. The lesson of Mark 6 is repeated in Mark 8.

### Another Miracle of the Loaves and Fish

Mark 8:1-10

8 During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 2 "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. 3 If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."

4 His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?"

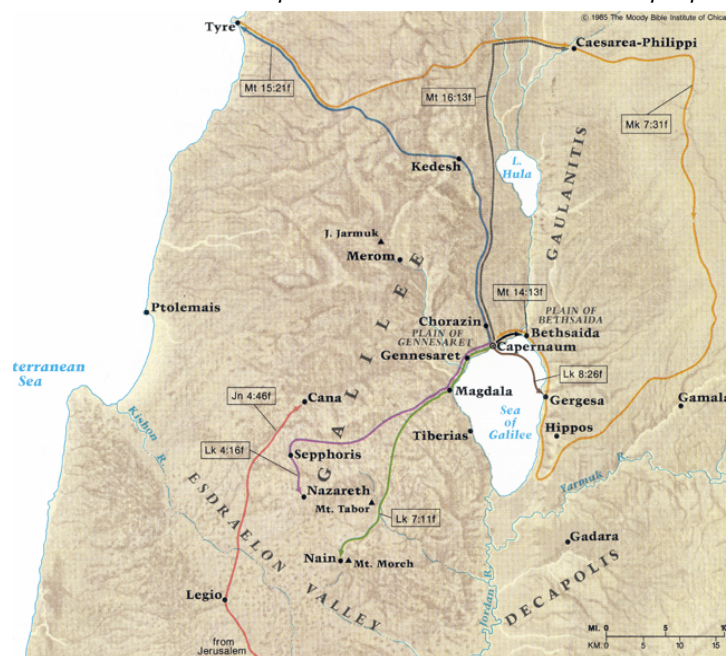
5 "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked.

"Seven," they replied.

6 He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so. 7 They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. 8 The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 9 About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away, 10 he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

Mark uses the word *compassion* in regard to Jesus 6 times. Paul charges us to emulate Jesus and put on compassion in Col 3:12-14:

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have



against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Once again, the disciples are bewildered, as Jesus repeats the miracle, feeding a multitude which included 4,000 men. After this, they departed for the region of Dalmanutha—a region with no other historical reference. However, one might assume that this was the region on the western coast of the Sea of Galilee; for Matt 15:39—a parallel passage reports that they left for Magadan, a city on that coast: “9 After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.” Without Biblical or historical proof, some think Magadan was the home of Mary Magdalene, saying that Magadan was Magdala.

### ***The Yeast of the Pharisees and Herod***

Mark 8:11-13

*11 The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. 12 He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it." 13 Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.*

Jesus did not do miracles on demand. On this and other occasions, the Jews tested him asking for signs. Even at his death, Jesus did not oblige them. For example, Herod sought a sign in Luke 23:8:

8 When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle.

Jesus himself claimed the power to command powerful signs in Matt 26:53-54:

53 Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?

Those who crucified him taunted him in Matt 27:40:

40 and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"

Of course, Christ would not ever oblige a challenge that caused him to go against the will of the Father. In 1 Cor 1:22-25, Paul wrote:

22 Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

To fulfill the scriptures, Jesus did nothing to avoid his humiliating destiny.

Mark 8:14-21:

*14 The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. 15 "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."*

*16 They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread."*

*17 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? 18 Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but*

*fail to hear? And don't you remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"*

*"Twelve," they replied.*

*20 "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"*

*They answered, "Seven."*

*21 He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"*

This passage offers a contrast between the Lord's warning about the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod and the disciples being concerned for bread that they might eat. Matthew offers a sequential account of this discussion in Matt 16:5-12:

*5 When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. 6 "Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."*

*7 They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread."*

*8 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? 9 Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? 10 Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? 11 How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 12 Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

Herod is used in Mark's account because of the Herodians, a political party supporting Herod, who were seeking to kill Jesus from the beginning in Mark 3:6: "6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus." Political philosophy and false religions often will align themselves to attack Christ and his Church.

### ***A Blind Man Healed***

Mark 8:22-26

*22 They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. 23 He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"*

*24 He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."*

*25 Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village."*

This miracle speaks for itself; but skeptics often use it to claim that the spit had medicinal value as they try to destroy the miraculous nature of the miracles of the Lord.

### ***"You are the Christ"***

Mark 8:27-30

*27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"*

28 *They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."*

29 *"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"*

*Peter answered, "You are the Christ."*

30 *Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.*

Once again, Matthew's account of this episode confirms Mark's account and adds detail in Matt 16:13-20:

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." 20 Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

### ***Jesus Teaches about His Impending Rejection***

Mark 8:31-33

31 *He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.*

32 *He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.*

33 *But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."*

This is the beginning of Jesus teaching about his death, burial, and resurrection. Later, Paul will describe these events retrospectively as the very elements of the gospel (good news) about Christ. In 1 Cor 15:3-5, Paul wrote:

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.

Peter, who apparently did not like the idea of the Lord's sacrifice, rebuked him. At that, Jesus rebuked Peter, calling him Satan. The power of the Lord is evident, because even archangels' did not rebuke Satan. Jude 9-10 states:

9 But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Jesus had established his power over Satan at the time of his temptations, rebuking him with scriptures three times in Matt 4.

## **Disciples Must Take up His Cross**

Mark 8:34-38

*34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? 37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."*

Mark 8 ends with Jesus giving the standard for discipleship. To go with Jesus, then and now, one must:

- Deny ones self, take up his cross, and follow him.
- Lose his life for the Lord and the Gospel.
- Not be ashamed of the Lord and his words.

Two questions should haunt ever one who is not a Christians: What good is it to gain the world and lose ones soul? What will a man exchange for his soul?

Finally, if we are ashamed of the Lord before the horrible generation in which we live, we will be ashamed of us before the father. An eternal principle prevails as stated in Luke 12:8-10:

8 "I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. 9 But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God. 10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

## Mark 9: The Coming of the Kingdom and the Impending Betrayal of the Lord

Mark 8 closed with the Lord emphasizing a spiritual situation that will save one's soul: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? 37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mark 9 carries this concept into a discussion of the kingdom of God.

### ***The Coming Kingdom***

Mark 9:1

*And he said to them, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."*

There are two truths evident in this passage: The kingdom of heaven would come in the lives of some in the audience. The kingdom of God would come with power. The apostles were told to wait for this day. In Acts 1:3-5, Jesus, speaking of the kingdom of God, said that power would come to them in Jerusalem along with the gift of the Father:

He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

All those who teach and profess that the kingdom is yet to come are false teachers who in word and deed rebuke the Lord, just as Peter did in chapter 8. In Acts 1:7-8, Jesus spoke of the power to come on the day of Pentecost:

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

These scriptures plainly refute that premillennial teaching which holds that somehow the kingdom is yet to come. Before Pentecost, the kingdom of God is spoken of as an event yet to come. After Pentecost it is always spoken of as being in existence:

Col 1:12-14:

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and **brought us into the kingdom of the Son** he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Heb 12:28-29:

28 Therefore, since **we are receiving a kingdom** that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

Rev 1:5-6:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and **has made us to be a kingdom and priests** to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

“Brought us” and “made us” in these passages are past tense noting action already accomplished. “Are receiving” is a present tense, progressive verb stating an action continuing in the present. Christ established his kingdom in the time of some living in Mark 9:1.

### ***The Mount of Transfiguration***

Mark 9:2-8

*2 After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. 4 And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.*

*5 Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." 6 (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)*

*7 Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"*

*8 Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.*

Peter would refer to this transforming event in his life in 2 Peter 1:16-18:

*16 We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.*

This episode is about the *power and coming* of the Lord, emphasizing that he is to be heard and not the prophets. Jesus message has transcended the traditions of the Jews up to this point in Mark’s narrative. From this point forward, it will transcend the teaching of the Old Testament prophets by fulfilling their teachings, as Jesus himself said in Matt 5:17:

*“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”*

The Hebrew writer made plain that we are to hear Christ in Heb 1:1-3:

*1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

### ***The Coming Resurrection***

Mark 9:9-13

*9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant.*

*11 And they asked him, "Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"*



12 Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? 13 But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him."

The statement that Jesus would be raised from the dead lingered with the disciples. The teachers of law used Mal 4:5-6 to look for Elijah:

5 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

In Matt 11:11-15, Jesus explained fully that John the Baptist was the Elijah to come:

1 I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. 15 He who has ears, let him hear.

John had come, and Herod beheaded him. Now the Christ would suffer and be rejected. Matt 17:12-13 adds to Mark's account:

12 But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." 13 Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

### **Some Demons Cast out by Prayer**

Mark 9:14-29

14 When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. 15 As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

16 "What are you arguing with them about?" he asked.

17 A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. 18 Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."

19 "O unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

20 So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

21 Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"

"From childhood," he answered. 22 "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

23 "'If you can'?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."

24 Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."

26 The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

28 After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

29 He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."

We know that Jesus gave the apostles the power to drive out evil spirits in Mark 3:14-15: "14 He appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons." Why this spirit required prayer in order to be driven out is not stated. As before, the Greek word for *evil* is *unclean*. Other passages in Mark that describe evil spirits are Mark 1:27, 3:11, 5:13, and 6:7.

## **The Resurrection Foretold**

Mark 9:30-32

30 They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, 31 because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." 32 But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

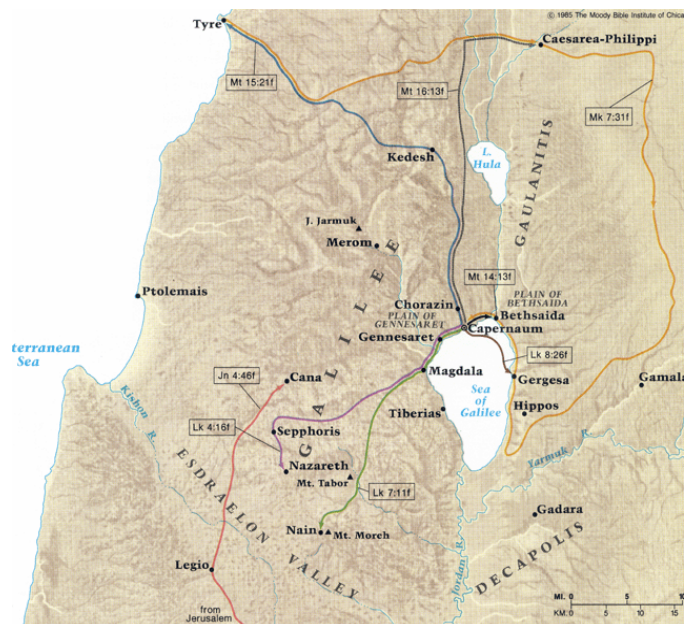
The place that they left is the regions around Caesarea Philippi. As they passed through Galilee, Jesus began to teach them about his betrayal, killing, and resurrection after three days in the grave. Once again, the disciples do not understand what he meant. This general misunderstanding continued until after his death. Luke 24:25-27 has the resurrected Lord explaining:

25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Rejection and suffering were prerequisite for the Lord to enter into his glory. In Luke 24:32, the disciples understood that he had opened the scriptures: "32 They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'"

Finally, in Luke 24:45-49, the Lord places these events in perspective to the power that is to come from on high, signally the kingdom coming with power (Mark 9:1):

45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all



nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Jesus followed a path of rejection, suffering, and death in order to be raised and exalted; so also, we must follow that path of denial in order to be justified. His teaching will now turn to how the first shall be last and the last first in this unusual spiritual kingdom.

### ***The First Shall Be Last***

Mark 9:33-35

*33 They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" 34 But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.*

*35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."*

*36 He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."*

The twelve were still looking to the greatness that comes with a material kingdom, and they argued about who was the greatest. Perhaps, they had a glimmer of the spiritual greatness demanded by the Lord, because when they were asked, they kept quiet, as if not wanting the Lord to know what they were talking about. But he knew anyway and taught them that if one wants to be first he must last—a servant of all. In the illustration the child is unto Christ as Christ is unto the father. Paul taught this lesson of humility and service in 1 Cor 12:24-26:

But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

### ***Works in the Name of the Lord***

Mark 9:38-41

*38 "Teacher," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us."*

*39 "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, 40 for whoever is not against us is for us. 41 I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward."*

This passage does not teach that one can be saved by doing works in the name of the Lord. In fact, Matt 7:21-23 teaches that many who do great things in the name of the Lord (including driving out demons) will be condemned:

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

What it does teach is that those who do good works in the name of Christ works will not say anything bad about the Lord. The principal eternal is "whoever in not against us is for us."

The second thing taught is that, while doing good works in the name of the Lord will not save one, it certainly will not cause one to lose his reward. For this very reason, Paul could rejoice when people were doing him in, because the gospel advanced. Phil 1:15-18 tells Paul's story:

15 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. . . . 17 The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 18 But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

### ***Entering the Kingdom of God Versus Being Thrown in Hell***

Mark 9:42-49

42 "And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. 43 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, 48 where

" 'their worm does not die,  
and the fire is not quenched.' "

49 Everyone will be salted with fire.

The spiritual triumphs over the physical every time in the kingdom of heaven: It is better to drown in the sea than to cause a little one to sin. It is better to be maimed than sin and go into hell where the fire never goes out? It is better to be crippled than sin and be thrown into hell. It is better to be blind than sin and be thrown into hell. It is in hell where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

The Lord teaches that everyone will be salted by fire which metaphorically means tested by trials and temptations. The Lord said in Luke 12:49-50, "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" Peter applied the principle in 1 Peter 1:6-7, where the saints had their faith proved by the fire of trials:

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Paul also used this figure in 1 Cor 3:11-15:

11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

Mark 9:50

50 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

Here salt is the spiritual nature (saltiness) of the disciples. Matthew recorded a similar usage in Matt 5:13: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men."

## Mark 10: Jesus Teaches in Judea, across the Jordan, and up to Jerusalem

In Mark 10, Jesus departs to new regions. Having taught in Galilee and the Decapolis and traveled as far as Sidon on the Mediterranean Sea and to the north to Caesarea Philippi. The chapter begins by noting that he continued his custom of teaching. In Mark 1:38-39, he explains his reason for coming:

38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else — to the nearby villages — so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Leaving Galilee, he travels and teaches in Judea, across the Jordan and up to Jerusalem.

### Marriage and Divorce

Mark 10:1-4

10 Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them.

2 Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

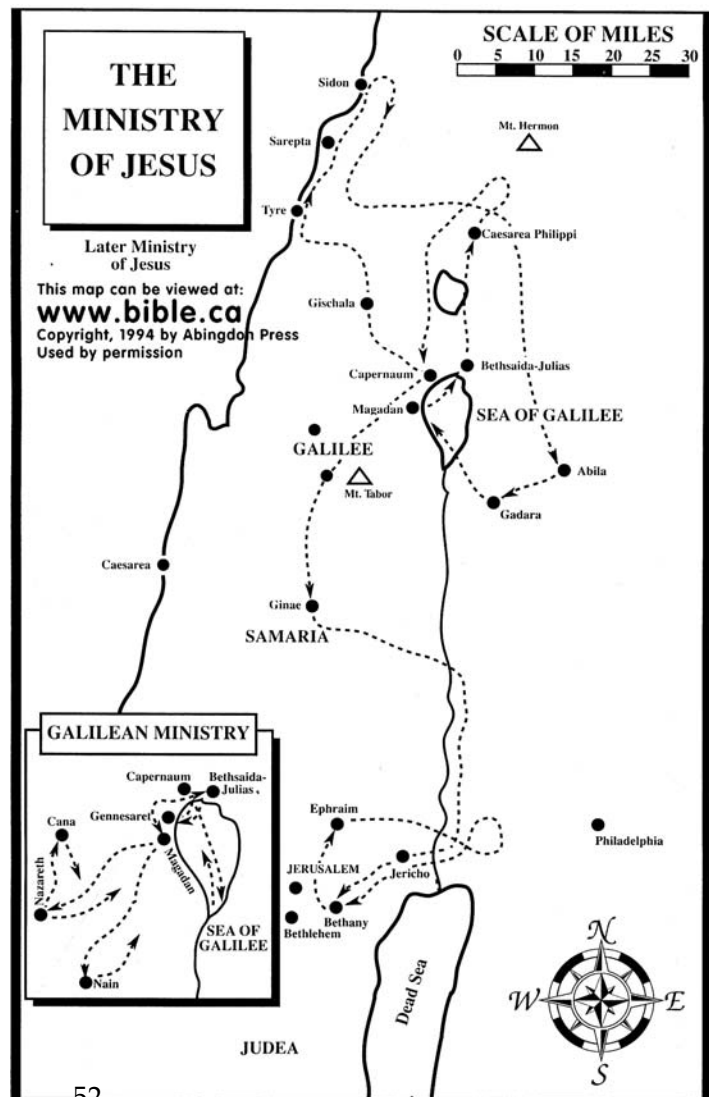
3 "What did Moses command you?" he replied.

4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

As was their usual practice, the Pharisees come and test him with the statement, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife." Up to this point, Jesus had been opposed to the human traditions enforced by the Jewish leaders. We also know (but the Lord's audience did not know) that the Mount of Transfiguration foreshadowed the fulfillment of the Law and prophets and established that all mankind must listen to the Lord. God the Father Said: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

The question they posed was a good one because it was not from their traditions but from Moses himself. He had written in Deut 24:1:

24 If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate



of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, . . .

Mark 10:5-9

*5 "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. 6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh. 'So they are no longer two, but one. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."*

Jesus taught that Moses wrote his statement because the Jews had hardened their hearts, quoting the original law God had laid down as an eternal principle in Gen 2:23-24:

23 The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones

and flesh of my flesh;

she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

Even the Old Testament writers condemned divorce. Malachi wrote in Mal 2:15-16:

15 Has not [the Lord] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

16 "I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the Lord Almighty.

So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.

The two become one flesh principle also applies to illicit sexual relations of all kinds. Paul wrote in 1 Cor 6:13-17:

The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

Mark 10:10-12

*10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11 He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."*

Matthew's account offers more detail in Matt 19:8-12:

8 Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. 9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

10 The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

11 Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. 12 For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

Verses 11-12 require extreme action to avoid the adulterous situation of verse 9. One should look back to the preceding chapter for insight into this requirement. Jesus had taught in Mark 9:43: "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out." The conclusion is that one does not have to have sexual relations to live a full life before the Lord.

Our world, as theirs, allows legal divorce breaking God's eternal law. These divorces are called no-fault divorces. No Fault Divorce is defined:

No-fault divorce is a divorce in which the dissolution of a marriage requires neither a showing of wrongdoing of either party nor any evidentiary proceedings at all. Laws providing for no-fault divorce allow a family court to grant a divorce in response to a petition by either party to the marriage, without requiring the petitioner to provide evidence that the respondent has committed a breach of the marital contract. . . . Since October 15th, 2010 no-fault divorce has been legal in all 50 U.S. states, and the District of Columbia.

Christians must remember that what is legal—divorce for reasons other than marital unfaithfulness—may be sinful before the laws of God. There are two scripture reasons for severing the marriage ties other than for sexual unfaithfulness. One is death. Paul explained this in Rom 7:1-3:

7 Do you not know, brothers — for I am speaking to men who know the law — that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? 2 For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. 3 So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

The second reason for severing the marriage is when an unbelieving spouse leaves a believing spouse. Paul explains in 1 Cor 7:12-16:

12 To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. 16 How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

The believing spouse, when deserted, is not bound to the unbeliever, anymore than a living spouse is bound to a dead spouse.

Of last consideration, the overarching rule of God is Paul's statement in 1 Cor 7:17: "Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches." Paul's teaching is important because it addresses the situation of those who were divorced for some other reason than sexual unfaithfulness, perhaps even years before obeying the gospel. This issue divides



churches all across the fellowship. Some argue that divorces prior to ones obedience of the gospel cannot be remedied; rather these Christians should remain in the place in life that the Lord assigned, and God called. The forgiveness resulting from baptism is complete, regardless of what happened before. In their mind, the adultery involved is forgiven just as murder would be forgiven.

Others say the state of marriage, after a divorce for reason other than adultery, leaves the participants of the second marriage in a state of perpetual adultery where the sin continues without repentance. It is argued that previously divorced Christians for reasons other than adultery and who are in another marriage at the time they are baptized are living in adultery; therefore, they must leave the marriage, repenting of the sin of adultery, or they must live in the marriage having no sexual relations with a spouse of this second marriage. Failure to do so leaves the couple in a perpetual adultery.

Complex social situation from these divorces create a sea of trouble, heartache, and guilt, making them issues where the individual involved must decide the right or wrong. They are individual problems rather than congregational problems. The divorce issues are deep personal and individual issues involving the person's conscience and sets of past circumstances and facts that others are unlikely to know.

Some in the fellowship of churches argue the right and wrong of these personal issues without resolution but, often times, with the division of congregations. While one may not be able to settle conclusively in the minds of all the scriptural authority of the positions taken on these issues, it is true division is certainly sin. Of the work of the flesh named by Paul, eight were divisive sins in Gal 5:19-21:

19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

When a congregation confronts these complex situations of difference, the guiding rules for discussion should be Gal 5:22-23:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Real life cases, where resolutions of previous divorces are necessary, occur seldom, if ever, in a congregation. The best part of wisdom would be not to take positions based on hypothetical situations, the disagreement upon which can likely divide the church. When actual situations occur, the church should avail itself of two principles laid down by Paul. The first is to let the wise among the church decide. Paul wrote in 1 Cor 6:4-6:

4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! 5 I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?

Although in context, Paul is talking about avoiding going to law against another Christian, his statement offers an avenue of escape from the divisive consequences of all out confrontation and dispute in the congregation over someone's previous divorce. Also, in all difficult matters, each member should consider the other members better than themselves. Again, Paul wrote in Phil 2:3-4:

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

In all matters, the congregation should seek peace within the congregation not division; the inclusion members in the congregation and not exclusion. Both Jesus and his apostles recognized the difficulty in these situations in Matt 19:

10 The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

11 Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given."

### **Such as Little Children**

Mark 10:13-16

*13 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.*

This is the second time Jesus spoke about children in Mark. In Mark 9:36-37, he taught:

36 He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

In both scriptures, Jesus spoke of children as being in a state of approval: Christ is with little children and to be welcomed with them. In the present passage, the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these children, and anyone who receives the kingdom of heaven must be like a little child. Matt 19:13-14 and Luke 18:16-17 record this same teaching. The apparent conclusion is that children are free from the burden of sin; thus they are safe from the consequence of sin. The New Testament never requires children to obey the gospel. In fact, those obeying the gospel are always adults, men and women. The acts of gospel obedience require an adult mind to execute them. Acts 2:38 requires repentance; Matt 28:19-20 requires teaching and obedience to all things that the Lord has taught; Mark 16:16 requires belief.

Many churches practice infant baptism—a doctrine that denies the innocence of infants and children by holding to some form or the other to original sin and, thus, the need for baptism. The original sin holds that humanity is in a state of sin resulting from the Fall of Man. The range of effect on infants that some hold for this sin is broad with the most extreme condition being total depravity or automatic guilt for all humans from birth.

"Original sin," "total depravity", "automatic guilt", and "ancestral sin" are not found in the Bible, yet the practice of infant baptism grew out of these words of false doctrine. Following the Roman Catholic lead, many denominations practice infant baptism, including Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, Oriental Orthodoxy, Armenian Apostolic Church, Assyrian Church of the East, the Anglican churches, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, some Church of the Nazarene, the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Canada, the United Church of Christ (UCC), and the Continental Reformed.

Those churches affected by the Great Enlightenment of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries do not baptize infants: the Baptists, Apostolic Christians, most Pentecostals, Mennonites, Amish, Plymouth Brethren, Seventh-day Adventists, most non-denominational churches, and other Arminian denominations. Infant baptism is also excluded by Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians, and Latter Day Saints.

Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ, who aim to restore New Testament Christianity, reject the infant baptism practice since there is no scripture that teaches it and no apostolic example of it ever being done in the New Testament. They also teach that no infant could ever accomplish the New Testament requirements for obeying the gospel: hearing, learning, believing, repenting, confessing, etc.

The doctrine of original sin was not a teaching of the New Testament, having first appeared in the late 2nd-century by Bishop of Lyon Irenaeus (c. 130–202). Irenaeus believed that Adam's sin had grave consequences for humanity, that it is the source of human sinfulness, mortality and enslavement to sin, and that all human beings participate in his sin and share his guilt. As one might expect, the false practice of infant baptism quickly followed the false teaching that infants are enslaved to sin. However, the writings of the first century and early second century include baptism for only adults and never for children.

## ***Earthly Wealth***

Mark 10:17-22

*17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

*18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good – except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'"*

*20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."*

*21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

*22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.*

Almost all know, well and true, the story of the rich young ruler, who asked a question that all humanity should ask, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus at first responded with a mild chastisement: "Why do you call my good?" "No one is good – except God alone?" Paul latter would explain the absolute greatness of God, the Father in Eph 3:14-21:

*14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

*20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

Jesus required of the rich ruler that he keep all the moral commandments of the Law of Moses. To this, the rich man claimed to have kept these commandments from his youth. Then Jesus required of him what he would not give—sell what you have, give the money to the poor, and follow me. This is the way to have treasures in heaven. His face fell and he went away sad because he had great wealth. Jesus had taught this principle to the apostles and disciples in the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 6:19-21:

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

He had also taught that one cannot serve money and the Lord in Matt 6:24: "24 No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

James, the brother of the Lord, repeated this teaching in his letter. James 5:1-6 uses the same metaphors to describe unprepared rich people:

5 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

This generation, more than any other, with its getting and spending, materialism and luxury seeking, needs to pay special attention to the New Testament teaching on the snares of wealth. All of us, when our income is compared to the income of those living in New Testament times, are worldly rich. Keep in mind that the Lord expects us to be good stewards of the wealth that he has given us, just as he teaches in the parable of the talent (Matt 25:15-30). In addition, we must always love others and care for them in times of their need.

Mark 10:23-27

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 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."

26 The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

This passage following the confrontation with the rich ruler finds truth in hyperbole—an obvious exaggeration to illustrate a truth. Many try to explain away the hyperbole—"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." Some will say that it refers to the gate in a city where the camel must be unloaded and knell to go through; it is so narrow. Some will say that this gate was called the eye of a needle. All such efforts to minimize the meaning of the hyperbole reduce the power of its imagery. It is like saying that "faith to move mountains" is not faith to move mountains (1 Cor 13:2). The apostles were correct when they asked who could ever be saved, understanding that the Lord has blessed us all with more than we ever need. With man, it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

Mark 10:28-29

28 Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"

29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Peter's response, keyed to the rich young ruler's negative answer, declares that the apostles had left everything to follow the Lord. Jesus teaching is that what every one leaves for him and the gospel will be rewarded a hundred times in the present age, but with the reward is spiritual and comes with persecutions. Homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and fields find their spiritual meaning in Jesus statement about himself in Mark 3:34-35: "34 Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.'" Our relatives today are in the church—those who do God's will—and they are countless. Moreover, we have eternal life

The Lord reiterates the teaching of Mark 9:35: "35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.'" A continuing issue with the apostles is who will be first. Human nature makes it difficult to grasp the spiritual nature of the kingdom. The issue will come up again before the end of the chapter.

Mark 10:32-34

32 They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. 33 "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, 34 who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."

Jesus once again teaches that he will be betrayed, condemned to death, mocked among the Gentiles, flogged, killed and rise again three days latter. Jesus had introduced this teaching in Mark 8:31-32:

31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

It is easy to understand why the apostles had difficulty with this core concept of the gospel. It involved a suspension of belief and a break with reality, as they knew it. After all, how could one rise from the dead. Yet this teaching lies at the core of the gospel message just as Paul wrote in 1 Cor 15:3-8:

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

### **Who Will Sit on the Lord's Left and Right**

Mark 10:35-40

35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

36 "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

39 "We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, 40 but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

James and John continue to seek preeminence in the kingdom of God, assuring the Lord that they can drink the cup he was to drink and be baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with. The cup is the cup of suffering about which he would pray in Mark 14:35-36:

35 Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 36 "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

John the Baptist had foretold this baptism in Luke 3:16-17:

16 John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

The Lord spoke of this baptism referring to himself in Luke 12:49-50:

49 "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!

Baptism takes the generic meaning universally used at that time—immersion. Fire symbolically represents persecution, trial, and rejection. They all, the Lord and the apostles, were to be baptized with suffering.

In the kingdom of God, the places to the right and left of the Lord are reserved for those for whom they are prepared. All Christians sit equally on the throne of the Lord, according to Rev 3:21-22:

21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Mark 10:41-45

41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. 42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The Lord seizes this opportunity to teach once again that the first must be a servant. The Lord was to serve with the ultimate gift—his life as a ransom for many. Paul wrote in 1 Tim 2:5-7:

5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all men — the testimony given in its proper time.

The Hebrew writer added in Heb 9:15:

15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

### **Jesus Heals the Blind Bartimaeus**

Mark 10:46-52

*46 Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

*48 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

*49 Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."*

*So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." 50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.*

*51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.*

*The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."*

*52 "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.*

Mark 10 closes with Jesus confirming his power as the son of God in a miracle where Bartimaeus receives his sight.

## Mark 11: Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem and His First Encounters

Jesus arrives outside Jerusalem and begins the last major episode of his life. The people overwhelmingly accept him, but the Jewish leaders overwhelmingly reject him.

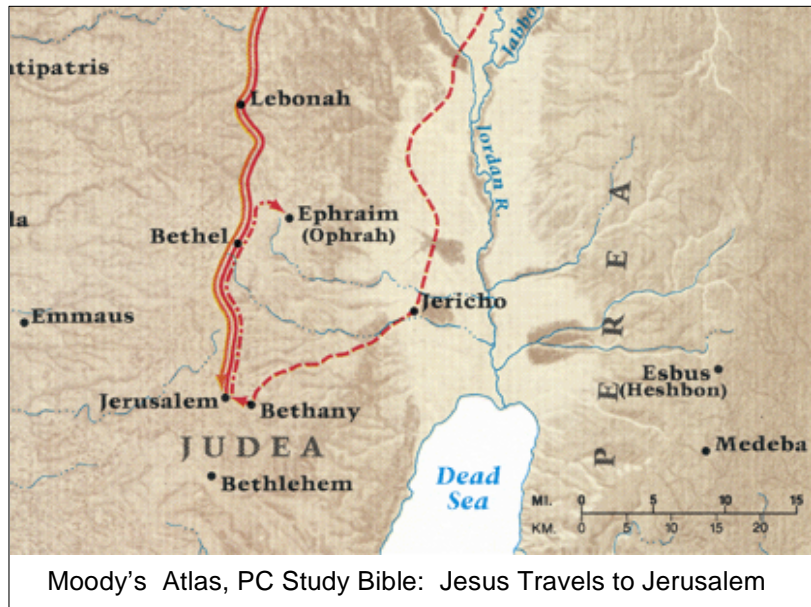
### ***The Entry on a Colt***

Mark 11:1-12

*11 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 3 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"*

As Jesus approached Jerusalem, he came to Bethphage and Bethany, which Mark locates at the Mount of Olives. There is no historical record to locate Bethphage exactly; however, the remains of an ancient town—perhaps Bethphage—exist atop the Mount of Olives. The mount itself, more often called a hill, was a common retreat from Jerusalem.

Later Mark will identify the Mount as being opposite the temple in Mark 13:3-4: "3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately. . . ." Luke speaks of it as place where Jesus spent each night in Luke 21:37: "37 Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives." Luke 22:39 calls Jesus' visits usual: "39 Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed



him." In Acts 1:12, Luke describes the Mount as being a Sabbath day's walk from Jerusalem: "12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city." The Sabbath day's walk was from rabbinical instruction and not from the law of God. They inferred from Ex 16:29-30 that they could not go far: "'Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out.' 30 So the people rested on the seventh day." From Josh 3:4, they concluded that one would have to go a thousand yards to worship: "But keep a distance of about a thousand yards between you and the ark; do not go near it." The point of all this is that this important place for the Lord was very near Jerusalem, and just outside the temple wall. Jerusalem, built on high ground at 2,400 feet above sea level, was almost as high as the Mount of Olives at 2,600 feet above sea level. From Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, a distance of 20 miles, the elevation changed from 2,400 feet above sea level to 1,384 feet below.

It was from here that Jesus sent the disciples to borrow the colt.



Mark 11:4-9

4 They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, 5 some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" 6 They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. 7 When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. 9 Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

10 "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

"Hosanna in the highest!"

11 Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Luke describes the beginning place of the glorious entrance of Christ, the King in Luke 19:37:

37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.



Google Maps: Mount of Olives from the East Wall

It was also along this road that some Pharisees challenged him; and this was his answer recorded by Luke 19:41-44:

41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 42 and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace — but now it is hidden from your eyes. 43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Without a doubt, this passage marks the time of the coming, and with the coming came the King and the kingdom. Matthew elaborates on the event in Matt 21:4-5 and quoting Zech 9:9:

5 "Say to the Daughter of Zion,  
'See, your king comes to you,  
gentle and riding on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

Hosanna, in the second quotation, means *save*, showing the people's recognition of the Savior come. In the quotation, the people recognize fully that this is the coming of the kingdom of David, otherwise known as the kingdom of God.

After looking at everything around the temple and Jerusalem, they returned to Bethany (Day one, the first day of the Week).

## **Cursing the Fig Tree**

Mark 11:12-14

*12 The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. 13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. 14 Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.*

This episode sets up a lesson that was not to be applied until the next morning. This lesson is not about the fig tree having no fruit, because the passage itself recognizes it was not the season for figs. The Lord teaches the lesson of the tree when they see the tree once again in Mark 11:20-25.

## **Driving out the Money Changers**

Mark 11:15-19

*15 On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, 16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. 17 And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written:*

*"My house will be called  
a house of prayer for all nations'?  
But you have made it 'a den of  
robbers.'"*

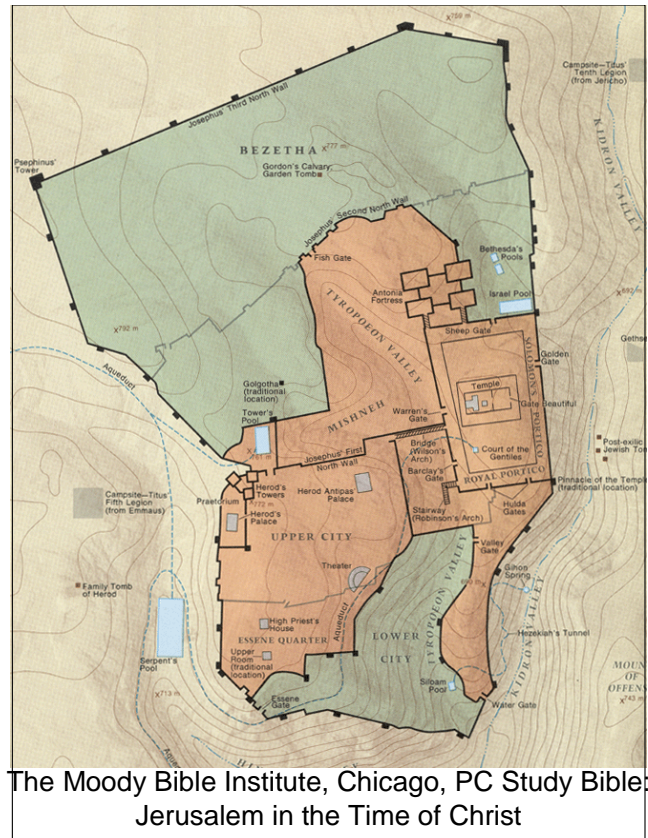
*18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.*

*19 When evening came, they went out of the city.*

Jesus drove out the money changers, overturned their tables and benches, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. The important point is that he used the occasion to teach them. He looked to Isaiah first in quoting from Isa 56:7-8:

7 these I will bring to my holy  
mountain and give  
them joy in my house  
of prayer.

Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."



8 The Sovereign Lord declares –  
    he who gathers the exiles of Israel:  
"I will gather still others to them  
    besides those already gathered."

The second quotation is from Jer 7:11:

11 Has this house, which bears my Name,  
    become a den of robbers to you?  
But I have been watching! declares the Lord.

The contrast is between what the Lord expected and what they did. The passages continue to speak of this as the coming of the kingdom, a time when the exiles of Israel return and all nations with them.

After this they went out of the city (Day two of the week, our Monday).

### ***The Lesson of the Fig Tree***

Mark 11:20-25

*20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. 21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"*

*22 "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. 23 "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."*

The next morning they saw the withered fig tree. Once again, Jesus teaches: Have faith in God. Do not doubt in ones heart. Believe what you say will happen. When you pray, believe that you have received it. Forgive your enemy. Your Father in heaven will forgive you your sins. The power of prayer is having ones sins forgiven by the Father in heaven. Faith to wither fig trees and faith to move mountains are hyperboles that show how strong our faith must be when we address our Father in heaven about that most important of all matters—forgiveness of our sins.

### ***The Authority of Jesus Questioned***

Mark 11:27-33

*27 They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. 28 "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?"*

*29 Jesus replied, "I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 30 John's baptism – was it from heaven, or from men? Tell me!"*

*31 They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' 32 But if we say, 'From men' . . ." (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)*

*33 So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."*

*Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."*

When Jesus arrived at the temple, the chief priests, elders, and teachers of the law challenged his authority. Jesus answered by confronting them with a dilemma: Was John's baptism from heaven or from men. When they refused to answer, Jesus refused to tell them by what authority he did the things that he did. People of less station than these leaders had no trouble in recognizing the authority of Jesus. After the Sermon on the Mount, the people were amazed in Matt 7:28-29:

28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Jesus himself testified to his authority in John 17:1-5:

"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. 2 For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. 3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. 4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

## Mark 12: Jesus Teaches in Jerusalem

Jesus starts in chapter 12 to teach in Jerusalem, beginning with parables that illustrate the nature of the messiah and men's reaction to him.

### **Teaching with Parables in Jerusalem**

Mark 12:1-8

*12 He then began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. 2 At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. 3 But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4 Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. 5 He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.*

*6 "He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.'*

*7 "But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 8 So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.*

The parable of the vineyard illustrates the Jews' rejection of the son of God. God has prepared everything for the coming of the Lord. He has entrusted his plan to Jews. However, those originally chosen and placed in charge rejected God's servants, the prophets, and killed them. Finally, God sent his son whom the men also killed that they might receive the inheritance unto themselves.

Mark 12:9-12

*9 "What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. 10 Haven't you read this scripture:*

*"The stone the builders rejected  
has become the capstone;*

*11 the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"*

*12 Then they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.*

Jesus used the parable of the vineyard to teach what will happen to Jews when they kill him. He asks a rhetorical question, and then answers: What will God—the owner of the vineyard—do? He will kill the Jews who killed the son and give his vineyard to others—Disciples of Christ or Christians. The lord compares their impending rejection of him to the teaching of David in Ps 118:22-23. Regardless of the wonders of the Lord, these Jews would reject him as the capstone—chief cornerstone. Peter will continue this teaching in Acts 4:10-12:

It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 He is

*"the stone you builders rejected,  
which has become the capstone.'*

*12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

In 1 Peter 2:7-8, Peter contrasts the believers and unbelievers, using this same passage:

7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,  
"The stone the builders rejected  
has become the capstone,"

8 and,

"A stone that causes men to stumble  
and a rock that makes them fall."

They stumble because they disobey the message – which is also what they were destined for.

The Jews who heard this teaching once again sought to seize him; but being afraid, they went away.

### **Render to Caesar**

Mark 12:13-17

*13 Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. 14 They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? 15 Should we pay or shouldn't we?"*

*But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." 16 They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?"*

*"Caesar's," they replied.*

*17 Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."*

*And they were amazed at him.*

Hypocrisy is "a feigning to be what one is not or feigning to believe what one does not; especially: the false assumption of an appearance of virtue or religion. "We know you are a man of integrity," they said while trying to catch him in his words. "You are swayed by men; you don't pay attention to who men are," they added. You teach the way of God, the truth. Immediately after the flattery came the deceitful trap: should they pay taxes to Caesar. Jesus used the dilemma to state a principle that has governed religious/political relationship even to our times. The statement itself has become a part of modern vocabulary: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." Of course, they left amazed. Paul and Peter also dealt with this situation. Paul taught in Rom 13:1-3: Rom 13:1-2:

13 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

Peter also taught the same principle in 1 Peter 2:13-17:

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. 16 Live as

free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.  
17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God,  
honor the king.

Once again, they had nothing else to say.

### ***The Dilemma Presented by the Sadducees on the Resurrection***

Mark 12:18-23

*18 Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. 19 "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. 20 Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. 21 The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. 22 In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. 23 At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"*

Having failed to catch the Lord with the dilemma of divine versus human government, the Sadducees, who do not believe in a resurrection, created a hypothetical situation of a woman with many husband. "At the resurrection, whose wife will she be?"

Mark 12:24-27

*24 Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? 25 When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. 26 Now about the dead rising – have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!"*

Jesus claimed them in error because they did not know the scriptures or the power of God. There will not be marriage in heaven. We will be like the angels in heaven. The Hebrew writer describes angels as spirits in Heb 1:14: "14 Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" However, the Lord's disciples will be higher than the angels, according to Heb 2:5-6: "5 It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking." As spirits, angels are sexless. Angels as women or girls come from artists depictions and false teaching

### ***The Most Important Commandment***

Mark 12:28

*28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"*

Jesus had gained the attention of one of the teachers of the law who wanted to know what the most important commandment was. This man seemed sincere and lacked the deceit of the others.

Mark 12:29-31

*29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."*

These teaching are from the Old Testament, but they are not explicitly stated in the Ten Commandments. Deut 6:4-6 teaches: "4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Lev 19:18 further teaches: "18 Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord."

Mark 12:32-34

32 "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Underlying this discourse is the relative importance of the law of the letter and the law of the spirit. The Lord's new order was to be ruled by a law of the spirit. Paul explained in 2 Cor 3:4-6:

4 Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. 5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. 6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant- — not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

### **Christ the Son of David**

Matt 12:35-37

35 While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked,

"How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? 36 David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared:

*"The Lord said to my Lord:*

*'Sit at my right hand*

*until I put your enemies*

*under your feet.'"*

37 David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"

*The large crowd listened to him with delight.*

In these verses, Jesus asks a question with Mark not recording the answer, if one were given. On whether Jesus was the son of David or the Lord of David, Jesus cited David in Ps 110:1. We know from our perspective that Jesus was born of the lineage of David, according to Genealogies of Matt 1. But Jesus is the Lord of all kings, including David. The Revelation teaches in Rev 1:4-5:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

In addition, he is Lord of lord and King of kings. Rev 17:14 teaches: "

"14 They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings — and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."



Rev 19:15-16 teaches that he is KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS:

15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

### ***The Teachers of the Law***

Mark 12:38

*38 As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, 39 and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. 40 They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."*

Matthew records Jesus' condemnation of the teachers of the law in more detail in Matt 23 (the entire chapter). In that passage, Jesus concludes his teaching with this statement in Matt 23:37-39:

*37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. 38 Look, your house is left to you desolate. 39 For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"*

### ***The Widow's Contribution***

Mark 12:41-44

*41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.*

*43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on."*

This teaching is so explicit that one can add little without diminishing it. Suffice it to say that the early church offers many examples where the Christians gave out of their poverty. The example of the Macedonian churches recorded in 2 Cor 8:1-4 will suffice here:

*8 And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.*

This widow and the rich young ruler offer striking contrast in liberality and generosity.

## Mark 13: Coming Events of Greatest Importance

### ***When Will Be the Destruction of the Temple and the Coming of Christ?***

Mark 13:1-2

*13 As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" 2 "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."*

With just cause, the disciples were impressed with the magnificent buildings of the temple. Jesus seized on the opportunity to prophesy about the destruction of the temple. Several models demonstrate how awe inspiring the edifice was.



Fotografía del Templo de Jerusalén en la maqueta del Jerusalén bíblico del jardín del Hotel Holyland en Jerusalén. Juan R. Cuadra. Wikipedia Public Domain

This view of the temple faces the Mount of Olives and Bethany where they were staying. Jesus prophecy would be fulfilled when Titus destroyed the temple in 70 AD. It is so provoking that the apostles brought it up after they had arrived back at the Mount of Olives.

Mark 13:3-4

*3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, 4 "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"*

The passage makes clear that they were talking about *things to happen*; and that they were seeking a sign prior to the fulfillment that *they are all about to be fulfilled*? It is important to separate the prophetic events from one another; otherwise the interpretation will be confusing.

Matt 24:3 clearly teaches that there are two main events each separate from the other in time and meaning:

3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

The antecedent of *this* is in Matt 24:2: "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." The first subject of prophecy is the destruction of the temple. The second subject of prophecy, different in time and meaning, is what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age. In order to justify their millennial theories, most people, who seek an earthly reign of Christ obscure, there two very different questions and their answers.

The *end of the age* is the end of the time when Christ returns and the time that he will say no one knows save the father in Mark 13: 32-33:

No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.

Peter describes this time as the time of the destruction of the heavens and earth in 2 Peter 3:10-13:

10 But **the day of the Lord** will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to **the day of God** and speed its coming. **That day** will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

Peter also describes this time as the time when Jesus returns, ending all things earthly in 2 Thess 1:6-10:

6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 **on the day** he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

### ***The Destruction of the Temple and the Abomination that Cause Desolation***

Mark 13:5-13

5 Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. 6 Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. 7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 8 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

Every time there is a calamity or nature or war, men claim the end has come. Wars are often called the beginning of Armageddon (Rev 16:16). Jesus describes these events as the beginning of birth pains. If anyone comes claiming that they are the Lord, they surely are not. The passage describes the events that lead up to the destruction of the temple.

Mark 9:9-13

9 "You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. 10 And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. 11 Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

12 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 13 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

This passage describes the events affecting the church and the gospel also leading up to the destruction of the temple and beyond. Acts of the Apostles describes these events as they occur. The apostles are jailed and beaten; James is beheaded; Stephen is stoned. Paul describes how he suffered these things in the name of the Lord in 2 Cor 11:23-28:

3 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

### ***The Abomination that Causes Desolation***

Mark 13:14-23

14 "When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong – let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 15 Let no one on the roof of his house go down or enter the house to take anything out. 16 Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. 17 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! 18 Pray that this will not take place in winter, 19 because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now – and never to be equaled again. 20 If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. 21 At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. 22 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect – if that were possible. 23 So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

After the events of verses 5-13 transpire, they will see “the abomination that causes desolation.” They will see places the event in the lifetime of those listening. Matthew adds to this statement in Matt 24:15: “15 "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel.” The abomination

of desolation will be seen standing in the holy place, and this is the same event spoken of by Daniel. Dan 11:31 said: "31 His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation." An armed force will desecrate the temple and the daily sacrifice will end. What they are to look for constitutes the five variables that identify the event.

It will come in their life time.

They will see it

It will fit Daniels prophecy.

An armed force will desecrate tht temple.

The daily sacrifice will end.

The only event to fulfill all these variables is the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70



Siege of Jerusalem (70) The destruction date according to the Hebrew calendar was the 9th of Av, also known as Tisha B'Av (29 or 30 July 70). Wikipedia Public Domain

In 66 CE the Jewish population rebelled against the Roman empire. Four years later, in 70 CE, Roman legions under Titus retook and subsequently destroyed much of Jerusalem and the Second Temple. The Arch of Titus, located in Rome and built to commemorate Titus's victory in Judea, depict a Roman victory procession with soldiers carrying spoils from the Temple, including the Menorah. Although Jews continued to inhabit the destroyed city, Jerusalem was razed by the Emperor Hadrian at the end of the Bar Kokhba revolt in 135 CE when he established a new city called Aelia Capitolina.

Josephus claimed that 1,100,000 people were killed during the siege, of which a majority were Jewish, and that 97,000 were captured and enslaved.

Josephus described the event:

The slaughter within was even more dreadful than the spectacle from without. Men

and women, old and young, insurgents and priests, those who fought and those who entreated mercy, were hewn down in indiscriminate carnage. The number of the slain exceeded that of the slayers. The legionaries had to clamber over heaps of dead to carry on the work of extermination.

Now as soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be the objects of their fury (for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other work to be done), [Titus] Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and Temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as they were of the greatest eminence; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne; and so much of the wall enclosed the city on the west side. This wall was spared, in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison [in the Upper City], as were the towers [the three forts] also spared, in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valor had subdued; but for all the rest of the wall [surrounding Jerusalem], it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it [Jerusalem] had ever been inhabited. This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind. And truly, the very view itself was a melancholy thing; for those places which were adorned with trees and pleasant gardens, were now become desolate country every way, and its trees were all cut down. Nor could any foreigner that had formerly seen Judaea and the most beautiful suburbs of the city, and now saw it as a desert, but lament and mourn sadly at so great a change. For the war had laid all signs of beauty quite waste. Nor had anyone who had known the place before, had come on a sudden to it now, would he have known it again. But though he [a foreigner] were at the city itself, yet would he have inquired for it.

Christ followed his description of the destruction with very specific instructions for the Christian disciples. Those who were in Judea were to flee to the mountains. Do not go back for belongings, but flee across the rooftops. If they were in the field, they were not to go back. Such urgency of flight would be especially hard on pregnant women. The distress was so great as to be never equaled again. The Lord shortened the days for the elect's sake. They were not to believe anyone who claimed that this was the coming of the Lord. There would be false Christs and false prophets coming to deceive the elect. He had told them everything ahead of time. It has been said [I do not know the truth of it] that all the Christians fled the city ahead of the destruction.

Many false teachings mistaken take these facts and apply them to the second coming, even though Jesus repeatedly warned that this was not his coming. This was the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus Caesar in 70 AD.

### ***The Sign of the Lord's Coming and of the End of the Age?"***

Mark 13:24-

24 *"But in those days, following that distress,*

*"the sun will be darkened,*

*and the moon will not give its light;*

25 *the stars will fall from the sky,*

*and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'*

26 "At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

*In those days* describes the time from the destruction of the temple to the coming of the Lord. This use of the word days describes the end of the Mosaic Age and the entire duration of the Christian Age. Heb 1:1-2 reads:

**1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.**

We have seen how Paul and Peter described this end of days as a complete destruction of the heavens and earth right down to the elements. He will come in the clouds is consistently taught by the apostles. Paul wrote 1 Thess 4:15-18

15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Not only will we meet the Lord in the air to be with him forever, but we will be spiritual beings, according to 1 Cor 15:50-53

50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

Mark 13:28-31

28 "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. 29 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. 30 I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

This section turns back to the urgency of the preparing for the coming destruction of Jerusalem. These things have as the antecedent the above warning that related to that destructive event. The word of the Lord will never pass away; and in his words, there is no room for a millennial theory of any kind.

### **No One Knows**

Mark 13:32-37

32 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. 34 It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

35 "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back – whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. 36 If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. 37 What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"

No one knows when the Lord will come, yet there are today many who pretend that they do know, only to be found false prophets every single time. The entire message for all generation of people is to watch! When Jesus said, "What I say to you, I say to everyone," shows the singleness of the Lord's teaching for every generation of mankind. We will all certainly know when that day is here for the Lord said in Matt 24:27:

*For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*



## **Mark 14: Institution of the Lord's Supper, Betrayal of Jesus, and First Trial of Jesus**

The events of Mark 14 run rapidly toward his betrayal and capture. From the triumphal entry to his death and resurrection will take only eight days, first day of the week to first day. The chapter begins 2 days from Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which should be our Tuesday.

### ***The Chief Priests and the Teachers of the Law Plot to Kill Jesus***

Mark 14:1-2

*14 Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. 2 "But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot."*

The only thing restraining the chief priests and the teachers of the law was their fear of the people who had so supported the Lord at his triumphal entry just three days earlier. Since Roman practice had left the Jewish government in place under Roman auspices, the chief priests and the Sanhedrin will control many of the coming events. The Sanhedrin, at and before the time of Christ, was highest Jewish tribunal with 71 members. Its origin dates to Moses where God instituted the council in Num 11:16-17:

16 The Lord said to Moses: "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the Tent of Meeting that they may stand there with you. 17 I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone."

### ***A Woman Anoints Jesus***

Mark 14:3-9

*3 While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.*

*4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? 5 It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.*

*6 "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. 9 I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."*

Both Matthew and Mark record this incident in almost the very same words (See Matt 26:6). The very expensive perfume—worth more than a year's wages—figuratively is a burial anointment which Jesus called a "beautiful thing to me." The apostles rebuked her because they thought the money should go to the poor. However, the instigator of the dissent appears to have been Judas by John's record in John 12:4-6:

4 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's

wages." 6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

Jesus answer that they would always have the poor with them shows that the church must also attend to matters other than benevolence. Indeed, there is no way that the church can take up a mission to care for all the poor of the world. As the teachings unfold in the New Testament, the scriptures limit benevolence to destitute saints in Acts 2 and 5; 1 Cor 16:1-2; to all people as we have opportunity in Gal 6:10; to widows who are widows in deed in 1 Tim 5:3-16; and to orphans and widows in their distress in James 1:27. However, implicit in Christ teaching is that the church must spend on many other things besides benevolence to preach the gospel to the whole creation, which is after all the primary commission to the church.

This woman's beautiful act has prepared symbolically the Lord's body for his burial. She has found her beautiful recorded forever in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

### ***Judas Seeks an Opportunity to Hand over Jesus***

Mark 14:10-11

*10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. 11 They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.*

During the course of these events, Judas went to the chief priests to betray Jesus. According to other accounts Judas was always a crook and thief. Matt 26:14-16 illustrates that Judas was in it for the money:

14 Then one of the Twelve – the one called Judas Iscariot – went to the chief priests 15 and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. 16 From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Luke 22:3-6 teaches that Judas allowed Satan to control him:

3 Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. 4 And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. 5 They were delighted and agreed to give him money. 6 He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

Although the betrayal of Jesus contributed to fulfilling God's eternal purpose, Judas did what he did of his own free will to choose his path. James 1:12-15 teaches:

12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Judas chose his path to destruction, as do all those turning away from the Lord.

### ***Preparations for the Passover***

Mark 14:12-

12 *On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"*

13 *So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. 14 Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'* 15 *He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."*

16 *The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.*

The Old Testament refers to the Passover 47 times; the New Testament, 30 times, and only three of those came after Acts 2 and the establishment of the church. Paul used the Jewish Passover symbolically to teach the Jesus is now the Passover lamb without blemish in 1 Cor 5:7-8:

For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

As with the acquiring of the colt to enter the city on the first day of the week, a room was already set for the Lord.

### ***The Betrayal Forecast and the Lord's Supper Instituted***

Mark 14:17-

17 *When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. 18 While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me – one who is eating with me."*

19 *They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?"*

20 *"It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. 21 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."*

During the meal, Jesus announced his betrayal—not mentioning Judas; but we know from verses 10-11 that Judas had already set his disastrous deed in motion. The prophecy of Jesus is three fold: Jesus would go just as it was prophesied; Jesus pronounced woe on Judas; it would be better for Judas had he never been born.

Mark 14:22-25

22 *While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."*

23 *Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.*

24 *"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. 25 "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."*

Jesus instituted his supper using the unleavened bread of the Passover feast and the fruit of vine of the Passover feast to represent his body and his blood. Many abuse this figure by saying the bread and the fruit of the vine become the literal body and blood of Jesus (transubstantiation). If that were the case, *cup* would be literal; and one would need to drink the literal cup—a physical impossibility. Others say that the *cup* is literal, advancing the idea

of one cup for the entire congregation. Of course, if the cup were literal, they too would have to drink a solid object – a physical impossibility.

Perhaps the most overlooked or perversion of the teaching of the Lord regarding his supper is the confusion created by those who have no regard for when to take it. The Lord specifically taught that he would drink it anew in the kingdom of God. When the kingdom of God came on the Day of Pentecost after the Lord's resurrection, the disciples continued in the practice of breaking bread. Acts 2:42 records: "42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Acts 20:7 teaches that the church came together for the purpose of breaking bread on the first day of the week: "7 On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. Paul taught that the Lord's Supper was on the first day of week when the church comes together in 1 Cor 11:20-21:

When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk.

It was at this same time – the first day of the week – that they were to give as they were prospered, according to 1 Cor 16:2-3:

2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

### ***The Mount of Olives: Prayer***

Mark 14:26-27

26 *When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

27 *"You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written:*

*"I will strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep will be scattered."*

28 *But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."*

The Lord foretold the disciples falling away and his resurrection as a fulfillment of the prophecy in Zech 13:7:

7 *"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd,  
against the man who is close to me!"  
declares the Lord Almighty.*

*"Strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep will be scattered,  
and I will turn my hand against the little ones.*

Mark 16:29-31

29 *Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."*

30 *"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "today – yes, tonight – before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."*

31 But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.

Peter's certainty that he would not deny the Lords falls against the temptations to come, marking Peter for his denial throughout all of history.

Mark 14:32-36

32 They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33 He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 34 "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

35 Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 36 "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

One can only imagine the agony of a "sorrow unto death." Yet, in this scene and the in the words of the cross, we see the Lord taken to his final state of forsakenness. He had already given up his heavenly state to dwell among us according to John 1:14:

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Paul stated the Lord's sacrifice in Phil 2:5-8:

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,  
7 but made himself nothing,  
taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man,



Bild des Garten Gethsemane mit der Maria-Magdalena-Kirche im Hintergrund. License: GFDL with permission.

he humbled himself  
and became obedient to death –  
even death on a cross!

It was the death upon the cross that took him even farther from the Father and plunged him into death and Hades. Of this prospect of final alienation, he was to cry out in Mark 15:33-34:

33 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Mark 14:37-38

*37 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38 Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."*

The example of the apostles sleeping illustrates how easy it is for Christians to lose focus. Sometimes we lose focus in lesser events such as sleeping in the assembly. Sometimes we lose focus in larger events such as failing to attend service at all or not being alert to impending temptation set for us by Satan. Whatever the temptation we must "watch and pray". Paul warned us to wake up in Eph 5:13-14:

13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14 for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said:

"Wake up, O sleeper,  
rise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you."

### ***The Mount of Olives: Betrayal***

Mark 14:39-55

*39 Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. 40 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.*

*41 Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"*

*43 Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.*

*44 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." 45 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. 46 The men seized Jesus and arrested him. 47 Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.*

*48 "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? 49 Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." 50 Then everyone deserted him and fled.*

*51 A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, 52 he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.*

53 They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together. 54 Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.

This narrative of the betrayal speaks for itself. As they were sleeping for the third time, they had no understanding of the urgency of the hour. The time had come and Jesus was delivered into the hand of the Jews by Judas. The betrayal with a kiss has carried Judas name in all future generations as the most deceitful of men. John reveals that it was Peter who had drawn his sword in John 18:10-11:

10 Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

11 Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

Matthew reveals that Jesus declared his power to bring forth legions of angels in Matt 26:50-54:

When the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. 51 With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

52 "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. 53 Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

Every one deserted him and fled.

### **Jesus First Trial before the Sanhedrin**

Mark 14:55-65

55 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. 56 Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

57 Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: 58 "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.'" 59 Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

60 Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" 61 But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

62 "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

63 The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. 64 "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

They all condemned him as worthy of death. 65 Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him.

This first trial of Jesus is a mockery to justice. These leaders of the Jews have stalked Jesus from the beginning of his ministry. Now they are going to kill him without proof of wrong

doing. In seeking evidence to convict him, they heard false testimony against him, but even this testimony did not agree. Then some used the Lord's teaching about his body being destroyed and raised up after three days to say falsely that he was going to destroy the Jewish temple. Even so they did not agree. Fortunately John records this original teaching of Jesus which shows clearly that Jesus was not talking about the Jewish temple. John wrote in John 2:18-22

18 Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

20 The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" 21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Lacking any proven testimony, the high priest began his own inquiry to establish an accusation of blasphemy, and the abuse of spitting on and beating a blindfolded Lord.

### ***Peter Denies the Lord Three Times***

Mark 14:66-72

*66 While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. 67 When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him.*

*"You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said.*

*68 But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway.*

*69 When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." 70 Again he denied it.*

*After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean."*

*71 He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about."*

*72 Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.*

The final story tells of a weeping Peter, after he fulfills the Lord's prophecy by denying the Lord three times. This story, just as Judas' story, has gone down in history as a despicable event. Peter broke down and wept when he realized what he had done; Judas killed himself.

Perhaps, Peter remembered the words of Jesus in Matt 10:32-33:

32 "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.



## Mark 15: The Final Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus

This chapter follows Jesus' betrayal and trial before the Sanhedrin. Since the leaders of the Jews had long sought to kill the Lord, they had no choice but to take him before Pilate—the Roman governor, who had last say on the death penalty. Thus, chapter 15 begins with the Jewish leaders meeting for the sole purpose of expediting the Lord's death. An important note to make about this lesson is that modern day Jews reject and, in fact, dispute the fact that the Jews killed the Lord. Of course, they reject the New Testament text that attests to this historical fact. In the study of Mark, it is clear that the Jewish leaders plotted against Christ from the beginning of his ministry. Mark 3:6 begins their effort to kill him, "6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus." Mark 11:18 confirms their continuing efforts and their fears as Jesus grew in popularity, "18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching." Mark 14:1-2, sets the stage for the final trial recorded here in Mark 15:

14 Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. 2 "But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot."

After the resurrection, the New Testament writers continue to emphasize the Jews' role in the death of Jesus. Peter consistently called the Jews into account for the death of Jesus. On the Day of Pentecost, he preached in Acts 2:22-23, 36:

22 "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

This theme continued in the sermons of Acts as illustrated by Acts 3:13-16:

You handed him [his servant Jesus] over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. 14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.

This chapter is best taught in one reading, where it will attest to the power and glory of Christ's humiliation and crucifixion.

### ***Jesus Handed over to Pilate***

Mark 15:1-5

*15 Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.*

2 "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate.

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.

3 The chief priests accused him of many things. 4 So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of."

5 But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

All the leaders of the Jews— the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin— handed Jesus over to Pilot. Since Roman law disallowed local bodies from administering the death penalty, the matter had to go before Pilot. Jesus agreed that he was King of the Jews, but by his silence indicates that this is a very different answer than was expected; for his kingdom was a spiritual kingdom. John 18:33-37 offers this segment in more detail:

33 Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

34 "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

35 "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

36 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

### ***Pilate Gives into the Jews and Releases Barabbas Instead of Jesus***

Mark 15:6-15

6 Now it was the custom at the Feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested. 7 A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. 8 The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

9 "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, 10 knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

12 "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.

13 "Crucify him!" they shouted.

14 "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

15 Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

It is evident from the passage that Jesus had committed no crime. Indeed, it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed him over to Pilate. Pilate's motivation was his desire to satisfy the crowd. Prior to his acquiescing, Pilate washed his hands of the matter, apparently in an effort to justify himself. The account of Matt 27:24 includes Pilate's feeble effort to remove his guilt and responsibility from himself:

24 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of

this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"

### **The Humiliation of Jesus**

Mark 15:16-24

*16 The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. 17 They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. 18 And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" 19 Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.*

*21 A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. 22 They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). 23 Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24 And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.*

These passages on the humiliation and crucifixion of Jesus present the agony of the cross in a way that needs no elaboration. Peter summed it up best in 1 Peter 2:21-25

21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

22 "He committed no sin,  
and no deceit was found in his mouth."

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

### **The Crucifixion of Jesus**

Mark 15:25-39

*25 It was the third hour when they crucified him. 26 The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS. 27 They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. 29 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30 come down from the cross and save yourself!"*

*31 In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! 32 Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.*

*33 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

*35 When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah."*

*36 One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said.*

*37 With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.*

38 *The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"*

Matt 27:51-53 details the events at the point of Jesus' death:

51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. 52 The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

The poignant plea, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" shows the mental and spiritual despair of Jesus, who had emptied himself of everything to fulfill the will of the Father. Phil 2:6-8 traces the depths of Jesus journey, now climaxed by this desperate, desolate despair:

6 Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,  
7 but made himself nothing,  
taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to death –  
even death on a cross!

With the tearing of the temple curtain from the top to bottom, the physical and spiritual vestiges of the Mosaic Law disappeared, giving rise to a new covenant sanctified by the shed blood of Christ. Jesus had foretold this in Matt 26:28-29:

28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." NKJV

Paul explained how the cross was the end of the Mosaic Law and the beginning of the New Covenant in Col 2:13-15:

He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

### ***Events after His Death***

Mark 15:40-47

40 *Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.*

42 *It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. 44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. 45 When he learned from the*

*centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. 46 So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.*

These women were witnesses to Jesus' death and now the witnesses to his secure burial with a stone closing the entrance to tomb, cut out of rock. Thus, they secured Jesus body for the miraculous event of his resurrection. Matt 27:62-66 gives other details of how they secured the tomb making it impossible for anyone to steal the body:

62 The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. 63 "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' 64 So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

65 "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how."  
66 So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

## Mark 16: The Resurrection and the Great Commission

Mark 15 closed with the secure burial of Jesus in a tomb of solid rock, sealed with a large stone and guarded by soldiers:

46 So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was laid.

There was no way escape, except by divine intervention, which, indeed, happened when he was raised from the dead.

### ***The Secure Tomb Is Empty***

Mark 16:1-3

*16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb 3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"*

The group of women who had been following him closely the previous day was on the way to the tomb. They knew the tomb was secured, for they wondered how they were going to move the stone at the entrance of the tomb. This statement seems contrary to Mark 16:9-10:

9 When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. 10 She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping.

In fact, Mark 16:9-20 does not appear in some early manuscripts; however, the other gospels confirm the content of that passage in its essential elements.

Mark 16:4-8

*4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.*

*6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"*

*8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*

Matt 28:2-4 describes this "young man" as the angel of the Lord:

2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The primary message of the angel was to instruct them to tell the disciples that the Lord would meet them in Galilee. The women were frightened and said nothing.

## **Jesus Appears to Some of the Disciples**

[The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20.]

Mark 16:9-11

*9 When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. 10 She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. 11 When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.*

This passage appears to disagree with other statements in the early part of the chapter. This also is the only place that we read of Mary Magdalene as being demon possessed.

Mark 16:12-14

*12 Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. 13 These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either.*

*14 Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.*

Luke 24:13-16 records the meeting with the two men:

13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him.

Paul offered the best summary of the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection in 1 Cor 15:5-8:

5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

## **The Great Commission**

Mark 16:15-16

*15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*

This account of the great commission requires one to be baptized in order to be saved. This essential nature of baptism was repeated by Peter in Acts 2:37-39:

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call."

Paul preached the necessity of baptism in Acts 16:29-34:

29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

Paul himself obeyed this very same command in Acts 22:14-16:

14 "Then he said: 'The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. 15 You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'

### ***How the Word Was Confirmed***

Mark 16:17-20

*17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."*

*19 After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. 20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.*

The Hebrew writer taught that the word was confirmed in this very same way in Heb 2:2-4:

For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, 3 how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. 4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Although the signs and miracles followed the first generation of Christians, when the apostles died there was no way to pass them forward, since it was by the laying on of the apostles' hands that they passed to the early Christians. Acts 8:15-19 teaches:

When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money 19 and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

At the end of the apostolic age, the gifts ceased just as it was prophesied that they should in 1 Cor 13:8-11:

But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.