

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

WITH STUDY NOTES

A preacher's guide to the book of Mark



HANDS to the PLOW MINISTRIES

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INTRODUCTION

The gospel of Mark is a gift from God to people from every nation, tribe, and language. It is a gift to people from every religious background. It is a gift to people in every position in society, from the very rich to the very poor. It is a gift to people who are highly educated and to people who are not highly educated. It is a gift to people who have tried to live a good life and to people who have lived a very sinful life. The gospel of Mark is for all people.

In this book, Mark tells stories about Jesus and the people who walked and talked with him. He writes about miracles that Jesus did. These miracles are signs that Jesus is the King who was sent by God to save people from their sin and from death (see John 20:30-31).

Some of the people in the book of Mark put their faith in Jesus. They see the signs that he did and they understand that he has been sent by God. They leave their old lives to follow him. Based on their faith and on the death and resurrection of Jesus, they receive God's gracious gift of life. Other people in the book of Mark will not put their faith in Jesus. They do not leave their old lives and do not follow him. They refuse to accept God's gracious gift of life.

All of these stories are true. Every word in Mark is "breathed out" by God so that people might know and love and follow Jesus Christ (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The book of Mark includes many quotations from the Old Testament. These verses from the Old Testament prove that all Scripture is telling the same story: the story of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Mark's gospel was written so that those who hear its words might think deeply about their own need and about the greatness of Jesus Christ. He is God's gift to a very broken world. He is the King who came to save people from sin and from death!

All glory to the great King!

Tom Kelby
August, 2014

Dear Reader,

Our prayer is that these notes will be a great help to you as you read and consider the stunning truths found in the book of Mark. Beyond this, we pray that these notes will be a help to you as you proclaim these truths to others. That is why this book is called **A preacher's guide to the book of Mark**. The gospel is good news that must be proclaimed.

The Scriptures are perfect. These notes, however, are not perfect. I am certain that I have missed certain truths that Mark wanted to proclaim. May the Spirit of Christ graciously overcome the weaknesses evident in these notes, and may He lead you into all truth as you study this book.

Tom Kelby
August 21, 2014

How to use this guide

1.

This book contains the entire gospel of Mark. The text of Mark appears in the **upper portion** of each page.

2.

This book also contains study notes that refer to certain words or verses or sections in Mark. These study notes are located beneath the Scripture passages in the **lower portion** of each page.

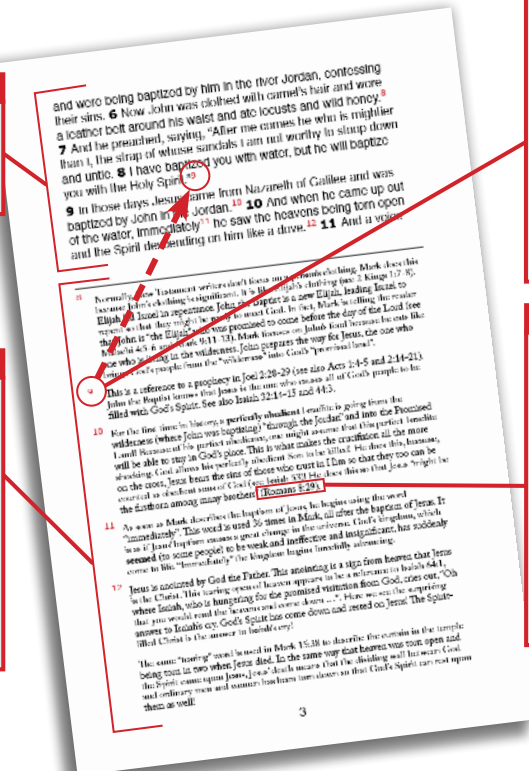
The study notes are not sermons. They are intended to help the preacher discover the meaning of the passage.

3.

The study notes in the lower portion of the page are numbered. These numbers are red. The red numbers next to each study note are connected to a red number appearing within the text of Mark in the upper portion of the page. The numbers go together.

4.

The study notes sometimes list other passages of Scripture. These passages are sometimes from the Old Testament and sometimes from the New Testament. These passages should be carefully examined because they are connected to the Scripture passage under consideration in Mark.



MARK 1

1 The beginning¹ of the gospel² of Jesus Christ,³ the Son of God.⁴

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- ¹ Genesis 1 starts with God and tells the story of his creation. Mark tells the story of the good news of God's new creation in Christ. However, Mark is just the "beginning" of the story of the Christ. The good news of Jesus Christ is continuing to be told today and will continue to be told for all eternity.
- ² The gospel is the "good news" about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. See also Mark 1:14-15, 8:35, 10:29-31, 13:10, 14:9, 16:15. See also Romans 1:1-6, 1:16-17, and 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.
- ³ Christ is a title referring to God's anointed King. It is a translation of the word Messiah (see John 1:41). Mark declares, at the very beginning of this gospel, that Jesus is the Christ, God's anointed King. The title Christ is not used again in Mark until Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Christ in Mark 8:29. See also 9:41, 12:35-37, 13:21, 14:61, and 15:32.
- ⁴ The title "Son of God" is used just three times in Mark. Even with this small number, however, it is clear that the title is being emphasized by Mark. He does this by using the title at the beginning (1:1) and at the end of the book (15:39). By placing the title at the front and the back of the book, Mark demonstrates that this book tells the story of the Son of God.

The first use of the title "Son of God" (1:1) is, in ways, a summary of the entire book. Everything that Mark wants his readers to know about Jesus can be summarized in the title "Son of God". The second use of "Son of God" is in Mark 3:11. In that verse, Mark reports that unclean spirits are declaring that Jesus is the "Son of God". Jesus doesn't permit the demons to use this title in public (see Mark 3:12), however, it is significant that, even though Jesus doesn't want the demons to use the title in public, Mark wants his readers to know that the demons recognize that Jesus is the Son of God. Mark wants his readers to know that even God's enemies recognize that Jesus is the Son of God! The third and final use of the title "Son of God" is by the Roman centurion who watches Jesus die (see 15:39). It may seem surprising that the centurion uses this title in regard to Jesus. After all, he is a Gentile "sinner" who has been overseeing the crucifixion of Jesus. However, the centurion's use of the title emphasizes the glorious truth of the gospel. In this verse we see a sinner who has, based on careful consideration of Jesus' death, become convinced that Jesus is God's Son. The centurion is a picture of all who come to Christ. All of us, because of our sins, are a part of Jesus' crucifixion. We, like the centurion, are to carefully consider Jesus' death and to come to recognize that Jesus is the Son of God.

The title "Son of God" emphasizes at least four truths: (1) Jesus is the one upon whom God the Father pours all of his love, favor, and blessing, (2) in the same way that an ordinary son is a reflection of his earthly father, the title "Son of God" means that Jesus is the perfect reflection of God the Father (see John 1:18), (3) Jesus is the "people" of God—the true Israel (note that in Exodus 4:22 Israel is also called God's firstborn son), (4) Jesus is the King whom God has chosen to reign over his people (it is significant that the word "son" is used in regard to God's anointed king in Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7:1-17).

2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,⁵

“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way,

3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’⁶

4 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.⁷ **5** And all the

⁵ More than one quarter of the Old Testament references in Mark are from Isaiah. It is evident that Mark is thinking about Isaiah as he writes this gospel. He uses Isaiah because Isaiah prophesies about a “Second Exodus” when a “new Moses” will come and lead God’s people to God’s place (see also Deuteronomy 18:15-19 where Moses prophesies that a new prophet like him will arise). By repeatedly quoting Isaiah, Mark demonstrates that Jesus fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy about a new leader for God’s people. Jesus is leading God’s people to God’s place. Like Moses, Jesus sees God face-to-face. Unlike Moses, Jesus never sins, therefore he is able to lead God’s people (people of faith in Christ) from the “wilderness” where they have been scattered, across “the Jordan” and into “the Promised Land”.

⁶ This quotation is drawn from four Old Testament texts: Genesis 24:7, Exodus 23:20, Isaiah 40:3, and Malachi 3:1. All four texts should be studied carefully. In Genesis, Abraham tells his servant that God will send his “angel” before him so that he might take a wife for his son. In Exodus, God tells the Israelites that he is sending his “angel” before them to guard them, and to bring them to the land he has prepared for them. The angel’s role is to bring God’s people to God’s good land. This is a reference to the first Exodus. If God’s people would obey God, they could stay in God’s place. However, God’s people could not stay in God’s good land because they did not obey God, and they worshiped other gods. Because of this, like Adam and Eve, they were driven away from God’s presence and were scattered across the earth (this was prophesied in Deuteronomy 4:15-31). But the “good news” is that God has not abandoned his people. Because of his great mercy, God promised to bring his people back to himself (see, again, Deuteronomy 4:15-31) in a “second Exodus”.

Isaiah and Malachi write about this “second Exodus”. As with the first Exodus, once again a messenger will help God’s people before they arrive in God’s good place. This messenger’s role is to lead the people into repentance (see Malachi 4:5-6), thus preparing them to meet God and to live and to remain in his presence. Mark 1:1-8 tells us that John the Baptist is the messenger prophesied in Isaiah 40 and Malachi 3. By referring to Isaiah in particular, Mark is signaling his readers to pay close attention to Isaiah’s prophesy about the messenger in Isaiah 40. It is no accident that “good news” is used twice in Isaiah 40:9. This chapter is about the good news of Jesus Christ! It is significant to note that Isaiah says that the “messenger” will prepare the way before “the Lord” (Yahweh) and will make the paths of “God” straight. Mark, however, says that these verses refer to Jesus. These verses demonstrate that Jesus is more than just a man, for Mark applies verses referring to God to Jesus!

⁷ It is significant that John is doing something related to the forgiveness of sins **in the wilderness** and **not at the temple in Jerusalem**. This is a clue that something brand new is happening. It is also a clue that the temple in Jerusalem is not a part of the new thing that God is doing.

country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. **6** Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey.⁸ **7** And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. **8** I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."⁹

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.¹⁰ **10** And when he came up out of the water, immediately¹¹ he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.¹² **11** And a voice came from

⁸ Normally, New Testament writers don't focus on a person's clothing. Mark does this because John's clothing is significant. It is like Elijah's clothing (see 2 Kings 1:7-8). Elijah led Israel in repentance. John the Baptist is a new Elijah, leading Israel to repent so that they might be ready to meet God. In fact, Mark is telling the reader that John is "the Elijah" who was promised to come before the day of the Lord (see Malachi 4:5-6 and Mark 9:11-13). Mark focuses on John's food because he eats like one who is living in the wilderness. John prepares the way for Jesus, the one who brings God's people from the "wilderness" into God's "promised land".

⁹ This is a reference to a prophecy in Joel 2:28-29 (see also Acts 1:4-5 and 2:14-21). John the Baptist knows that Jesus is the one who causes all of God's people to be filled with God's Spirit. See also Isaiah 32:14-15 and 44:3.

¹⁰ For the first time in history, a **perfectly obedient** Israelite is going from the wilderness (where John was baptizing) "through the Jordan" and into the Promised Land! Because of his perfect obedience, one might assume that this perfect Israelite will be able to stay in God's place. This is what makes the crucifixion all the more shocking. God allows his perfectly obedient Son to be killed! He does this, because, on the cross, Jesus bears the sins of those who trust in Him so that they too can be counted as obedient sons of God (see Isaiah 53)! He does this so that Jesus "might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Romans 8:29).

¹¹ As soon as Mark describes the baptism of Jesus, he begins using the word "immediately". This word is used 36 times in Mark, all after the baptism of Jesus. It is as if Jesus' baptism causes a great change in the universe. God's kingdom, which **seemed** (to some people) to be weak and ineffective and insignificant, has suddenly come to life. "Immediately" the kingdom begins forcefully advancing.

¹² Jesus is anointed by God the Father. This anointing is a sign from heaven that Jesus is the Christ. This tearing open of heaven appears to be a reference to Isaiah 64:1, where Isaiah, who is hungering for the promised visitation from God, cries out, "Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down ...". Here we see the surprising answer to Isaiah's cry. God's Spirit has come down and rested on Jesus! The Spirit-filled Christ is the answer to Isaiah's cry!

The same "tearing" word is used in Mark 15:38 to describe the curtain in the temple being torn in two when Jesus died. In the same way that heaven was torn open and the Spirit came upon Jesus, Jesus' death means that the dividing wall between God and ordinary men and women has been torn down so that God's Spirit can rest upon them as well!

heaven, “You are my beloved¹³ Son,¹⁴ with you I am well pleased.”¹⁵

12 The Spirit¹⁶ immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

13 And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by

¹³ The term “beloved” is used in the gospels to refer to Jesus. In the epistles (the New Testament letters after the books of Acts), however, the word “beloved” is often used to refer to those who have faith in Jesus. In other words, because of the work of Jesus, we, like Jesus, are God’s “beloved” sons and daughters!

¹⁴ See the note on Mark 1:1 and 9:7. Again, “Son” is a reference to Psalm 2, which is, in itself, connected to 2 Samuel 7:1-17. It is significant to note that Israel was called God’s son in Exodus 4:22. Israel never obeyed God, therefore, after repeated warnings and punishments, this disobedient “son” was renamed “Not My People” and was driven from God’s presence (see Hosea 1:9). Christ, unlike Israel, never disobeyed. He is fully pleasing to the Father.

¹⁵ This is evidence that God the Father has examined his “Son’s” life and has found it fully pleasing. This is why he pours his Spirit out on him (see Isaiah 42:1). Because of Christ’s death and resurrection, all those who, by faith, are counted as “in Christ” are able to count Christ’s pleasing life as their own!

¹⁶ As the obedient Son of God, Jesus obeys God’s Spirit, even when he leads him into dangerous and unpleasant places.

Satan.¹⁷ And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.¹⁸

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, **15** and saying, “The time is fulfilled,

¹⁷ Adam, the first “son” of God, was tempted by Satan and failed to pass the test. God’s first “son” did not consider God’s word to be good and true. He accepted Satan’s false words as better than God’s true words. Because of this, he was rejected and could not remain in God’s good land (see Genesis 3). Israel, a new “son” of God, was tempted when Moses spent 40 days and nights on Mount Sinai (see Exodus 24:18). Instead of waiting for God’s good word, they rejected God’s word and made a new god for themselves (see Exodus 32:1). Because of their rebellion, 3,000 men of Israel were killed with the sword and God sent a plague among the people (see Exodus 32). But, even after this, God’s “son” still did not trust in God’s good word. 12 representatives of Israel were sent to cross the Jordan and to spy out the land of Canaan for, once again, 40 days. Ten of the spies brought back an evil report. As with Adam in the garden and Israel at Mount Sinai, the Israelites did not consider God’s word to be good and true. Instead, this “son” of God accepted the evil report of the spies and, because of this, was made to wander for 40 years in the wilderness. They could not enter God’s good land (see Numbers 13). King Saul was tempted by Goliath for 40 days (see 1 Samuel 17:16). He didn’t trust God’s word. He was afraid of Goliath (see 1 Samuel 17:11). He too failed the test and would not fight the enemy of God’s people. Elijah, when he was tempted by Jezebel, fled through the desert for 40 days. He too failed the test (see 1 Kings 19). Another prophet was appointed to succeed him. Would there ever be a son of God who would demonstrate faith in God’s good word when tested? Jesus, the true “Son” of God, didn’t fail the test. He was tempted in a way that no other man was ever tempted, yet he passed the test. He demonstrated his trust in God and his love of God’s good word. (King David is a small picture of Christ. When David was tempted by Goliath, David, the Spirit-anointed king of Israel, ran to face Goliath and conquered him.) Significantly, after Jesus’ death and resurrection, the Apostles are “tested” when Jesus appears to them over a period of 40 days (see Acts 1:3). Will they pass the test? Will they believe God’s promises? They do not doubt that Jesus is alive, but, as the book of Acts demonstrates, act in faith based on what they have seen. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and because the Apostles are “in Christ”, a new kind of people has been created—a people who, like their Savior, can pass the test!

¹⁸ Christ, because he is the perfect “Son of God” who always listens to God, receives help from God (by his angels) and is able to conquer the devil. It appears Mark wants his readers to think of Psalm 91 here (this Psalm is quoted by Satan in Matthew 4:6 and Luke 4:10-11). Psalm 91 is a Psalm concerning the care God promises to show to his “son”. Because God’s “Son” has, unlike the “sons” who have gone before him, put his trust in God (see Psalm 91:2), God promises to deliver him from evil and promises that he, rather than being conquered, will conquer evil: “You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot” (see Psalm 91:13). This conquering of “the snake” (Satan) is an echo of God’s promise regarding the Christ in Genesis 3:15: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel”. Christ is the one who “bruises” the head of Satan. As the perfect “Son” of God he is able to, as Psalm 91 says, trample the “adder” (Satan) underfoot. He did this when he died on the cross (see Colossians 2:15). It is important to understand that, with Christ’s death and resurrection, Christ’s victory has “**already**” been won, however, every aspect of that victory has “**not yet**” come to pass.

and the kingdom of God is at hand;¹⁹ repent and believe in the gospel.”

16 Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee,²⁰ he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. **17** And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”²¹ **18** And immediately they left their nets and followed him. **19** And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. **20** And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.²²

21 And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. **22** And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. **23** And immediately there was in

¹⁹ The kingdom of God is the blessed kingdom ruled over by God’s King (see 2 Samuel 7:12-13) and possessed by God’s people. The citizens of this kingdom are those who have repented of their sins and who have faith in Christ (this is summarized in Acts 2:38). Jesus’ words here echo several prophecies from Daniel: “And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever . . .” (Daniel 2:44), and “the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom” (Daniel 7:22). Jesus is declaring that, because of his coming, the time of the kingdom promised in the Old Testament has come. Again, it is important to understand that the kingdom of God is “**already**” present in Christ, but is “**not yet**” here in all its fullness.

²⁰ Christ’s chosen place of ministry demonstrates that he is the promised King of God’s people. By ministering in Galilee, he fulfills Isaiah’s words: “in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, **Galilee** of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined” (Isaiah 9:1-2). See also Mark 14:28 and Acts 2:7.

²¹ It appears that Jesus’ actions here are intended to be echoes of Jeremiah 16:14-21. In these verses, God says that he will bring his people out from the nations and to himself in a second Exodus. In fact, he says that this second Exodus will be so great that it will cause people to no longer talk about the first Exodus from Egypt! How will God bring the people to himself in this second Exodus? He will do it by using fishermen! “Behold, I am sending for many fishers, declares the LORD, and they shall catch them” (Jeremiah 16:16). Jesus’ words echo this: “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” Jesus is using fishermen to “catch” his people. If you are in Christ, you are among those who have been “caught” by God’s fishermen, and you are part of this second Exodus. Christ uses these fishermen to, as Isaiah 9:3 says, multiply the nation. His desire, if you are his follower, is that you also would be a fisher of men.

²² A mark of Jesus’ followers is that they leave everything to follow him (see Luke 14:26-33).

their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit.²³ And he cried out, **24** “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.”

25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!”

26 And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. **27** And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” **28** And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

29 And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. **30** Now Simon’s mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her.

31 And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

32 That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. **33** And the whole city was gathered together at the door. **34** And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.²⁴

35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he

²³ As Christ begins his ministry, it is evident that Israel—the place that should be filled with God’s peace and presence—is filled with enemies. The people are tormented by sickness and disease. The effects of sin are everywhere. Demons are common—even in the synagogues. Jesus is presented as the one who delivers God’s people from all of these enemies. It is no accident that the most common miracles in Mark involve the casting out of demons (see Mark 1:21–28, 1:34, 1:39, 3:10–12, 3:14–15, 5:1–20, 6:7–13, 7:24–30, and 9:14–29). These miracles demonstrate that, in Christ, God has come to fight for his people. He delivers them from all of their enemies. This deliverance from mighty oppressors was promised in the book of Isaiah: “Can the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of a tyrant be rescued? For thus says the LORD: ‘Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant be rescued, for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children’” (Isaiah 49:24–25). It is significant to note that there is no evidence of demons being cast out in the Old Testament. King David, who is a small picture of Christ, was able to bring temporary relief to King Saul when he played his harp (see 1 Samuel 16:23). Only the Christ is able to deliver God’s people from their deepest and most dangerous enemies. See also Isaiah 35 and 61:1–4.

²⁴ Christ does not need demons to testify to his greatness. Instead, Christ uses his “fishermen” (those who love him) to proclaim his mighty deeds.

Throughout the book of Mark, Mark repeatedly emphasizes Christ’s desire for secrecy. Jesus wants to be revealed in his way and in his time. His time is the time of his death and resurrection (see also John 2:4). Only after his death and resurrection does Jesus seek to have all attention drawn to himself. It is clear that attention from the crowds during the time period before Jesus’ death would have hindered Christ’s purposes.

departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.²⁵

36 And Simon and those who were with him searched for him,

37 and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.” **38** And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I

may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” **39** And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

40 And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, “If you will, you can make me clean.” **41** Moved with pity, he

stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, “I will; be clean.”²⁶ **42** And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was

made clean. **43** And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away

at once, **44** and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what

²⁵ Jesus, the perfect Son of God, delights to be in God’s presence. God’s blessing rests on Christ because, as Psalm 1:2 says, “his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night”. Jesus is more than just our Savior. He is also our example. We are to imitate his zeal for God. See also Psalm 5:3.

²⁶ Touching the leper does not make Jesus unclean. He makes the leper clean!

Moses commanded, for a proof to them.”²⁷ **45** But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

²⁷ This miracle is meant to provide “proof” to the priests that the kingdom of God has come in power. They are to, based on seeing this man, recognize that the Christ has come and put their faith in him (see John 20:30-31 for the purpose of **signs** in Jesus’ ministry).

But this miracle is more than just a sign to the priests in Jerusalem. It is sign to all of Mark’s readers. **It is a sign that the kingdom of God has come in power.** The man is healed by Christ’s words. He is forever changed because he meets Jesus.

It is a sign that the kingdom has come in mercy. This man is a picture of all of those who come to Christ. All those who come to Christ are unclean because of sin. The King of the kingdom cleans those who come to him in faith so that they can be part of his kingdom. Every citizen in the kingdom of God has been cleansed by Christ.

It is a sign that a new and different kind of priest has come. In this miracle, Jesus does what the priests were supposed to do. He declares that the man is clean (see Leviticus 13-14). The priests in Jerusalem were supposed to go through a lengthy ceremony to do this. Jesus, however, doesn’t go through any ceremonies. His words are enough! But Jesus does more than just declare that the man is clean. By his words he actually cleanses the man! Jesus has power and authority that far surpasses that of the priests in Jerusalem. He is a new and different kind of priest with a new and different kind of power (see Hebrews 5-10 for a comparison between Jesus’ priesthood and the priesthood of those serving in Jerusalem).

It is a sign that a new and different kind of temple has come. Under the Old Covenant, people needing cleansing were supposed to go to the temple in order to be proclaimed clean. Jesus, however, declares people clean when they come to him! He is demonstrating that he is the replacement of the temple in Jerusalem (see John 2:18-22 and 4:19-26). This means people from all the earth can come to Christ for cleansing!

It is a sign that a new and different kind of sacrifice has come. Under the Old Covenant, whenever a person was declared clean from a disease, animal sacrifices needed to be made (see Leviticus 13-14). Jesus pronounces this man clean without any animal sacrifices because Jesus himself is the sacrifice for this man. The sacrifice of Jesus takes place when he dies on the cross.

Mark 2²⁸

1 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. **2** And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them.²⁹ **3** And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. **4** And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.³⁰ **5** And when Jesus saw their faith,³¹ he said to

²⁸ There are five “controversies” between Mark 2:1 and Mark 3:6. All of the controversies involve the Jewish leaders questioning Jesus’ actions and authority. See Mark 2:1-12, 2:13-17, 2:18-22, 2:23-28, and 3:1-6. At the conclusion of these controversies, the Pharisees decide to kill Jesus (see Mark 3:6). This is the first hint in Mark that Jesus will die.

²⁹ “The word” Jesus was preaching to them was, based on Mark 1:14-15, the gospel of God. The gospel is the good news that because God’s anointed King has arrived, the kingdom of God has also arrived, and that people can now, by faith, enter into the kingdom of God. For a time period, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness exist side-by-side. People of faith experience, even now, the stunning power of the new age (see Mark 2:5). Others, like the Pharisees, refuse to acknowledge God’s anointed King and, because of this, remain outside of his blessed kingdom.

All people are, because of sin, born into the kingdom of darkness (see Ephesians 2:1-3). Those who put their faith in Jesus, however, are born again. They are, by this “second birth”, transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of Christ (see Ephesians 2:4-10).

³⁰ The people assume that Jesus will heal the man’s paralyzed body. The healing of the body is something that great prophets in the Old Testament sometimes did. Jesus, however, forgives the man’s sins. The healing of the soul is something that only God can do because sins are committed against him. The people are shocked by Jesus’ actions.

³¹ Notice the connection between faith in the first half of this verse and forgiveness of sins in the second half of this verse. Sins are forgiven based on faith in Christ.

the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”³² **6** Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, **7** “Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”³³ **8** And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? **9** Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’? **10** But that you may know that the Son of Man³⁴ has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic—

³² Under the Old Covenant (a time period in Israel prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus), those who had faith received forgiveness of sins when they went to the temple in Jerusalem (or, prior to the building of the temple, to the tabernacle) and offered a sacrifice. This man, however, is forgiven even though he is far from the temple in Jerusalem and has not offered any sacrifices for his sins. He receives forgiveness at **the temple of Jesus’ body** (see John 2:18-22 and 4:20-26). And Jesus offers no animal sacrifice for this man’s sins, because the forgiveness this man receives is based upon the upcoming sacrifice that Jesus will make of his own body (see Isaiah 53:4-12). As **the true and final temple**, Jesus is the “place” where people come to find forgiveness and healing and communion with God. As **the true and final sacrifice**, Jesus’ death satisfies God’s wrath and enables this man (and all people who trust in Christ) to be forgiven.

It is important to understand that Jesus has always been the only sacrifice that can take away sin. Animals sacrificed under the Old Covenant were small pictures of Christ. They were intended to prepare people for the true and final sacrifice—Jesus Christ. These animal sacrifices could not actually take away sin. They were temporary “coverings” for sin, mercifully granted by God until the perfect sacrifice of Christ (see Romans 3:25-26 and Hebrews 10:1-18). Christ alone has the glory of taking away the sins of the world (see John 1:29).

³³ The scribes are right in their understanding that only God can forgive sins. The Scriptures are clear about this (see, for example, Exodus 34:6-7, Psalm 130:4, and Isaiah 43:25). However, the scribes are very wrong when they are offended at Jesus’ actions. Jesus can forgive the man because he is fully God and fully man.

³⁴ This is the first use of the title “Son of Man” in the book of Mark. Jesus often uses this title in reference to himself. The title is used 14 times in Mark (and more than 80 times in the gospels). See Mark 2:10, 2:28, 8:31, 8:38, 9:9, 9:12, 9:31, 10:33, 10:45, 13:26, 14:21, 14:41, and 14:62. The term, as Jesus uses it, is based on a prophecy regarding the coming of someone called the “Son of Man” in the book of Daniel. In Daniel 7:13-14, the “Son of Man” comes before God the Father and receives “dominion and glory and a kingdom”. By using this title in reference to himself, Jesus is indicating that **he is the Son of Man** and he is telling the people (both then and now) that he has been given dominion over all things (this dominion includes the power to forgive sins). Jesus’ frequent use of this title in reference to himself is a sign that he is the Son of Man prophesied in Daniel. The miraculous signs he performs are additional signs that he is the Son of Man. Those who hear Jesus’ words about himself and who see the signs that he performs are to put their faith in him. The forgiveness of sins is a demonstration of the unprecedented authority Jesus has received from God the Father. To “see” the Son of Man and to fail to worship him is a great sin and is worthy of great punishment.

11 “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.”³⁵ **12** And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”³⁶

13 He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. **14** And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth,³⁷ and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.

15 And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. **16** And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”³⁸

17 And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

18 Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, “Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” **19** And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is

³⁵ Miracles are signs intended to cause people to believe that Jesus is the Christ. See John 20:30-31.

³⁶ The crowds are amazed because they are seeing the Son of Man exercising dominion over sin and sickness. However, their amazement does not equal faith. Faith is more than amazement. It is recognition of Christ’s identity, trust in him, and love of him.

³⁷ In the same way that it was no accident that several of the disciples were fishermen (see Jeremiah 16:16), it appears to be no accident that Matthew was a tax collector. Tax collectors were considered by the people to be very great sinners because they worked with the Romans and they were thought to cheat the people (see Matthew 18:17 and Luke 18:10-13). The fact that Matthew is called to follow Jesus when he is sitting at his tax booth is noted by Matthew (Matthew 9:9), Mark (Mark 2:14), and Luke (Luke 5:27). In other words, Matthew is not presented as a “former” tax collector at the time of his call. He is still collecting taxes! It must have shocked the people to see Jesus calling someone who is actively collecting taxes for Rome. Matthew is presented in this way to emphasize the fact that Jesus calls sinners. He is the one who changes sinners to saints.

³⁸ Christ’s table fellowship with sinners in Mark is a picture of the feasting forgiven sinners will enjoy with each other and with Christ in the age to come. Until that day, we wait with anticipation (see Isaiah 25:6-8 and Revelation 19:6-9). The Lord’s supper is a “mini-feast”. It is meant to remind us of the fellowship we have with one another and with Christ because of his death and resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 11:17-34).

with them?³⁹ As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. **20** The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.⁴⁰ **21** No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. **22** And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins.”⁴¹

23 One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. **24** And the Pharisees were saying to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” **25** And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: **26** how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?”⁴² **27** And he said to them, “The

³⁹ It is significant to note that the Old Testament presents Yahweh as the husband of his people (see Isaiah 54:5-8, Isaiah 62:5, and Hosea 2:19-20). Here, Jesus claims the title of “bridegroom” for himself! By his words he is indicating that he is filling the role the prophets said would be filled by Yahweh! He is the bridegroom, and the church is his bride (see 1 Corinthians 6:15-17 and Ephesians 5:22-33).

⁴⁰ Jesus’ disciples did not fast because he was with them. The implication is that the presence of the bridegroom demands feasting, not fasting. After the ascension of Jesus to heaven, however, fasting was a regular part of the disciples’ lives. Fasting has always been a mark of believers (see, for example, Acts 13:1-3). We do not fast because we are waiting for the kingdom of God to come (that is why people of faith under the Old Covenant would have fasted). It has already come in Christ. We fast because the kingdom has not yet come in all its fullness. When Christ returns, then there will be no more reason to fast. Because of the bridegroom’s presence, we will never fast again!

⁴¹ Patches made out of new cloth cannot be used to repair tears in clothing made of old cloth because the patches made out of new cloth will shrink and will ruin the old clothing. In the same way, the New Covenant is not a new and better “patch” intended to fix problems associated with the Old Covenant (actually, the problems weren’t with the Old Covenant—they were with the people who, because of sin, couldn’t keep the Old Covenant - see Hebrews 8:8). Jesus did not come to “repair” the Old Covenant. Rather, he brought in something brand new.

Fasting (verses 18-20) and the keeping of the Sabbath (verses 23-28) are examples of “old wineskins”. Jesus didn’t come to keep fasting as it was, or to keep the Sabbath as it was. These were just shadows of truths that would become reality in him.

⁴² See 1 Samuel 21:1-6. Jesus seems to be saying that David, because he was God’s anointed king, could “break” the law and still be considered innocent. He could do this because he was “greater” than the law. Jesus is David’s heir, the coming King promised in 2 Samuel 7. If David can “break” the law and still be considered innocent, surely the Christ can do the same thing. For further explanation of this see also Matthew 12:1-8.

Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. **28** So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”⁴³

Mark 3

1 Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand.⁴⁴ **2** And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath,⁴⁵ so that they might accuse him.

3 And he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come here.”

4 And he said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. **5** And he looked

⁴³ Nothing, not even the Sabbath, is lord over the Son of Man. He has been given dominion over all things. The Sabbath doesn't limit what he can and cannot do. But Jesus is more than just lord of the Sabbath. He actually is the true Sabbath. The rest people were to enjoy on the Sabbath is a picture of the rest that can only be found in Christ (see Matthew 11:28-30). Many things pictured in the Old Covenant (the temple, the priesthood, the Sabbath, the sacrifices, etc.) find their true meaning in Christ. Jesus confirms this in Matthew 5:17-20.

⁴⁴ The abundance of sickness, disease, and deformity among God's people at this time should be seen as an indication that all was not well in Israel. Curses for disobedience had come upon the nation (see Deuteronomy 28). But Jesus is changing things in the land. Where he goes, blessing follows. By his actions, the curse is reversed! This healing is a sign that Jesus is the one who ends the curse. Today, believers on earth do **not yet** experience all of the blessings associated with Jesus' victory on the cross. We **already** have forgiveness of sins and eternal life, yet our mortal bodies still experience sickness, disease, and death. There will come a day, however, when all effects of sin and the curse will forever be forgotten. Jesus must reign until every enemy is under his feet (see Psalm 110 and 1 Corinthians 15:25), thus, he will ultimately deal with every effect of sin and the curse.

⁴⁵ The last two of the five controversies in this “controversy” section of Mark (2:1-3:6) both take place on the Sabbath (2:23-28 and 3:1-6). According to Exodus 31:12-17, the Sabbath was intended to be a sign so that the people might know God is the one who sanctifies his people. God's people are not sanctified (made holy) by their own efforts. That is why they were commanded to rest. We, also, are not saved by our works. We are saved because Christ has finished his work and we enter into his rest. The fact that he is described as **sitting** at the right hand of God the Father demonstrates that he is resting from his work of redemption (see Hebrews 10:11-18). The penalty under the Old Covenant for breaking the Sabbath was death (see Exodus 31:12-17 and 35:1-3). The Pharisees consider Jesus to be a Sabbath breaker, therefore, they seek to put him to death.

Jesus is not a Sabbath breaker because he is Lord of the Sabbath and he is the true Sabbath, therefore, those who come to Christ find their rest in him. Because Jesus is the true Sabbath, Christians are no longer required to keep a certain day of the week as the Sabbath. The first Sabbath was a shadow meant to point people to Christ. Christ is the reality (see Colossians 2:16-17). Christians keep the Sabbath when they find their rest in Christ.

around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart,⁴⁶ and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

6 The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.⁴⁷

7 Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea **8** and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. **9** And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, **10** for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. **11** And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.”⁴⁸ **12** And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ The Pharisees pretend to love God’s good word. However, by their actions, they demonstrate that they do not love his word, because they do not love God’s Son. God’s word, all of it, is intended to draw people to God’s Son. The Pharisees, because they reject God’s Son, also reject God’s word.

⁴⁷ Christ suffers so that this man might be healed. This is a small picture of the suffering Christ bore on the cross so that all people might be healed. At this time, the disciples don’t understand that Jesus must suffer and die. However, they shouldn’t have been surprised that the Christ would suffer. The suffering of the Christ is a major theme of the prophets in the Old Testament (see, for instance, Isaiah 50:6-7, 53:4-8, Luke 24:26-27, 44-47, and 1 Peter 1:10-12).

⁴⁸ Mark wants his readers to know that the unclean spirits recognize Jesus’ authority as the Son of God. This should provide strong comfort to those who call Jesus Lord.

⁴⁹ Jesus wants people to put faith in him based on the signs he is doing (see John 20:30-31 and Acts 2:22) and on the testimony of those who love him, not based on the testimony of demons.

Verses 7-12 are a summary of Jesus’ actions. Mark includes a summary when he doesn’t want his readers to focus on one particular sign or saying of Jesus, but rather on a whole group of signs together (see also Mark 1:34 and 39). These **summary statements** are intended to cause us to think hard about Jesus’ whole identity, rather than just one particular “sign”. He is doing all of the things prophesied about the Christ in the Old Testament. Old Testament prophecies about the “signs” of the Christ include Isaiah 29:18, 30:26, 35:5-6, 42:6-7, and 49:24-25. The people should have recognized the “weight” of all of these signs and have come to Christ in faith.

13⁵⁰ And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him.

14 And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles)⁵¹ so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach **15** and have authority to cast out demons. **16** He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); **17** James the

⁵⁰ Verses 13-35 all concern how various groups of people relate to Christ. Verses 13-19 concern the twelve Apostles. They are called by him to be his authorized representatives. Verses 20-21 concern his earthly family. They think Jesus is “out of his mind” and are coming so that they might control him. Verses 22-30 concern the scribes from Jerusalem. They think he is possessed by Beelzebul (another name for Satan). Verses 31-32 concern his earthly family again. They have arrived so that they might control him. Finally, verses 32-35 concern those whom Jesus considers to be his true family. These people are sitting around him and are listening to him (see another example of a true family member in Mark 5:15). It is significant to note that Jesus explains the secrets of the kingdom of God only to his Apostles and true family members (see Mark 4:10-12).

⁵¹ The Apostles are not chosen because of their intelligence or their education or their giftedness or their holiness. They are very ordinary men. They become great men of God because they are called by Christ, because of Christ’s death and resurrection, and because of their faith in Christ. Jesus, because of his victory on the Cross, pours out his Spirit on them, and they, in obedience to his command, proclaim the gospel throughout the earth (Acts 1:8).

The importance of the Apostles cannot be minimized. They are, with the exception of Jesus, the most important and influential people on the earth. This is true today. The words of the Apostles are true and they are binding. They must be obeyed. This is evident based on Jesus’ words to the Apostles in John 14:25-26 and John 16:12-15. The Apostles have been given the task of rightly proclaiming the words and history of Christ and the ways of the kingdom of God. Their teaching, along with the writings of the prophets in the Old Testament, forms the very foundation of the household of God (see Ephesians 2:19-20). The church, both in the first century and today, is to base its teaching on the teaching of the Apostles (see Acts 2:42). If any local church departs from Apostolic teaching, it has departed from Christ, for the Apostles are the authorized representatives of Christ.

Those within the church should consider the overall teaching pattern of the Apostles. What do they focus on? What don’t they focus on? The church is in danger any time it doesn’t embrace and emphasize teaching that **is** emphasized by the Apostles. Likewise, the church is in danger any time it embraces and emphasizes teaching that is **not** emphasized by the Apostles. The teaching of the Apostles forms a fence for the church. Inside the fence is eternal life, peace, joy, health, and safety. Outside of the Apostolic fence is eternal death.

It is no accident that there are 12 Apostles. Israel, in the Old Testament, was comprised of 12 tribes. Jesus, the true “Israel” of God, also has 12 “tribes”—the Apostles. The reason Israel needed to be “re-built” was because of its disobedience. Israel, remember, was scattered among the nations because of idolatry. However, the prophets promised that Israel would be regathered (see Deuteronomy 4:30). The promised regathering of God’s people began with Christ. He is the true Israelite—the true Son of God. The 12 Apostles are the foundation of the new people of God. To depart from the Apostles is to depart from the people of God.

son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder);⁵² **18** Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, **19** and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

20 Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat.

21 And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”⁵³

22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.”⁵⁴ **23** And he called them to him and said to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? **24** If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. **25** And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. **26** And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. **27** But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.”⁵⁵

⁵² In the same way that the first Adam named the creatures (see Genesis 2:19), Jesus, the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45), names his followers.

⁵³ Jesus’ earthly family does not, at this time, fully understand his identity or his mission. This was prophesied in the Old Testament (see Psalm 69:8-9).

⁵⁴ The religious leaders in Jerusalem should recognize that Jesus is God’s Son. They should, after seeing the signs that Jesus is doing, put their faith in Christ and call the people of Israel to put their trust in the Christ. Instead of doing this, the religious leaders from Jerusalem declare that Jesus is filled with Satan and is, therefore, doing the works of Satan.

See Isaiah 40:9-11 in connection with this passage. This is a call for Jerusalem, because it has seen the arrival of the Christ, to spread the good news of his coming. The religious leaders in Jerusalem do not fulfill this passage. The church, however, is fulfilling this passage.

⁵⁵ Jesus insists that he is not filled with Satan. He is not working with Satan or by the power of Satan. Instead, he is destroying Satan’s kingdom! He has bound Satan (the strong man) because he is stronger than Satan and he has entered his “house” and is plundering his goods (see Acts 10:38). If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you are plunder that has been rescued! You have been rescued from the kingdom of darkness because one stronger than Satan has come (see Ephesians 2:1-3)! Every time Jesus heals a disease or casts out a demon or forgives sin it is a sign that the stronger one has come! Every person who turns to Christ is a sign that the stronger one has come!

MARK 3

28 “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, **29** but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”— **30** for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”⁵⁶

31 And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. **32** And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” **33** And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” **34** And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! **35** For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”⁵⁷

MARK 4

1 Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. **2** And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he

⁵⁶ In verses 28-30, Jesus honors the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the member of the Trinity who was greatly dishonored by the Scribes (see verse 22). Notice the great concern Jesus has for the honor and reputation of the third member of the Trinity. Christ has, again, given us an example to follow. We should, as followers of Christ, show the same concern for God’s reputation as Jesus shows.

Verses 28-30 include a glorious promise and a terrible warning. The glorious promise is that every sin can be forgiven. Jesus demonstrates this by eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. The terrible warning is that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. To say that the Holy Spirit is an unclean spirit is an eternal crime that will never be forgiven (see Isaiah 63:10).

⁵⁷ Jesus does not consider his true family to be those who are related to him by blood. His true family is made up of those who sit around his feet and listen to him and do what he says. By listening to Jesus, the people are obeying the words in Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (see also God the Father’s words concerning Christ in Mark 9:7).

said to them: **3** “Listen!⁵⁸ Behold, a sower went out to sow.⁵⁹ **4** And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. **5** Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. **6** And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. **7** Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. **8** And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.” **9** And he said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

10 And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables.⁶⁰ **11** And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables,

⁵⁸ In Mark 4, Jesus speaks God’s words and commands the people “to hear” (the verb “to hear” appears 13 times in this chapter). “To hear” means more than merely listening. It means listening to Jesus’ word, loving the word that he has spoken, and obeying that word. To refuse to listen to Jesus is sin. It is sin because God the Father has raised Jesus up and has put his words in Jesus’ mouth.

Jesus is the one who fulfills Moses’ words in Deuteronomy 18: “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen” (Deuteronomy 18:15). The people of God were to wait for this prophet and were to, when he was raised up by God, eagerly listen to him. Jesus is like Moses because he sees God face-to-face (this was said of none of the other prophets in the Old Testament). To disobey Jesus is to disobey God the Father: “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him” (Deuteronomy 18:18-19). See also Mark 9:7 and Acts 3:22-23.

⁵⁹ The parable of the sower is the first parable in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This parable appears first because of its importance. This parable is a description of those who hear the good news of the kingdom of God and reject it (the bad soil) and a description of those who hear the good new of the kingdom of God and accept it (the good soil).

⁶⁰ In Mark 3:34, Jesus indicated that his true family was made up of “those who sat around him” listening to his words. Here, we see Jesus giving the secret of the kingdom of God to these true family members! Christ’s words of explanation are a gracious gift that should be treasured! He sees God face-to-face, and he explains all that he has seen about the kingdom to his family members. Those outside of his true family (those who have no faith in Christ) do not receive Christ’s explanation. They receive no explanation because they want no explanation. They do not love Christ or love his words. They will not sit at his feet.

12 so that

“they may indeed see but not perceive,
and may indeed hear but not understand,
lest they should turn and be forgiven.”⁶¹

13 And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?”⁶² **14** The sower sows the word. **15** And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.⁶³ **16** And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. **17** And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. **18** And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, **19** but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.⁶⁴ **20** But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and

⁶¹ This is a quote from Isaiah 6:9-10. Jesus is warning those outside (those who will not sit and listen to him) that Isaiah’s prophecy in Isaiah 6:9-13 applies to them. Even though Jesus only quotes verses 9-10, it is important to see the following verses, for the Jewish leaders would have known these verses by heart and would have known that Jesus was telling them that these verses applied to them. Jesus was saying that since they have eyes and will not see and ears and will not understand (in other words, since they will not come to the Christ for understanding), they will be utterly destroyed.

⁶² This is the first negative comment that is made about the disciples in Mark. They are slow to understand who Jesus is and why he has come. See also Mark 4:40-41, 6:51-52, 7:17-19, 8:14-21, 8:31-33, and 9:30-32. Jesus wants his disciples to think very hard about the signs they are seeing and the words they are hearing. They are thinking hard, but they are confused. They need a miracle from heaven in order to clearly understand the Christ.

⁶³ Even though, as Mark 3:27 made clear, Satan has been bound by Christ, and Christ is “plundering his house”, here we see that Satan is still able to cause great trouble on the earth. Like a poisonous snake that has suffered a mortal injury but is still thrashing around, Satan is still dangerous. The day will come when Satan is finally cast into the “lake of fire and sulphur” (see Revelation 20:10). Until that day, believers in the Lord Jesus need to be watchful (see 1 Peter 5:8-9).

⁶⁴ Even though some people initially receive the word with joy and profess to believe for a time, this does not mean that they have saving faith and are members of Christ’s true family. The only evidence that a person has true saving faith is good fruit. Good fruit testifies to the condition of a person’s “soil” (see Matthew 3:8 and 7:15-20). Even though the crowds initially received Jesus’ miracles with joy, most of them did not produce good fruit. They are an example of bad soil. This is why they eventually abandoned him (see John 6:60-71).

sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”⁶⁵

21 And he said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand?”⁶⁶ **22** For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light.⁶⁷ **23** If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” **24** And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. **25** For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one

⁶⁵ This parable is about two types of soil: bad soil that does not bear fruit and good soil that does bear fruit. Jesus gives three examples of bad soil (soil on the path, rocky soil, and thorny soil) and three examples of good soil (soil bearing thirtyfold, soil bearing sixtyfold, and soil bearing a hundredfold). The bad soil should not be seen as representing true followers of Christ. True followers of Christ do not have the word snatched away by Satan, they do not fall away because of persecution, and they are not choked by thorns. True followers of Christ remain true until the harvest. The good soil miraculously produces an abundance of grain. This is true of all those who are in Christ. There are no “kinds” of faith that bear no fruit. All those in Christ bear much fruit (see John 15:1-8).

In Genesis 1:28, God blesses man and tells him to “Be fruitful and multiply”. Good fruit is intended to bring great glory to God, for it demonstrates his greatness. Adam doesn’t bear good fruit. Instead of treasuring God’s good word, he rebels, is kicked out of the garden, and is forced to live in a cursed land where he cannot bear good fruit. Those who are in Christ, however, do not live in a barren wilderness that bears no fruit. Because of Christ, the curse is reversed. Christ is like a new garden of Eden—he is the “place” where good fruit is produced! See Galatians 5:22-23 for a description of the kind of fruit that grows in all those who are “in Christ”.

⁶⁶ The Greek text actually reads, “Does **the** light **come** to be put under a basket”? Jesus is **THE** light that has come into a very dark world (see John 8:12 and Revelation 21:23). He didn’t come so that he might be silenced (this is what the Pharisees wanted to do to him). He didn’t come so that he might be hidden away (this is what his earthly family wanted to do to him). He came so that he might be displayed and loved and trusted and worshiped. He came so that all might see his light, love his light, and be saved by his light. Also see John 1:5-9 and 3:19-21.

Because Jesus is the light of the world, all those who are “in him” have his light within themselves, therefore, they too may be called the light of the world. See Matthew 5:14-16.

⁶⁷ Jesus came in a “hidden” way. People could not, based on his outward appearance, see his eternal glory (see Isaiah 53:1-2). They needed to see his glory with eyes of faith. But God did not intend for Jesus’ glory to remain forever concealed. God sent Christ in humility so that Christ’s true glory might be seen by all (see Philippians 2:5-11).

who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”⁶⁸

26 And he said, “The kingdom of God⁶⁹ is as if a man should scatter seed⁷⁰ on the ground. **27** He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. **28** The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”⁷¹

30 And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? **31** It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, **32** yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”⁷²

33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they

⁶⁸ Jesus is talking about how we listen to the teaching of the Christ. If we give to him all of our attention, we will be given more by him. If we will not pay attention to the little of his teaching that we have heard, even what we have heard will be taken away from us. Receive Christ with joy and obedience, and God will pour out his blessings on you. Reject Christ, and you will be rejected by God.

This parable should give great hope to those who trust in Christ. Much more will be given to them. This does not mean that those who trust in Christ receive all of their blessings at once and in this lifetime. Like Christ, true believers will suffer persecution in this age.

⁶⁹ Kingdom of God appears in Mark in 1:15, 4:11, 4:26, 4:30, 9:1, 9:47, 10:14, 10:15, 10:23, 10:24, 10:25, 12:34, 14:25, 15:43. A related term, “kingdom of our father David”, appears in 11:10.

⁷⁰ See Mark 1:15. The “seed” is the gospel message. The gospel demands repentance and belief.

⁷¹ Since the gospel has been planted, Christ’s true family members can be assured that the kingdom is growing, whether they see it (like the man when he is awake) or do not see it (like the man when he is asleep). Christ’s true family members can be assured that the seed will not die but will continue to grow and the harvest will eventually come. This parable is especially encouraging during those times when it appears that the kingdom of God is retreating.

The “seed” parables (verses 1-9, 26-29, and 30-32) emphasize that the seed bears fruit. God’s seed bears fruit because Jesus is the fruitful one (see Isaiah 11:1 and John 15:1-11).

⁷² The parable of the mustard seed is, like the parable immediately before it, meant to encourage Christ’s true family members. Jesus wants his family members to know that, like a mustard seed, the kingdom of God starts small. But he also wants them to know that it will not stay small. The kingdom of God that seemed so tiny will eventually turn into something that can be compared to a very large tree that has taken over a garden. Jesus doesn’t want his family members to lose faith as they are waiting for the kingdom of God to finally fill the earth. This growing time of the kingdom is why we read that it is by faith **and** patience that we inherit the promises (see Hebrews 6:12).

were able to hear it. **34** He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.”⁷³ **36** And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him.

37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. **38** But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion.⁷⁴ And they woke him and said to him,

“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” **39** And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. **40** He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” **41** And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”⁷⁵

⁷³ Mark intentionally places this story after the parables. The purpose of this story is to strengthen faith in Christ. He is utterly trustworthy. No matter how dangerous the journey might be (the sea was a symbol of chaos), Christ will get his people to the place he has promised to take them. He is not afraid, therefore they should not be afraid.

Jesus’ true family members need strong faith if they are to persevere in the difficult time when the kingdom of God is transitioning from its small beginnings (it started like a mustard seed) to the time when it overwhelms everything (it will be like the largest tree in a garden). The kingdom is not a tiny mustard seed anymore. It is **already** growing, but it is **not yet** a full grown tree, either. It is growing up. Faith for Jesus’ true family members during this “growing up” season comes by seeing the signs Jesus performs, considering the meaning of the signs, and, based on the signs, putting trust in Christ.

The point of this story is that Christ has power to cause all things to submit to himself (even the wildly tossing sea), therefore he can be trusted to fulfill all of his promises! The things Jesus does in the boat are things that are said of Yahweh in the Old Testament. Carefully read Job 9:4-12, 26:11-14, 38:8-11, Psalm 65:7-8, 89:9-10, 106:8-9, 107:23-31, and Isaiah 51:9-11. In these passages, Yahweh shows his power over the sea and, in some of the passages, over a creature called “Rahab” (this is a poetic name for the great sea monster who lives in the sea). By doing the very same things that are said of Yahweh, Jesus is demonstrating that he is God and that he has the power to save his people and to safely bring them across the “sea” (chaos) to “dry land” (God’s safety).

⁷⁴ Jesus’ sleep while the storm is raging demonstrates his perfect faith in God. See Proverbs 3:21-26.

⁷⁵ The disciples are afraid because they are starting to realize that Jesus must be more than a man. He is doing the things that only God can do! Jesus is “God with us”. God has come down and climbed into the boat with his people. In this story, we see Jesus taking the dangerous journey across the sea with his people! What was true for the disciples then is true for Jesus’ followers today. He will safely get us through the wildly tossing sea. Jesus has said, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

MARK 5

1 They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.⁷⁶ **2** And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. **3** He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, **4** for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him.⁷⁷ **5** Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. **6** And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. **7** And crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.” **8** For he was saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” **9** And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.”⁷⁸ **10** And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. **11** Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside,⁷⁹ **12** and they begged him, saying, “Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.” **13** So he gave them

⁷⁶ Mark does not say whether the characters in this story were Jews or Gentiles, however, there are reasons to think that the people here may have been Jews. It may be significant that Mark doesn't specifically say that the people involved were Gentiles (notice, he does say this regarding a woman in Mark 7:26). Some have said that the people here must be Gentiles because Jewish people were not permitted to eat pigs. However, the large herd of pigs might be a sign of the wickedness of the Jewish people in this place. Also, this passage seems to be a reflection of Isaiah 65:1-7, a passage detailing the rebellion of God's people. Notice, particularly, verses 2-5: “I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices; a people who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and making offerings on bricks; who sit in tombs, and spend the night in secret places; who eat pig's flesh, and broth of tainted meat is in their vessels; who say, ‘Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you.’ These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day.”

⁷⁷ Mark goes to great lengths to tell us that no one has the strength to subdue this man. Jesus does what no one else can do, for he is the stronger one (see Mark 3:27)!

⁷⁸ Jesus isn't asking the demon for its name because he needs to know his name in order to cast it out (he cast out many demons without asking the name), and he isn't asking the demon its name in order to give his followers a formula for casting out demons. He asks the demon its name so his followers will know this is an actual battle and they will know how many enemies there are. Jesus is one man going to battle against a whole **legion** of enemy soldiers (a Roman legion was a troop of about 6,000 soldiers).

⁷⁹ The Jews were not permitted to eat pigs. Therefore, these pigs may have been kept by Gentiles. However, the fact that there was such a large herd of pigs may have shown the great rebellion of the Jewish people in this region (again, see Isaiah 65:1-7).

permission.⁸⁰ And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand,⁸¹ rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.⁸²

14 The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. **15** And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind,⁸³ and they were afraid. **16** And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. **17** And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.⁸⁴ **18** As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. **19** And he did not permit him but said to him, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” **20** And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much

⁸⁰ Jesus is not showing compassion to the demons, and he is not following their advice. Jesus sends the demons into the pigs for his own reasons. If he would have just sent the demons from the area, the readers would not have known the size of the battle that took place or the greatness of the victory that Jesus won, for demons are invisible. Pigs, however, are not invisible. The 2,000 dead pigs floating in the Sea of Galilee were like 2,000 (or more) warriors slain by one man!

⁸¹ In the Old Testament, God promised that one Israelite would put 1,000 enemies to flight (see Joshua 23:10). Jesus, the ideal Israelite, doubles the number and defeats at least 2,000 enemies. See also Leviticus 26:8, Deuteronomy 32:30, Judges 15:16, 1 Samuel 18:7, 1 Chronicles 12:14, and Isaiah 30:17.

⁸² This story should remind the reader of the Exodus and of the Egyptians that were seen floating dead on the Red Sea after the Lord led his people out of Egypt and safely through the Red Sea (see Exodus 14:26-31 and Psalm 106:8-12). Israel's enemies are lying dead before the people! The result of this deliverance should have been great praise of God (as the Israelites did in Exodus 15). Only one man, however, the man who has been delivered, does praise God. The rest of the people, even though they have seen the sign (they can see the 2,000 pigs floating in the sea!), reject Christ and tell him to go away.

⁸³ The man who had had the unclean spirits is now sitting at Jesus' feet and is listening to him. He has become a member of Jesus' true family (see Mark 3:34-35)! Jesus, again, is the one who fulfills Isaiah 49:24-25.

⁸⁴ The only one who recognizes his need for Jesus is the man who had had the unclean spirits. The other people who live in the area do not want Jesus to stay. They don't like his work, and they think they have no need of him. It is important to understand that their need for Jesus is just as great as the need of the man with the unclean spirits. But they are unwilling to have Jesus cleanse them. Because they refuse Jesus' help, he departs, and they stay in their rebellious state.

Jesus had done for him,⁸⁵ and everyone marveled.⁸⁶

21⁸⁷ And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea.

22 Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet **23** and implored him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death.⁸⁸ Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.” **24** And he went with him.

And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. **25** And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve

⁸⁵ In verse 19, Jesus tells the man who had had the unclean spirits to “Go home to your friends and tell them how much **the Lord** has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you”. In verse 20, the man tells his friends “how much **Jesus** had done for him”. Jesus’ command is an echo of the command found in Psalm 107. This Psalm is all about how those who have been saved by Yahweh should respond. They are to thank **Yahweh** for his “mercy” (sometimes translated as “steadfast love”). The man with the unclean spirits fulfills the command in this Psalm by praising **Jesus**. In other words, Jesus is receiving praise that is commanded to be given to Yahweh. The fact that Jesus receives praise that is to be given to God should cause us to ask, as the disciples ask in Mark 4:41, “Who then is this?”. Jesus is 100% God. And he is 100% man. And he has come to rescue his people. Our response to him should be like the response of the man with the demons. We should tell others how much Jesus has done for us, and how he has had mercy on us, and we should sit at his feet and learn from him, and we should love and worship him.

⁸⁶ It may appear that Jesus is cruel by not allowing the former demoniac to go with him, but this is not the case. Jesus has not abandoned this man. Rather, Jesus has put this man to work in his vineyard! This formerly useless man has become useful! He is a fisher of men! He is now doing what is seen in the parable of the two kinds of soil! He is bearing fruit!

⁸⁷ In Mark 5:21-43 there are two different healing stories, but Mark has tied them together. This technique of combining two stories into one is often used by Mark. He does this because he wants his readers to consider the stories as a single unit. They, together, are saying something important. He introduces one healing story (verses 21-24), but before the conclusion of this first healing story he tells a second healing story (verses 25-34), then he concludes the first healing story (verses 35-43). A major element tying these two stories together is faith (see 5:34 and 5:36).

⁸⁸ The fact that a little girl is sick and will not live out her days should have been troubling to the people. Her sickness is evidence that all is not well in the land of Israel (see Deuteronomy 28:45-46). Jesus is the only one who reverses the curse!

years,⁸⁹ **26** and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. **27** She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. **28** For she said, “If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.” **29** And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. **30** And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my garments?” **31** And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, ‘Who touched me?’” **32** And he looked around to see who had done it. **33** But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. **34** And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”⁹⁰

35 While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler’s house some who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?” **36** But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler

⁸⁹ This woman was, according to the Old Covenant, unclean (see Leviticus 15:25-33). Everywhere she went she would have been reminded of this fact. Jesus, however, makes the unclean to be clean. Jesus doesn’t become unclean when he is touched by unclean people. Rather, everyone who touches him (by faith) is made clean.

Compare the woman cleansed by Jesus in Mark 5 with the description of the person who is cleansed from an impurity in Leviticus 15:25-33. In Leviticus 15, the person who is cleansed must count off a certain number of days and must go to the “tent of meeting” and make a sacrifice before she is clean. The woman in Mark 5 does none of these things. She doesn’t wait a certain number of days, she doesn’t go to the temple in Jerusalem, and she doesn’t offer any sacrifices. Rather, she is cleansed instantly when she comes to “the temple” of Jesus’ body, and he, based on her faith in him, tells her that she can go in peace. She doesn’t need to offer any sacrifices because Jesus (when he dies on the cross) sacrifices his own body to cover all the uncleanness of all his people! The sacrifices for cleansing under the Old Covenant are a picture of Christ’s sacrifice of himself for the people’s cleansing under the New Covenant.

Compare the regulations for priests in Leviticus 15:25-33 with the actions taken by Jesus in Mark 5. In Leviticus 15, the person is only to be declared clean after a waiting period of seven days. Jesus, however, declares this woman to be clean at once. The priest under the Old Covenant offers two turtledoves or two pigeons as a sacrifice. Jesus, however, offers himself. He is operating as a different kind of priest with a different set of rules. Their priesthood was temporary. His, however, is eternal (see Hebrews 9:11-28).

⁹⁰ Many people in the crowd are “touching” Jesus but aren’t experiencing healing from him. That is because only one person, the “unclean” woman, truly touches him **by faith**. This woman is instantly healed and becomes “clean”. The rest of the people, those who don’t touch him by faith, are not cleansed by Jesus. They need his cleansing just as much as the woman needed his cleansing. They do not understand, however, their great need. The reason all people need cleansing is outlined in Romans 3:10-18.

of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.”⁹¹ **37** And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James.⁹² **38** They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. **39** And when he had entered, he said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.”⁹³ **40** And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. **41** Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.”⁹⁴ **42** And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. **43** And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.⁹⁵

⁹¹ This miracle is evidence of Christ’s power over all things, even death. The bodily resurrection that this little girl experiences will be experienced by all of Jesus’ family one day (see Isaiah 25:8, Daniel 12:1-3, John 11:17-27, and 1 Corinthians 15:12-58).

⁹² Jesus is bringing witnesses with him. These witnesses will share the events with the other Apostles. Not only that, but two of these witnesses actually write New Testament books. Having these three witnesses at key events ensures that people cannot say that Jesus didn’t actually do these miracles.

⁹³ God’s people who have died are sometimes said to be sleeping, because sleep isn’t a permanent state. Sleeping people wake up. God will, at the resurrection, cause the mortal bodies of his saints to “wake up” (see Daniel 12:1-3 and Acts 7:60).

⁹⁴ Again, Christ is not like the priests serving at the temple in Jerusalem. They were made unclean by death (see Leviticus 21:1-15 for rules regarding how the priests are to relate to dead bodies). Christ is not made unclean by death. He needs no special ceremony to cleanse himself after touching the dead, for he is forever clean. The regulations for priests demonstrate that the priests in the Old Testament were not greater than every enemy of God’s people. They were not greater than death (see also Numbers 6:6-11, 19:11-19, and Deuteronomy 14:1-2). Christ, however, has power over all things, even death itself (see 1 Corinthians 15:20-28). This little girl is like all of God’s people. Words like Christ’s words to the little girl (“I say to you, arise”) will one day be repeated to all of God’s people.

⁹⁵ Both of these stories (the woman who is healed of her bleeding and the girl who is raised from the dead) are signs that the kingdom of God has come in Christ and that it is growing. Where faith in Jesus is found, there is cleansing, purity, and life. Purity is found in Christ. It is not found in keeping purity laws (see also Mark 7:14-23). Notice that while these two healings are signs of the kingdom’s growth, only a few truly see it.

MARK 6

1 He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. **2** And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? **3** Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.⁹⁶ **4** And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.” **5** And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. **6** And he marveled because of their unbelief.⁹⁷

And he went about among the villages teaching.

7 And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. **8** He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— **9** but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.⁹⁸ **10** And he said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. **11** And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” **12** So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. **13** And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed

⁹⁶ The fact that people are offended by the Christ was prophesied in the Old Testament (see Isaiah 8:14-15 and 1 Peter 2:8). The followers of Christ should not expect to be treated better than their Savior.

⁹⁷ Jesus **cannot** do many miracles in his hometown because the people **will not** come to him in faith. They do not honor him because they do not consider him to have come from God. All they can see is his humanity. The lack of miracles in Jesus’ hometown does not demonstrate a lack of power on Jesus’ part. It demonstrates a lack of faith in the people. The people are offended at his humanness, that is why they cannot believe that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is 100% God and 100% man. Both of these can be offensive to people. Compare these verses to Mark 5:34-36. In those verses, Jesus emphasizes the importance of faith. The people in his hometown have no faith. Unlike the “unclean” woman, no one in Jesus’ hometown “reached out to touch his garments” in faith.

⁹⁸ Notice the contrast between the meager provisions permitted to the 12 Apostles (verses 7-13) and the luxurious excess exhibited by Herod Antipas (verses 14-29). The followers of Christ are to trust in God and in his provision. They are not to trust in themselves or in their money.

them.⁹⁹

14 King Herod¹⁰⁰ heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him." **15** But others said, "He is Elijah." And others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." **16** But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." **17** For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her.

18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."¹⁰¹ **19** And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, **20** for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

21 But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. **22** For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." **23** And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." **24** And she went out and said to her mother, "For what should I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist."

⁹⁹ Once again, Mark combines two stories. He begins with the account of Jesus sending out the 12 Apostles (verses 7-13), he then tells the story of Herod killing John (verses 14-29), he then returns to the story of the Apostles (verses 30-52). Mark wants his readers to see these stories together. Mark doesn't tell the reader **how** the two stories tie together. This needs to be **discovered** by closely reading and rereading the text.

¹⁰⁰ Herod is not actually a king. He is a "tetrarch"—an administrator for Caesar (see Matthew 14:1 and Luke 9:7-9). But Herod wants to be a king and he acts like a king. The irony is that Jesus is the real King and John the Baptist is the messenger of the real King (Jesus won't be referred to as a king until Mark 15). Here, a pretend king (Herod) demonstrates his hatred of the kingdom of God by killing the messenger of the real King. Herod promises to give his wife's daughter up to half of his kingdom. But Herod doesn't have a kingdom. He cannot, therefore, deliver this gift. The same may be said for every pretend "king" on this earth. They do not have a kingdom, and they cannot deliver what they are promising. Jesus, however, is a real King and he has a real kingdom. He promises that his followers will inherit the whole earth (see Psalm 37:9-11, 22, 29, 34, Isaiah 57:13, and Matthew 5:5). As the true King, Jesus will keep his word. His followers will never be put to shame, they will inherit the earth, and they will see the punishment of the wicked (see, again, Psalm 37). John's death foreshadows Jesus' death.

¹⁰¹ John's message is that all people (rich or poor, powerful or powerless, king or servant, Jew or Gentile) must repent. This is still true: "now he commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

25 And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.” **26** And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. **27** And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s head. He went and beheaded him in the prison **28** and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. **29** When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb. ¹⁰²

30 The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. **31** And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were

¹⁰² The death of John the Baptist does not, at first glance, seem to fit with the parable of the growing mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32), for, with the beheading of John, the kingdom of God appears to be losing to the powers of darkness. John the Baptist is a holy man, yet he is killed by a wicked man. How does this demonstrate growth in the kingdom of God?

We must remember that the same thing happened to many of the prophets in the Old Testament and to our Lord and to almost all of the Apostles and to countless others. It is happening today. How do we, as followers of Christ, continue in faith when we see innumerable “defeats” like this? We must remember that these “defeats” are not actually defeats. They are victories. When the saints suffer and die, they are demonstrating that they love God more than they love their own lives. The first Adam would not stand against Satan. He would not lay down his life for the sake of his God and King. He would not defend God’s place against Satan and his lies. Adam was to “keep” the garden (see Genesis 2:15). This means he should have kept evil from it. He did not do this. He loved his life too much to lay it down for the glory of God. The followers of Christ, however, do lay down their lives for the glory of God and for the honor of Christ. That is exactly what John the Baptist is doing in this chapter. He knows that calling Herod to repent of his sin is dangerous, yet he doesn’t give in to fear. He trusts in God, knowing that he will not be put to shame on the last day.

The saints (even the Old Testament saints) conquer Satan because of the victory Jesus won on the cross and because of their faith in Christ: “And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death” (Revelation 12:11).

It is helpful to consider how Jesus continued when he saw and experienced defeats like this. He did not quit. Instead, even in the midst of great pain (as the perfect man, we must know that the death of this saint deeply saddened Jesus), he continued “for the joy that was set before him” (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus did not, at this time, save John’s life. But we need to remember, he ultimately **did** save John’s life (in the same way that he saves the lives of all those who trust in him). He did this when he died on the cross. Jesus didn’t, at least in Mark 6, prevent the injustice against John. He did something greater. He went to the cross so that all injustice might forever be defeated.

The death of John the Baptist indicates that his role as a “messenger” of Christ has been fulfilled. He has announced Christ’s coming, and has served his purpose. However, his ministry continued to influence people in the first century (see Acts 18:25 and Acts 19:3-4). It also continues to impact people today! The suffering and death of a saint is never wasted!

coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. **32** And they went away in the boat to a desolate¹⁰³ place by themselves. **33** Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. **34** When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.¹⁰⁴ And he began to teach them many things.¹⁰⁵ **35** And when it grew late, his disciples

¹⁰³ Three different times, Mark emphasizes that the place is desolate (see Mark 6:31, 32, and 35). Mark wants his readers to picture this area as a wilderness. Like Moses, Jesus is leading the people through the wilderness (a place with no food) to God's good place. Jesus, again, demonstrates that he is the prophet like Moses (see Deuteronomy 18:15-19), leading God's people to God's place. But this story is not just meant to cause the people to see Jesus as the new and better Moses. They are also to see him as the true bread from heaven (see John 6). They are to see him as the one who is the good shepherd (see Psalm 23:1-2). They are to see him as the one who brings abundance and satisfaction to God's people (see Joel 2:24-27 and Amos 9:13-15).

¹⁰⁴ The phrase "sheep without a shepherd" is first used by Moses in Numbers 27:17. Moses is about to die. Therefore, Moses asks God to raise up a "shepherd" who will "go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd". Joshua is a temporary answer to Moses' prayer. God uses Joshua to lead his people across the Jordan and into the Promised Land. However, Joshua has many limitations. He only has **some** of Moses' authority (see Numbers 27:20). And, unlike Moses, he doesn't speak with God face-to-face (see Deuteronomy 34:10-12). Instead, Joshua needs to go through a priest in order to speak with God (see Numbers 27:21). And, even though Joshua is able to help the people defeat many of their **external** enemies, Joshua cannot deliver the people from themselves. Joshua's other problem is that he eventually dies (see Joshua 24:31). In summary, Joshua is not able to give the people true rest—rest from their enemies and rest from their struggles (see Hebrews 3 and 4). After Joshua's death, other "shepherds", many who were not as faithful as Joshua, begin to lead Israel. Israel follows these shepherds. Thus, if a judge or king is good, the people will follow this "shepherd" into what is right. But if a judge or king is bad, the people usually follow him into what is bad. Even David, while he is a great king, isn't a perfect shepherd. The people need a better shepherd than David. Moses' prayer in Numbers 27:17 isn't ultimately fulfilled by any of the "shepherds" in the Old Testament. That is why the Old Testament prophets declare that a new shepherd is coming who will perfectly care for God's people (see Ezekiel 34:1-31). The New Testament proclaims that Jesus is the Good Shepherd (see John 10:1-30, Hebrews 13:20-21, 1 Peter 2:25, and 5:4). As the Good Shepherd, Jesus feeds, comfort, and protects his sheep. Jesus lays down his life for his sheep. He brings his people to full and final rest (see Matthew 11:28-30).

One of the ways Jesus provides on-going care for his people is through the elders of the church. Elders in the New Testament are also called shepherds. They serve under the chief shepherd, Jesus. Like Jesus, they are to feed, comfort, and protect Christ's sheep. Like Jesus, the elders are to feed the sheep the word of God. The elders, like Jesus, are to lay down their lives for the sheep (see Acts 20:17-38 and 1 Peter 5:1-4).

¹⁰⁵ As the shepherd of God's people, Jesus "feeds them" God's word. Again, Jesus is "the prophet like Moses" who must be listened to. He is shepherding God's people toward God's place. See Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. **36** Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”¹⁰⁶ **37** But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.”¹⁰⁷ And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?” **38** And he said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” **39** Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. **40** So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. **41** And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. **42** And they all ate and were satisfied.¹⁰⁸ **43** And

¹⁰⁶ The “food” Christ provides can’t be bought with money. It comes from his hands.

¹⁰⁷ Jesus has already given the Apostles authority to do his work (see Mark 3:13-19 and 6:7-13). He has sent them out as his representatives, and they have had success. Here, Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, commands his under-shepherds to feed the people. The Apostles do not obey Jesus. Instead, they doubt Jesus’ word. They forget that God provided everything they needed when they were sent out earlier (Mark 6:7-13). The same thing happens when Jesus feeds the 4,000 (see Mark 8:1-10). The Apostles still need to learn that they can trust Jesus.

¹⁰⁸ The “satisfaction” of the people is also emphasized in Mark 8:8. The leftover baskets in both feeding stories (the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000) prove that there is more than enough food for everyone. This is significant because of certain Old Testament prophecies regarding events that will take place on “the day of the LORD”—the day when the kingdom of God will come in power. The prophets write that, during this time, there will be an abundance of grain in the land. They prophesy that the people of God will eat and be satisfied: “You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame” (Joel 2:26-27). By emphasizing that the people eat so much that they are satisfied, Mark is telling his readers that Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy (see also Psalm 22:26 and 107:9). He is the one who reverses the curse that fell on Israel because of their disobedience: “They shall eat, but not be satisfied” (Hosea 4:10). The feeding of the 5,000 is a sign that Jesus is the one who provides manna from heaven so that God’s people will never hunger and thirst again (see John 6). But Jesus does more than just provide manna from heaven. He is the manna from heaven. Jesus is the “bread” that is broken to give life to the world. See Mark 14:22.

they took up twelve baskets¹⁰⁹ full of broken pieces and of the fish.¹¹⁰ **44** And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.¹¹¹

45 Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. **46** And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray.¹¹² **47** And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. **48** And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the

¹⁰⁹ It is worth noting the repetition of the number 12 in these stories (see Mark 5:25, 5:42, 6:7, and 6:43). As 12 is the number of the tribes of Israel, this may be a subtle way of emphasizing that Jesus is, by his ministry, healing and rebuilding the true people of God. It's important to understand that the people of God do not belong to one particular nation. There is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. All people of faith in Christ, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, are part of the one people of God (see Ephesians 2:11-22). All people of faith in Christ are counted as the "Israel of God" (see Galatians 6:16). All people of faith in Christ receive the blessing promised to Abraham (see Genesis 12:1-3). But while Christ heals and rebuilds and satisfies the true people of God (those who believe), it is important to note that "unbelieving Israel" is not healed. Many are crowding around Jesus without receiving any help from him.

¹¹⁰ This miracle is called a "sign" in John 6:14. For the purpose of "signs" see John 20:30-31. It is significant to note that the signs Jesus does are very similar to the miracles done by prophets in the Old Testament. Jesus purposely does what the prophets did (see, for instance, the story of Elisha and the bread being multiplied in 2 Kings 4:42-44) so that people will think hard about his identity and will put their faith in him. But, as may be seen by studying passages like 2 Kings 4:42-44, Jesus' miracles aren't exactly like the miracles in the Old Testament. They are far greater than anything seen in the Old Testament. The miracles the prophets did are tiny pictures of what THE prophet Jesus does (see Deuteronomy 18:15-19). **The anointed leaders in the Old Testament, whether they are prophets, priests, or kings, are all small pictures of God's anointed leader, Jesus. He is the perfect Prophet, Priest, and King over God's people.**

¹¹¹ The feeding of the 5,000 and the sign of walking on the water are connected (see 6:51-52). Again, Mark wants his readers to consider these two signs together. The Apostles don't understand something about the feeding of the 5,000. The reader is supposed to think hard about these two signs and to understand their true meaning.

¹¹² Mark does not tell us the content of Jesus' prayer. However, it seems likely that he is asking the Father to open the eyes of the people (particularly the eyes of the Apostles) so that they might see who he is, and they will come to him in faith. As is evident from 8:17-21, even the Apostles are, at this time, confused. They are unclear about Jesus' true identity. They need a miracle from heaven in order to grasp Jesus' true identity. The same is true today.

sea.¹¹³ He meant to pass by them,¹¹⁴ **49** but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, **50** for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart; it is I.”¹¹⁵ Do not be afraid.” **51** And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, **52** for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. **54** And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him **55** and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was. **56** And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ As with Mark 4:35-41, carefully read Job 9:4-12, 26:11-14, 38:8-11, Psalm 65:7-8, 89:9-10, 106:8-9, 107:23-31, and Isaiah 51:9-11. Again, by doing the very same things that are said of Yahweh, Jesus is demonstrating that he is God and that he has the power to save his people and to safely bring them across the “sea” to “dry land”. Jesus does things that only God can do: he feeds his people and he walks on the sea. These are signs of his great power. Because of his great power, the Apostles, and all his true family, can trust Jesus with their lives.

¹¹⁴ The same verb translated “pass by” is used in regard to Yahweh in Exodus 33:19, 34:6, and Job 9:11. All of these passages relate to Yahweh displaying his great power. Jesus is doing what Yahweh does! However, he does not “pass by” the frightened Apostles. As “God with us”, he climbs in the boat with them!

¹¹⁵ Instead of “Take heart; it is I”, the Greek reads, “Take heart, **I am**”. Based on the sign of walking on the water (which is something that God alone is able to do) it appears likely that Jesus wants his Apostles to take courage because he is “**I am**”. “**I am**” is the sacred name of God (see Exodus 3:13-15 and 6:2-8). Jesus is able to use this name because it has been given to him by God the Father (see Philipians 2:8-11).

¹¹⁶ This is another summary statement in Mark. Notice, Mark does not focus on one particular act of Jesus in these verses. He talks about many things that he is doing. These summary statements serve to divide the book into sections. After a summary statement, a new section begins. The reader needs to determine how each new section differs from the previous section.

MARK 7

1 Now when the Pharisees gathered to him,¹¹⁷ with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, **2** they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed.

3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, **4** and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.)¹¹⁸

5 And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” **6** And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

“This people honors me with their lips,

but their heart is far from me;

7 in vain do they worship me,

¹¹⁷ This begins a new section in Mark. It begins with another conflict with the Pharisees. The first conflict with the Pharisees in Mark was in 2:13-28.

¹¹⁸ Verses where Mark explains Jewish customs (like 7:3-4) are indications that Mark was writing with Gentile readers in mind. Otherwise he wouldn't have had to explain Jewish customs.

teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’¹¹⁹

8 You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

9 And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! **10** For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ **11** But you say, ‘If a man

119 Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13 here, but he is almost certainly thinking of much more than just this one verse in this particular chapter of Isaiah. By quoting the first verse of a new section in Isaiah, Jesus is telling the Pharisees then (and he is telling the readers of Mark now) to carefully consider the entire passage (Isaiah 29:13-24). Close reading of these verses in Isaiah reveals that Isaiah 29:13-24 is very much like Mark 7. Consider the following connections between these chapters:

Isaiah 29:13-16 is written in regard to Israel’s “wise men” and “discerning men”. These “wise” leaders in Israel do not love God, but pretend to worship him by following rules they have made up themselves. In Mark 7:1-13, Jesus tells the Pharisees that they are the ones Isaiah is writing about.

Even though these “wise men” won’t worship God, God promises to do “wonderful things with this people” (Isaiah 29:14). This is exactly what happens in Mark 7. In spite of opposition by the Jewish leaders, God is, through Jesus, doing wonderful things among the people. The “wise” Pharisees, however, cannot recognize his work! They miss the wonderful things God is doing because they are focused on their man-made rules.

The wonderful things God promises to do are seen in Isaiah 29:17-18. These verses are echoed in Mark 7. The first of the “wonderful things” God promises to do involves the land of Lebanon. Isaiah 29:17 reads, “Is it not yet a very little while until Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be regarded as a forest?”. Isaiah is describing a time when, even though the Jewish leaders are resisting God by following man-made rules, the Gentile region of Lebanon, a region outside of Israel, will begin bearing fruit for God. This is exactly what happens in Mark 7:24-30. Jesus goes to “the region of Tyre and Sidon” (the same area as Lebanon—see Isaiah 29:17!). The Syrophoenician woman comes to him in faith and begs him to heal her daughter. Her begging is proof that she has genuine faith. The daughter is healed. This pagan area is becoming fruitful! Since Israel’s leaders (the Pharisees) will not receive the wonderful things God is doing through Christ, he goes to a place where they are received!

But there is still another connection between Isaiah 29 and Mark 7. Isaiah 29:18 reads, “In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book.” In Mark 7:31-36, Jesus heals a deaf man.

Finally, Isaiah 29:19 reads, “The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.” Isaiah describes the “meek” and the “poor” rejoicing in “the Holy One of Israel”. Mark 7:37 reads, “And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.’” It is important to note that, in this passage, the Pharisees and leaders aren’t astonished and aren’t rejoicing in Christ. They hate him and his work. The people rejoicing in the work of Christ are the ordinary people.

Isaiah 29 is not the only passage from Isaiah echoed in the book of Mark. Isaiah’s words are echoed throughout this book. See, for instance, Isaiah 35.

tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban” (that is, given to God)— **12** then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, **13** thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

14 And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: **15** There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.” **17** And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. **18** And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, **19** since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.)¹²⁰ **20** And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. **21** For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, **22** coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. **23** All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”¹²¹

24 And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. **25** But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. **26** Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. **27** And he said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not right

¹²⁰ This is an editorial comment by Mark. He inserts these comments to help the reader further understand something. He also does this in 3:30, 5:8, 7:3-4, and 13:14.

¹²¹ These wicked things are all the “fruit of Adam”. Christ came to cleanse people of wickedness so that they might produce the “fruit of the Spirit” (see Galatians 5:22-23).

to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."¹²² **28** But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." **29** And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." **30** And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.¹²³

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. **32** And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. **33** And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. **34** And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." **35** And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.¹²⁴ **36** And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. **37** And they

¹²² It could appear that Jesus is not showing love to this woman or is being unkind to this woman because she is a Gentile. However, Jesus is not being unloving or unkind. Jesus clearly loves Gentiles because God loves Gentiles, and Jesus' actions and attitudes always please God (see Mark 1:11 and 9:7). In the Old Testament, God repeatedly demonstrates his love for Gentiles (examples include Rahab, Ruth, Uriah the Hittite, the widow in Elijah's day, Namaan the Ninevite, and the sailors with Jonah). At Jesus' birth, God causes Gentiles to come and worship Christ, demonstrating that Christ is a king for all peoples (see Matthew 2:1-12). After his resurrection, Jesus sends the Apostles to the "end of the earth" (Acts 1:8), that is, to the Gentiles. When the Apostles are slow to obey this command, the Holy Spirit specifically calls Peter to preach to the Gentiles (see Acts 10-11). Thus, both before Christ's earthly ministry and after his resurrection, God demonstrates an intense love for all people, whether they are Jew or Gentile. Why, then, during the period of Christ's earthly ministry, does Jesus specifically go to the Jews? He does this because he was sent to the people of Israel. He wasn't sent to the Gentiles. That task has been left to the church.

When Christ's actions in Mark (or in any of the gospels) do not make sense, we must remember that Christ came to earth on a very specific mission. He is unique and needed to do things in a certain way during the few years of his public ministry before his death and resurrection. For instance, when Jesus commands people not to tell others about a miracle he has done, we need to know that this was for a very specific reason that applied during his earthly ministry before his death and resurrection. In the same way, during the very brief time period before his death and resurrection, Jesus needed to go to the Jews. This is not because God only loves Jewish people. It is because blessing for the world came through the Jewish people.

¹²³ In verses 1-30 we have a comparison of false faith and true faith. The Pharisees look like "true believers" in God (7:1-23), but are denounced. The woman from Syrophoenicia is outwardly unclean. However, she has faith and is blessed by God. The fact that she keeps asking Jesus to heal her daughter demonstrates the reality of her faith (7:24-30).

¹²⁴ The prophets declare that the opening of the ears of the deaf is a sign of the Christ and of the glorious day of the LORD (see Isaiah 29:18 and 35:5). Those who have eyes of faith recognize and rejoice in the fact that the day of the LORD has come in Christ!

MARK 7

were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

MARK 8

1 In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, **2** “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. **3** And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away.” **4** And his disciples answered him, “How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?” **5** And he asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven.” **6** And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. **7** And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. **8** And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. **9** And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. **10** And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of

Dalmanutha.¹²⁵

11 The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. **12** And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.” **13** And he left them,

¹²⁵ See the notes regarding the feeding of the 5,000 (Mark 6:30-44). It is significant to note that the same elements are found in both stories. The place is desolate (8:4/6:31, 32, and 35). Jesus has compassion on the people (8:2/6:34). Jesus says that the people should be fed (8:2-3/6:37). The Apostles do not believe the people can be fed with the resources that are available (8:4/6:37). Jesus takes a very little, thanks God for it, breaks it, and gives it to the Apostles to give to the people (8:6-7/6:41). The people eat and are satisfied (8:8/6:42). Baskets are filled with left over pieces and the baskets are counted (8:8/6:43). The number of people who were fed is also counted (8:9/6:44).

The fact that this “sign” is repeated two times (Mark 6:30-44 and 8:1-10) is highly significant. Why does Jesus do this exact same sign two different times? And why does Mark feel that telling this story two separate times is so important? This story takes up a lot of space in Mark’s book, and Mark could have summarized this story in the same way he summarizes other miracles. But he chooses not to do this. Again, why does he go into so much detail about both feedings when they are so similar? Clearly, Jesus wants **his Apostles** to learn something about his identity and his work. And Jesus wants **the people** to learn something about his identity and his work. But what is he trying to teach each of these groups? That is what the reader needs to discern. At the very least, Jesus is teaching his Apostles that they are to be concerned for Jesus’ sheep. Beyond this, they are to help feed his sheep. And he is teaching them that, because of his power, there will always be more than enough to meet the needs of the sheep. But is there more to these stories? It is significant that there is one more story of Jesus breaking bread in Mark. It is on the night of the Last Supper (see 14:22-25). At this time, Jesus breaks bread and tells the Apostles that the broken bread is his body. He commands his followers to eat this bread. Surely, Mark wants his readers to connect all of these stories about broken bread. Not only is Jesus the New Moses bringing manna from heaven for God’s hungry people (6:30-44 and 8:1-9), he is also the bread itself (14:22-25)! There is no sustenance for God’s people outside of Jesus’ broken body (see also John 6). Jesus commands his followers to receive their life from him. And he commands his followers to share this broken bread with others. This happens as we share the gospel message. All those who eat this bread are eternally satisfied. See Psalm 22:26 and 107:9.

It is significant to note that Jesus rebukes the disciples in 8:14-21 because they didn’t understand the meaning of these signs. Readers today should be careful to think hard and to try to discern the meaning of these signs.

got into the boat again, and went to the other side.¹²⁶

14 Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. **15** And he cautioned them, saying, “Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”

16 And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. **17** And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread?¹²⁷ Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? **18** Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? **19** When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” They said to him, “Twelve.” **20** “And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” And they said to him,

¹²⁶ It is significant that verses 11-13 follow immediately after the feeding of the 4,000. Jesus has just done a tremendous “sign”, yet the Pharisees want to put him to the test by asking for another sign. They refuse to “see” any of the signs Jesus is doing. They want Jesus to do the signs of their own choosing. This is great wickedness. When Jesus says that he will not give a sign to “this generation”, he clearly doesn’t mean that he won’t do any signs at all. He means that he won’t do any signs for the wicked people (like the Pharisees) who refuse to trust in the signs he has already given. “This generation” is another way of saying “this **adulterous and sinful** generation” (see Mark 8:38, Matthew 12:39, and Matthew 16:4). The word “adulterous” is used because, in the Old Testament, Yahweh was called Israel’s husband, and Israel was supposed to be God’s faithful wife. God is faithful to his promises. But the Israelites worship other gods. The Pharisees are exactly like the people of Israel in the Old Testament. They are committing adultery against God by following a religion of man-made rules. The word “sinful” is used because the Pharisees are sinning. Their sins include refusing to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, attempting to sway the crowds from Christ, and planning the death of the Christ.

¹²⁷ Jesus is not talking about literal leaven. He is talking about two different kinds of “leaven” (false teaching) that will destroy a person. The first kind of leaven is the teaching of the Pharisees. They pretend to love God, but they are liars. They love themselves. They love their man-made religion that exalts themselves and dishonors Christ. The pride of the Pharisees is seen in Mark 8:11. In this verse, we see them putting Christ to the test! Christ-less religion is deadly. Even though it may have an appearance of godliness, it will destroy a person. The second kind of leaven is the teaching of Herod. Herod seems to represent worldliness, for he lived for the pleasures of the moment. He wants his brother’s wife, so he takes her for himself. He enjoys a girl’s dancing, so he makes a foolish promise. He is afraid of what his guests will think of him if he refuses the girl’s wicked request, so he kills John the Baptist (see Mark 6:14-29). Herod is completely governed by his flesh. Jesus tells his followers (both in the first century and today) that Christ-less religion (represented by the Pharisees) and worldliness (represented by Herod) are both dangerous and, if they are not guarded against, will soon spread throughout a person’s life. The only way to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees (Christ-less religion) or of Herod (worldliness) is to receive your true teaching from Christ. He is the only one who is to influence you. His “leaven” is good and leads to eternal life.

“Seven.” **21** And he said to them, “Do you not yet understand?”¹²⁸

22 And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. **23** And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?” **24** And he looked up and said, “I see people, but they look like trees, walking.” **25** Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. **26** And he sent him to his home, saying, “Do not even enter the village.”¹²⁹

27 And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” **28** And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say,

¹²⁸ Verses 14-21 re-emphasize the great importance of the signs of the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000. The Apostles still don't understand the meaning of these signs. Their vision of the Christ is still blurry. The next miracle (described in verses 22-26) is related to the blurry vision of the Apostles. They need a miracle from heaven in order to see Christ clearly.

¹²⁹ This story is **not intended** to demonstrate that Jesus sometimes needs two attempts in order to heal a person. There is a reason Jesus partially heals this man the first time. But what is the reason for the partial healing and the man's blurry vision? The reader is forced to think hard about this healing. The answer seems to be found in the verses surrounding this healing. The verses before this healing (8:14-21) are about the inability of the Apostles to see clearly (see, particularly, 8:17-18). They have blurry spiritual vision. In the verses after this healing (8:27-30) Peter makes a stunning declaration that Jesus is the Christ (see 8:29). Peter is, in these verses, seeing very clearly. Something has happened that has caused the Apostles to see Christ with great clarity. **The vision of the Apostles**, therefore, seems to be what this healing is all about.

This healing story seems to be something like an acted parable. The man is like the Apostles. He is touched by Jesus, but he still can't see clearly. When he looks at people, they look like trees walking around. The Apostles, like the man, have also been “touched” by Jesus. They, however, don't see Christ clearly. He is still blurry to them. The man needs to be touched by Jesus a second time in order to see clearly. In the same way, the Apostles need a miracle from heaven in order to be able to see Christ clearly.

The story of the blind man in 8:22-26 is the first part of an **envelope** setting apart a new section of Mark. This section in Mark concludes with another story of a blind man being healed (see 10:46-52). That story is the second part of the **envelope**. In between these two “blind man” stories (Mark 8:27-10:45) is a great amount of teaching about how those who follow Jesus are to think and how they are to live. The envelope of “blind men” stories around the teaching in the middle teaches the reader that a miracle from heaven is needed in order for people to see Christ clearly and to live as Jesus' disciples.

Elijah;¹³⁰ and others, one of the prophets.”¹³¹ **29** And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the¹³² Christ.” **30** And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.¹³³

31 And he began to teach them that the Son of Man¹³⁴ must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.¹³⁵ **32** And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. **33** But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the

¹³⁰ The people expect Elijah to come back to Israel before the day of the LORD because Malachi 4:5 reads, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes”. They are wondering if Jesus is the Elijah that Malachi is speaking about. Jesus is not the Elijah who was to come. John the Baptist, however, is the “Elijah” sent by God to prepare the people for the Christ.

¹³¹ Notice, none of the answers given by the crowds are correct. No one thinks Jesus is “the Christ”. Even with all the signs that they have seen, the majority of the people simply do not know who Jesus is. The signs in Mark serve the same purpose today. When people read about the signs, they are to learn that Jesus is the Christ and, beyond this, they are to put their faith in him. Again, for the purpose of signs, see John 20:30-31.

¹³² By using the word “the” before “Christ”, Peter is indicating that he consider Jesus to be “THE” coming King promised in the Old Testament (see Luke 24:25-27 and 44-49).

¹³³ This is a temporary command, in effect only until the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus does not want the words about his identity to keep him from death.

¹³⁴ Even though Peter calls Jesus “the Christ” in verse 29, Mark indicates that Jesus uses the title “Son of Man” when he is teaching about himself (see verse 31). Mark wants his readers to make a connection between **the Christ** and **the Son of Man**. Jesus does not often use the title “Christ” in reference to himself (see Mark 14:61-62), however, he often uses the title “Son of Man” in reference to himself. Son of Man is a title taken from a prophecy in Daniel 7 about a coming ruler referred to as “one like a son of man” (see Mark 2:10, 2:28, 8:31, 8:38, 9:9, 9:12, 9:31, 10:33, 10:45, 13:26, 14:21, 14:41, and 14:62).

¹³⁵ Now that the Apostles understand that Jesus is the Christ, Jesus adds to their understanding about himself. He refers to himself as the Son of Man and tells them that, as the Son of Man, he must suffer, be rejected, die, and rise again. This is the first of three predictions about his own death and resurrection that Jesus makes in Mark (see also 9:30-32 and 10:32-34). Significantly, all three predictions of Jesus’ death are immediately followed by the Apostles saying something foolish and self-serving (see 8:32-33, 9:33-37, and 10:35-45). Mark wants his readers to see that the Apostles, even though they now understand that Jesus is the Christ, do not yet understand that Christ didn’t come to be served, but to serve. They demonstrate that they don’t yet understand that they are to imitate Christ in his humility. Serving requires suffering. The Apostles do not know this yet.

things of God, but on the things of man.”¹³⁶

34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. **35** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.

36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? **37** For what can a man give in return for his soul? **38** For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Peter understands that Jesus is the Christ. But he doesn’t understand that Jesus, as the Son of Man, needs to suffer and die. He wants Jesus to be exalted without suffering and death. God’s plan requires that Jesus suffer and die and rise again. This is Christ’s path to glory (see Philippians 2:5-11). The suffering and death and resurrection of Christ is also the believer’s only path to glory. By trying to keep Jesus from suffering, Peter is, although he doesn’t know it, actually attempting to keep him from glory!

¹³⁷ The Apostles don’t want Jesus to suffer. Here, Jesus teaches the Apostles and the crowd that all those who would follow him will suffer for his name. The only path to glory, for anyone, involves death. All those who would follow the Son of Man will follow him to the cross. This is the first reference to the cross in Mark. Here, Christ is foreshadowing the manner of his death.

The warning in verse 38 is a gracious gift to those who would follow Jesus. **God uses warning passages like these to motivate his people to obey him and to help them avoid those actions that lead to judgement.** The warning is clear: all those who do not, by their attitudes and actions, demonstrate that they love Christ and his words will be judged by him. They will not be numbered among the saints. Instead, at his coming, the “Son of Man” will count them as members of “this adulterous and sinful generation”. He will condemn them to eternal punishment.

It is difficult denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus. It is difficult living in the middle of an “adulterous and sinful generation”. But remembering that a day is coming when the “Son of Man” will be revealed in all his glory and that we will have the privilege of seeing him in his glory and enjoying his glorious presence forever should motivate believers to boldly live for Christ today. We don’t have to wonder what Christ in his glory will be like. Mark provides his readers with a picture of Christ in his glory in the next verses (9:1-8). **These verses are, as with the warning in verse 38, a gracious gift from God. God uses passages like 9:1-8 to motivate believers to, even in the midst of difficult days, joyfully stand with Christ.** Believers stand with Christ because they, by faith, already see him in all his glory. They know who he is and they are not ashamed of him. He will, in the same way, not be ashamed of them at his coming.

MARK 9

1 And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”¹³⁸

2 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, **3** and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.¹³⁹

4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses,¹⁴⁰ and they were talking with Jesus. **5** And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” **6** For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.¹⁴¹

7 And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the

¹³⁸ In 9:1-8, Jesus is teaching the Apostles (and his followers today) more about his true identity. Jesus’ prophecy in 9:1 is fulfilled in 9:2-8. When Jesus refers to “some standing here”, he is talking about Peter, James, and John. These three Apostles see the kingdom of God after it has come with power when they go with Jesus up the mountain where he is transfigured.

¹³⁹ The three Apostles are seeing Christ in all his glory! They are seeing “the kingdom of God after it has come with power”.

¹⁴⁰ Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. He represents “the Law”. Elijah was generally considered the greatest of the prophets. He represents “the Prophets”. Their appearance with Jesus demonstrates that he is the fulfillment of both “the Law” and “the Prophets” (see Matthew 5:17 and Luke 24:25-27).

¹⁴¹ Peter still doesn’t understand the greatness of Christ. He doesn’t see Christ as greater than Moses or Elijah. He considers them all to be equal.

Much later in his life, Peter refers to this event again (see 2 Peter 1:16-21). This time, after a lifetime of reflection on this event, Peter doesn’t even mention Moses or Elijah! Like God the Father, Peter ignores Moses and Elijah and focuses only on Jesus. He now, after the death and resurrection of Christ, and after a lifetime of preaching the gospel and seeing lives of Jews and Gentiles transformed by Christ, understands the greatness of Christ.

cloud, “This is my beloved Son,¹⁴² listen to him.”¹⁴³ **8** And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. **9** And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man¹⁴⁴ had risen from the dead.¹⁴⁵ **10** So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. **11** And they asked him, “Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” **12** And he said to them, “Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? **13** But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² See Mark 1:11.

¹⁴³ God the Father (who is speaking from heaven) does not even refer to Moses or Elijah! By ignoring these two great saints, and by only referring to Jesus, God the Father emphasizes the greatness of Christ.

The phrase “This is my beloved Son” is a declaration that Jesus is the King talked about in 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 2:7.

The phrase “listen to him” indicates that Jesus is the prophet like Moses whom Moses prophesied would come in Deuteronomy 18:15-19: “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—**it is to him you shall listen**—just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. **And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.**” See also Acts 3:22-23.

¹⁴⁴ Again, notice Mark’s use of the title “Son of Man”. He uses this in key verses pertaining to the death and resurrection of Christ. Mark wants his readers to think hard about this title and its meaning.

¹⁴⁵ Jesus is teaching his Apostles about his true identity so that they might, after his ascension to heaven, teach others about his true identity. The words of the Apostles can be trusted (see John 14:25-26 and John 16:12-15).

Again, it appears that Jesus doesn’t want his Apostles to share these things until after his resurrection because he doesn’t want anyone to, upon hearing the words of the Apostles, attempt to prevent his death. Jesus needs to die. It is his path to glory. It is also our path to glory. Now that Jesus has died, he wants his people to share these stories! They are signs of his great glory.

¹⁴⁶ This is a reference to the prophecy regarding Elijah in Malachi 4:5-6. The Apostles are wondering how the kingdom of God could have come in power if Elijah hasn’t come. Jesus indicates that Elijah has come. He is referring to John the Baptist. Once again, notice that Jesus speaks of his suffering, death, and resurrection. This is increasingly becoming a major theme in Mark.

14 And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. **15** And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. **16** And he asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” **17** And someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. **18** And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.” **19** And he answered them, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.”¹⁴⁷ **20** And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. **21** And Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. **22** And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” **23** And Jesus said to him, “If you can! All things are possible for one who believes.”¹⁴⁸ **24** Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!”¹⁴⁹ **25** And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” **26** And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” **27** But Jesus took him by the hand and

¹⁴⁷ Jesus is frustrated by the lack of faith demonstrated by this “faithless generation”. The term “faithless generation” seems to be a reference to the Apostles (and possibly others who were present). Jesus is frustrated because the Apostles have already been given authority over demons (see 3:15). However, because of a lack of faith and because of prayerlessness (see verse 29), the Apostles are not able to exercise authority over this demon. Jesus was absent from the Apostles (he was on the mountain being honored by God the Father) when they were attempting to drive out the demon. However, even in his absence, he expected his Apostles to effectively deal with the enemies of God and to rescue God’s people from Satan. Again, they could not do this because of their lack of faith and because of their prayerlessness. This event seems to be a small picture of the present time period. Jesus is, at the present time, not physically present with his people. He is enthroned in heaven in great glory. However, even in his absence, he expects his people to have faith and to be praying so that they might effectively exercise his authority in the earth. We can do this because his Spirit lives within us and he has promised that those who have faith in him will do the works that he did (see John 14:12-14). In regard to Christ’s victory over Satan, see Genesis 3:15, Acts 10:38, Ephesians 2:1-10, Colossians 1:13, 2:15, and 1 John 3:8.

¹⁴⁸ The importance of faith is emphasized again in this verse.

¹⁴⁹ Again, faith is emphasized.

lifted him up, and he arose. **28** And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?”

29 And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”¹⁵⁰

30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, **31** for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.”¹⁵¹ **32** But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.¹⁵²

33 And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” **34** But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. **35** And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” **36** And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, **37** “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever

¹⁵⁰ The Apostles, apparently, are not diligent in their prayers at this time. It is significant that Jesus does not pray before he casts out this demon. When he says, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer”, he seems to be referring to more than one prayer (for, it appears, he doesn't pray before casting out this demon), but to a lifestyle of prayer. Jesus demonstrates a lifestyle of prayer by praying early in the morning (see Mark 1:35). Jesus' followers are to imitate his example.

¹⁵¹ Jesus keeps teaching his Apostles that he is going to be betrayed, suffer, be killed, and rise from the dead. Teaching this to his Apostles seems to be the most important thing to Jesus at this time.

¹⁵² It is worth asking why Jesus keeps emphasizing his suffering, death, and resurrection, even though his Apostles don't seem to be able to understand what he is talking about. By talking about his death and resurrection before these events happen, Jesus proves that none of the things that happen to him are an accident. Beyond this, the day comes when the Apostles do understand Jesus' teachings about his suffering, death, and resurrection. This happens after his resurrection. At that time, they remember **everything** Jesus has ever taught them: “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, **he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you**” (John 14:25-26). None of Jesus' teachings are wasted! The Apostles eventually come to understand them all! They, through their writings, pass Jesus' teachings on to the church!

receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”¹⁵³

38 John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” **39** But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. **40** For the one who is not against us is for us. **41** For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.”¹⁵⁴

42 “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.”¹⁵⁵ **43** And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. **45** And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. **47** And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell,

¹⁵³ The chapter begins with a demonstration of Jesus’ greatness (9:1-8). Just a few verses later, the Apostles are arguing about **their** greatness (9:33-37). Perhaps they are arguing about who has done the greatest miracles among them. Perhaps Peter, James, and John are boasting that Jesus has demonstrated their greatness by bringing them with him when he does great miracles. Jesus corrects their thinking by placing a child in their midst and saying, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.” Greatness in the kingdom of God is not displayed by exalting oneself. It is displayed by exalting Christ and by treasuring the things that he treasures (like little children!). Jesus is the foremost example of this kind of greatness (see Philippians 2:1-11).

¹⁵⁴ The Apostles receive another lesson in 9:38-41. They are bothered because someone else is casting out demons in Jesus’ name (ironically, in 9:18, Mark declares that the Apostles weren’t able to cast out a demon). This, again, seems to be an attempt by the Apostles to hold on to their own significance. They don’t want this man to do what they alone have been doing. Christ tells them that the man is not an enemy. In fact, he is, as Jesus says, “for us” (see 9:40). The Apostles are wrong in trying to limit the kingdom of God to themselves. And they are wrong in thinking that the kingdom is only seen in “great” acts like the casting out of a demon. Jesus declares that every act that is done for Christ, no matter how small, will be rewarded.

¹⁵⁵ It appears that Jesus is still holding on to the little child as he speaks these words. He wants the Apostles to know how much he treasures this little child (and all little ones who follow him). Jesus says that anyone who causes one of the “little ones who believe in me to sin” will be punished with great severity. The Apostles, again, are concerned about their greatness. They don’t seem to notice the little ones. Jesus notices the children and is concerned about them. He wants the Apostles to share his concern.

48 ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’¹⁵⁶

49 For everyone will be salted with fire. **50** Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”¹⁵⁷

MARK 10

1 And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them.¹⁵⁸

2 And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, “Is it lawful

¹⁵⁶ Jesus also wants his Apostles to be concerned about sin in their own lives. Rather than fight for their own greatness, they should fight for their own lives by resisting sin. The consequences of sin are terrible. Those who will not resist sin will “be thrown into hell” (see 9:45). Those who do (by faith in Christ) resist sin will enter the “kingdom of God” (see 9:47). Jesus quotes Isaiah 66:24 in 9:48. Isaiah 66:18-24 is written in regard to the punishment God will inflict on those who rebel against him and in regard to the new heavens and the new earth which will be inherited by those who obey him.

¹⁵⁷ Jesus is telling the Apostles that everyone’s true condition will be tested. Only the ones with “salt” in themselves will survive. The “salt” seems to represent the “flavor” of the kingdom of God. Only those with the “flavor of the kingdom” will pass the test. The Apostles (and all those reading Jesus’ words today) are to do everything possible to stay salty. One way they are to do this is by being “at peace with one another”. They are not to argue about who is the greatest. That question has already been answered. It is Jesus.

¹⁵⁸ Mark’s purpose in 10:1 is not to tell his readers about the specific content of Jesus’ teaching. Rather, he is using this verse as a “minor” transition within this larger section of Mark. Readers should notice how Jesus responds to the crowds of people. As with the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000, Jesus demonstrates his concern for the hungry people. He feeds them God’s word.

for a man to divorce his wife?"¹⁵⁹ **3** He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" **4** They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." **5** And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.¹⁶⁰ **6** But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'¹⁶¹ **7** 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, **8** and the two shall become one flesh.'¹⁶² So they are no longer two but one flesh. **9** What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."¹⁶³

10 And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter.

11 And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, **12** and if she divorces her

¹⁵⁹ The Pharisees aren't looking for help from Jesus in order to better understand the Scriptures. They are hardhearted. They are looking for any way that they might trap Jesus in his words (see also Mark 12:13-17). But what the Pharisees mean for evil, Jesus uses for good. Mark records their question and Jesus' answer because Jesus' answer is helpful for all of Jesus' followers. Followers of Jesus need to know how they are to think about marriage and divorce. Their thoughts about marriage and divorce are not to be based on the constantly changing standards of the world. Rather, they are to be based on the Scriptures. Fortunately, as Jesus demonstrates in these verses, Scripture says a great deal about these topics. As may be seen in this passage, hardhearted people tend to twist the Scriptures so that they can continue living for their own pleasures (even though they pretend to love God's words). In this case, the Pharisees use God's good words in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 to justify their sinful attitudes and actions in regard to marriage. They demonstrate that they don't care about the purposes God had when he made mankind "male and female" (Genesis 1:27). They don't care about God's original intent for marriage. Rather, they are looking for reasons to break apart marriages. Godly people, however, do not twist God's word. Rather, they meditate on God's word day and night (see Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:2), so that might learn God's will and live for his pleasure and for his good purposes.

¹⁶⁰ Jesus' answer demonstrates how thoroughly he understands God's word. Jesus begins with Moses' law (see Deuteronomy 24:1-4), because the Pharisees are thinking about this law. But Jesus doesn't stop with the law. He puts the law in context, demonstrating that this particular law was given because of the people's sinfulness. This law was never intended to demonstrate God's true purpose for marriage. Jesus quotes from Genesis 1 and 2 to prove that God's true purpose for marriage doesn't include divorce.

¹⁶¹ See Genesis 1:27 and 5:1-2.

¹⁶² See Genesis 2:24 and Ephesians 5:31. Jesus' words here apply to much more than just the question asked by the Pharisees. His words provide a clear answer to the question of whether same sex marriage is sin and whether same sex marriage is permissible for those who claim to be followers of Christ.

¹⁶³ Jesus uses Genesis to prove that God is the one who brings a husband and wife together, therefore people should not separate what God has joined together.

husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”¹⁶⁴

13 And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. **14** But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant¹⁶⁵ and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. **15** Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” **16** And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.¹⁶⁶

17 And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” **18** And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call

¹⁶⁴ In these verses, Jesus is telling the Apostles the **general principle** regarding divorce and remarriage after divorce. The general principle is that divorce and remarriage after divorce are not permitted. Some have wondered if Jesus’ words here (and in Luke 16:18) contradict his words in Matthew 5:31-32 and Matthew 19:1-12 and contradict Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 7:13-16. This is not the case. There is no contradiction. All of these passages are true. In Matthew 5:31-32, Matthew 19:1-12, and 1 Corinthians 7:13-16, Jesus and Paul go beyond the general principles regarding divorce and remarriage after divorce and discuss **exceptional circumstances**. The verses describing exceptional circumstances should not be seen as contradicting the verses that outline the general principle. Old Testament passages related to this topic include Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:18-25, Exodus 21:10-11, and Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

¹⁶⁵ Jesus is angry at the Apostles because they are sinning; they are hindering people from the kingdom of God. It is significant that this particular sin causes Jesus to be visibly angry. To him, this is a very serious situation. His rebuke demonstrates that the Apostles must change in their understanding of the ways of the kingdom of God. This is the second time the importance of children has been emphasized in Mark. The Apostles seem to have completely forgotten Jesus’ words and actions in Mark 9:36-37. The world places little value on children and those who have no “importance” (the poor, those with disabilities). Jesus’ followers (and certainly the elders in the church), however, are to imitate Christ. If a person does not demonstrate genuine love of children, that person cannot effectively shepherd God’s people.

¹⁶⁶ Mark is, as was mentioned earlier, probably based on the teachings of Peter. It is significant that the teaching of Peter includes so many stories that highlight the weakness of the Apostles. Story after story portrays them as proud, faithless, weak, ignorant, or foolish. The very fact that Peter includes this negative information about himself and his fellow Apostles in his teaching demonstrates that he experienced a great change. He clearly came to a place where he truly understood his own insignificance and the importance of the weak (like children). It is likely that the Apostles never argued again about their own greatness after the death and resurrection of Jesus. They had seen true greatness, and, because of their vision of Christ’s greatness, they had no need to exalt themselves.

me good? No one is good except God alone.¹⁶⁷ **19** You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’”¹⁶⁸ **20** And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.” **21** And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” **22** Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.¹⁶⁹

23 And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” **24** And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult 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 person to enter the kingdom of God.” **26** And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, “Then who can be saved?” **27** Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”¹⁷⁰ **28** Peter began

¹⁶⁷ When God created man, he saw that what he created was “very good” (see Genesis 1:31). Yet here, God the Son sees a man and declares that “No one is good except God alone”. How did mankind change from very good to “no one is good”? The answer is sin. When Adam sinned (see Genesis 3), all people, because they are connected to Adam, sinned with him (see Romans 5:12). It is important to understand that Jesus is not saying that he is not good. God proclaimed Jesus’ goodness in Mark 1:11 when he said that he was well pleased with Jesus. In addition, Jesus is God. Therefore, he must be good.

¹⁶⁸ See Exodus 20:12-16 and Deuteronomy 5:16-20. It is significant that the commandments Jesus lists are from the second half of the Ten Commandments. The man’s problem, as Jesus’ question proves, is with the first half of the Ten Commandments. His problem is that he worships another god – his money.

¹⁶⁹ This man declares that he has kept the law since his youth. While the man thought this was true, it was not actually true, for no one, as Romans 3:10-18 declares, is able to perfectly keep the law. But Jesus doesn’t argue this point with this man. Instead, he proves to him that there is something he loves more than God. This man loves his money more than he loves God. This man claims to want eternal life. However, when forced to choose between his possessions and eternal life, he chooses his possessions. This man worships something more than God. His god is his money!

Jesus tells the man to follow him. This is a theme in this section of Mark. Following Jesus is difficult. This man refuses to leave everything and follow Jesus. Because he has chosen his treasure on earth, he has forfeited all treasure in heaven.

¹⁷⁰ Jesus’ statement is stunning. He says that it is impossible for man to be saved! However, Jesus adds that God can do all things. Therefore, if man is to be saved, he must not trust in himself. He must trust in the God who can do the impossible.

to say to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you.”¹⁷¹

29 Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, **30** who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. **31** But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

32 And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid.¹⁷² And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, **33** saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. **34** And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”¹⁷³

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” **36** And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?”

37 And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”¹⁷⁴ **38** Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking.¹⁷⁵ Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”

39 And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized,¹⁷⁶ **40** but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” **41** And when the ten heard it, they began to be

¹⁷¹ Peter’s statement is true (see Mark 1:18, 1:20, and 2:14).

¹⁷² In Mark, Jesus’ enemies are identified with Jerusalem (see Mark 3:22 and 7:1). By going to Jerusalem, Jesus is marching straight into enemy territory! Jesus knows what will happen to him in Jerusalem. He is going to Jerusalem in order to die. Jesus is marching to his death.

¹⁷³ Once again, Jesus uses the title “Son of Man” when he talks about his upcoming suffering, death, and resurrection. See Daniel 7.

¹⁷⁴ Once again, we see Apostles trying to demonstrate their own greatness.

¹⁷⁵ Jesus’ Apostles know that the Christ will enter into his glory. They still don’t understand the suffering required in order for that to happen.

¹⁷⁶ Jesus tells the two Apostles that they will suffer. This is not just a message for these two Apostles. All who follow Christ will drink from Christ’s cup of suffering and be baptized into his baptism of suffering (see 2 Timothy 3:12).

indignant at James and John. **42** And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. **43** But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, **44** and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. **45** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”¹⁷⁷

46 And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. **47** And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David,¹⁷⁸ have mercy on me!” **48** And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent.¹⁷⁹ But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” **49** And Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.” **50** And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.¹⁸⁰

51 And Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And

¹⁷⁷ If anyone has a right to come in a lordly fashion, it is the “Son of Man”. However, “even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve”. Servanthood is despised in this world. Because of Adam’s sin, servanthood has become something to be avoided. However, the way of the kingdom of God is servanthood. In Isaiah, Israel’s deliverer (the Christ) is called the “servant” of Yahweh (see, for example, Isaiah 42:1-4, 49:1-7, 52:13-15, and 53:11). Jesus fulfills the “coming” of the “Son of Man” prophesied in Daniel 7:13-14 in a most surprising way.

¹⁷⁸ This blind man calls Jesus the “Son of David”. He is the only one in Mark, aside from Jesus in Mark 12:35, to use this title. Even though he is blind, Bartimaeus demonstrates that he can see far more than the crowds around Jesus. This man sees Christ quite clearly! He knows that Jesus is the heir to David’s throne. He knows that Jesus is the one who was talked about in 2 Samuel 7:4-16. The blind man’s understanding of Scripture is stunning. Again, we see Mark emphasizing the faith of the despised and the lowly, while the proud (the crowds) miss the kingdom of God.

¹⁷⁹ The people are doing what the Apostles did to the children! They don’t think this blind man is worthy of Jesus’ attention!

¹⁸⁰ By noting that Bartimaeus threw off his cloak, Mark may be drawing the reader’s attention to Bartimaeus’s faith. The cloak was necessary “equipment” for begging. By throwing it off, he demonstrates that he does not believe he needs the cloak any more. He believes he will be living a different life from this day forward.

In addition, by referring to Bartimaeus’s possessions (the cloak), Mark may be comparing him to the rich man in 10:17-22. Both of them have possessions. The rich man, however, won’t sell his possessions because he treasures his old life more than he treasures Christ. Bartimaeus, however, throws off his possessions because he treasures Christ more than he treasures his old life (the Apostles did the same thing). The rich man is fooled by his possessions. He thinks they are worth more than Christ. In reality, they are worth no more than Bartimaeus’s old cloak.

the blind man said to him, “Rabbi, let me recover my sight.” **52** And Jesus said to him, “Go your way,¹⁸¹ your faith has made you well.” And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.¹⁸²

MARK 11

1 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples **2** and said to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. **3** If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.’” **4** And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. **5** And some of those standing there said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” **6** And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. **7** And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he

¹⁸¹ Jesus tells Bartimaeus to “go your way”. Instead, he goes Jesus’ way. He demonstrates that he truly can see by following Christ! His new way is Jesus’ way.

¹⁸² Bartimaeus follows Jesus on the way. The way, as Jesus has been telling his Apostles, and as Mark will make clear in the next section of Mark, is the way to Jerusalem. It is the way to betrayal, to suffering, to death, and ... to glory (see Mark 11:1-16:8).

sat on it.¹⁸³ **8** And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. **9** And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”¹⁸⁴ **10** Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”¹⁸⁵

11 And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when

¹⁸³ The detail Mark goes into as he describes the sending of two disciples for the colt demonstrates that this event is highly significant. It is important to know that the Christ has long been associated with a colt. A colt figures prominently in the major poem about the Christ in Genesis 49:8-12. A colt figures prominently in a prophecy about the Christ in Zechariah 9:9. Those reading about this event should have these prophecies firmly in mind.

It is significant to note that Jesus is acting very publicly here. This is a dramatic change in the book of Mark. No longer is Jesus trying to stay hidden. Jesus rides on a colt (a very symbolic creature) into Jerusalem (Israel’s most important city) in broad daylight (when everyone can see him) during Passover (a very important and symbolic feast). This is intended to be a very public sign that Jesus is the Christ.

The fact that this colt has never been ridden is significant. First, animals that were to be used for especially sacred duties were not to be used as work animals prior to their sacred use (see Numbers 19:2, Deuteronomy 21:3, and 1 Samuel 6:7). Second, the fact that this animal has never been ridden indicates that Christ is riding a colt that has not been broken. As the Prince of Peace, Jesus is able to ride the colt because he brings peace to all creatures, even the animal world.

The colt has been, from birth, set aside for a sacred purpose. Most people, however, would have seen the colt as an ordinary colt—a humble beast of burden. He is, when the disciples find him, tied up, waiting for the moment when he will fulfill his purpose. The colt is like Jesus. From birth, he has been set aside for a sacred purpose. Most people, however, would have seen Jesus as an ordinary man. He is, like the colt, waiting to “untied” so that he might fulfill his sacred purpose. Ironically, “untying” Jesus involved him being tied up and led to a cross.

The colt is a humble beast. It is significant that the Christ, at this first coming, comes on a donkey and not on a war horse. He comes in humility (see Philippians 2:1-11). However, when he comes again (see Acts 1:10-11), Jesus will come on a war horse (see Revelation 19:11-16). This passage in Revelation 19 is also connected to the poem about the Christ in Genesis 49:8-12. In both passages, the Christ’s robe is stained. It is stained because Christ has conquered his enemies by his death!

¹⁸⁴ The people are quoting Psalm 118:26. It is very significant that the people are quoting from this particular Psalm as Jesus is riding the donkey into Jerusalem. The people quote just one verse from this Psalm, but Mark almost certainly wants his readers to read and consider the entire Psalm as they think about the events surrounding Jesus’ suffering and death and resurrection. Mark (in a quotation by Jesus) refers to this Psalm again in Mark 12:10-11.

¹⁸⁵ The “coming kingdom of our father David” is a reference to God’s promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:1-17. The Christ is repeatedly referred to as “David” or by names connected to David (or by names connected to David’s father, Jesse) in the Old Testament books of prophecy (see, for instance, Isaiah 9:1-7, 11:1-10, Ezekiel 34:20-24, 37:24-28, and Hosea 3:5).

he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.¹⁸⁶

12 On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. **13** And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. **14** And he said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it.¹⁸⁷

15 And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. **16** And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. **17** And he was teaching them and saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a

¹⁸⁶ It is significant that the first action Christ takes as he enters into Jerusalem as King is to go to the temple and to carefully examine it. He is looking to see if it is bearing fruit. It is evident, based on what happens the following day (when Jesus cleanses the temple of merchants and buyers), that Jesus does not approve of what is happening in the temple. The temple is not bearing fruit for God. Christ’s coming to the temple is prophesied in Malachi 3:1-2.

¹⁸⁷ This is not just a simple story about Jesus being hungry and punishing a fig tree. It is an acted parable (like the “double” healing of the blind man in Mark 8:22-26). The fig tree is connected to the temple. Mark demonstrates that the fig tree is connected to the temple by switching back and forth between the temple and the fig tree in this chapter. Consider the following: verse 11 is about the temple, verses 12-14 are about the fig tree, verses 15-19 are about the temple again, verses 20-25 are about the fig tree again, and finally, verses 27-33 are about the temple again. Mark clearly wants his readers to connect the temple and the fig tree.

The fig tree is like the temple. Jesus examines the fig tree in the same way that he examined the temple. Jesus is looking for fruit on the fig tree. From a distance the fig tree looks like it might have fruit. Up close, however, it has no figs. Because it is unfruitful, Jesus declares that the fig tree will never bear fruit again. This is exactly what happens with the temple. Jesus has examined it, and, because there is no “fruit” being produced by the temple, he, by his actions, “declares” that the temple (the physical temple in Jerusalem) will never bear fruit again. It will die. This doesn’t mean that there will no longer be a temple. There is a temple. But that temple is Jesus. Jesus is now the temple of God. He is the place where people come to God. He is the place where people come to receive forgiveness. He is the place where people come and worship (see John 2:13-22 and 4:20-26). The replacement of the temple in Jerusalem with the temple of Jesus’ body has been hinted at throughout Mark.

house of prayer for all the nations’?¹⁸⁸ But you have made it a den of robbers.”¹⁸⁹ **18** And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching. **19** And when evening came they went out of the city.

20 As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. **21** And Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.” **22** And Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God. **23** Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. **24** Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. **25** And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”¹⁹⁰

27 And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, **28** and they said to him, “By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?” **29** Jesus said to

¹⁸⁸ This is a quotation from Isaiah 56:7. Since the physical temple in Jerusalem is unfruitful and is not a “house of prayer for all the nations”, that temple is “condemned” by the Christ (see Malachi 3:1-5). Jesus demonstrates God’s feeling about the lack of fruit in the physical temple in Jerusalem by throwing all of the buyers and sellers out of it. As the true temple where people from all nations come and worship, Jesus truly is the “house of prayer for all the nations”. Isaiah 56:1-8 is describing this true temple of God.

¹⁸⁹ This is a quotation from Jeremiah 7:11. In Jeremiah 7, God reminds the Israelites that he has, in the past, changed the physical location of the temple (or tabernacle) because of the wickedness of the people. He first did this when the tabernacle was located at “Shiloh”. Because of the evil practiced there, that “holy” site was abandoned. By quoting this passage, Jesus is wanting the people to know that the temple in Jerusalem truly is “a den of robbers” and will be abandoned. A new site for the temple will be chosen. This site is Jesus’ body. He is the new temple. Read Jeremiah 7:1-15 with this in mind. Also, consider Ezekiel 40-48. These chapters describe, in poetic language, a new temple of stunning size and beauty and power. Jesus and the church are the fulfillment of this temple.

¹⁹⁰ The Apostles are amazed that the fig tree has withered. Jesus is not amazed, because he trusts in God and he knows God’s purposes. One of God’s purposes is that the “mountain” that stands opposed to God will be “thrown into the sea” (in this context, the mountain is both Jerusalem and the temple). The withered fig tree is a stunning indication that God will answer Christ’s prayers and will remove this corrupt mountain of false worship. But Christ moves beyond the “mountain” of false worship (godless Jerusalem and the fruitless temple) standing in front of them. He wants the Apostles to know that God can be trusted to answer all of their prayers. However, those who would pray for God’s purposes to be fulfilled must pray in faith and must not harbor unforgiveness in their hearts.

them, “I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. **30** Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me.” **31** And they discussed it with one another, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ **32** But shall we say, ‘From man?’—they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. **33** So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”¹⁹¹

MARK 12¹⁹²

1 And he began to speak to them in parables.¹⁹³ “A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country. **2** When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. **3** And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. **4** Again he sent

¹⁹¹ The end of this quotation is significant. Jesus does have authority, he says, to do these things. This authority has been given to him by God the Father (see Matthew 28:18). Jesus knows that the Jewish leaders will not recognize his authority because they do not accept the testimony of John the Baptist. The Jewish leaders do not consider John’s ministry to be from heaven. Therefore, since they do not believe John’s authority was from heaven, they also do not believe Jesus has any authority from heaven. They demonstrate, by their rejection of John’s authority from heaven, that they will not submit to the authority of God. The only thing left for a rebellious people like this is destruction. And that is precisely what may be seen in the first parable in Mark 12.

¹⁹² In the previous chapter, Mark focused on Jesus and the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus examined the temple and found it to be fruitless. It is important to understand that this does not mean there is no longer a temple. There is a temple. It is now Jesus. He is the “place” where God is worshiped. In this chapter, Mark focuses on Jesus and the Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders, Jesus said, “sit on Moses’ seat” (see Matthew 23:2). This means that they were a type of Moses. They were supposed to teach the people and to lead the people to love and follow God. However, the Jewish leaders in Mark 12 are very unlike Moses, for they do not love God. In this chapter, the Jewish leaders are examined by the Christ and, like the temple, are found to be fruitless. Ironically, the very fact that the Jewish leaders are “testing” Jesus reveals their godlessness. They, like the temple, are replaced by Jesus. Jesus is now Israel’s teacher. He is the one sitting “on Moses’ seat” (see Deuteronomy 18:15-19 and Acts 3:22-23). He is the one who rightly understands God’s word and rightly interprets it for God’s people. He is the one who feeds God’s people “manna” from heaven.

¹⁹³ Jesus is telling this parable to the Jewish leaders (see 12:12). He is not telling them this parable to teach them. He is telling them this parable to condemn them. Again, notice the theme of fruit. The owner (God the Father) is looking for fruit. Jesus connects the Jewish leaders of his day with the Jewish leaders in the Old Testament who killed the prophets. They form one group of wicked tenants doing the same wicked work. See Psalm 80:8-19, Isaiah 5:1-7, and John 15.

to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. **5** And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed. **6** He had still one other, a beloved son.¹⁹⁴ Finally he sent him to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ **7** But those tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ **8** And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.¹⁹⁵ **9** What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.¹⁹⁶ **10** Have you not read this Scripture:

“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;

11

this was the Lord’s doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes?”¹⁹⁷

12 And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away.

13 And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. **14** And they came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone’s opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?” **15** But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, “Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” **16** And they brought one. And he said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said to him, “Caesar’s.”

¹⁹⁴ See Mark 1:11, 2 Samuel 7:14, and Psalm 2:7.

¹⁹⁵ This demonstrates, once again, that Jesus knows that the Jewish leaders will betray him and kill him (they do this by handing him over to the Romans in order that he might be killed).

¹⁹⁶ God the Father will give the vineyard to the followers of the Christ. This includes both Jews and Gentiles.

¹⁹⁷ This is a quote from Psalm 118:22. The “stone” that is rejected is Jesus. He is like a giant stone that should be used as the cornerstone of the temple. The “builders” are the Jewish leaders—the ones who should be most interested in the building of God’s true temple. But, rather than rejoice at the coming of Jesus, these builders “reject” Jesus. They consider him unfit for use in God’s true temple. But even though this “stone” is rejected by the Jewish leaders, God accepts him (“this was the Lord’s doing”) and the people (the true people of God) rejoice in his acceptance. They declare that “it is marvelous in our eyes”. The parable in verses 1-9 is a summary of Psalm 118:22.

17 Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they marveled at him.¹⁹⁸

18 And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, **19** “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.¹⁹⁹ **20** There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. **21** And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. **22** And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. **23** In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.”

24 Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?

25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. **26** And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush,²⁰⁰ how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?²⁰¹

27 He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong.”²⁰²

28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” **29** Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. **30** And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with

¹⁹⁸ Jesus demonstrates that he is not opposed to God and he is not opposed to the authorities that God has put in place. The Jewish leaders, ironically, are opposed to both.

¹⁹⁹ This is a quote from Deuteronomy 25:5.

²⁰⁰ There were no verse numbers in the first century. Therefore, Jesus can’t tell the Sadducees which chapter and verse to turn to. Instead, he tells them which part of the story he is talking about.

²⁰¹ By saying “I **am** the God of Abraham ...” Jesus demonstrates that God is **currently** the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see Exodus 3:6, 15 and Acts 3:13). This is true right now. At this very moment, God **is** the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are currently worshipping him.

²⁰² In all of these disputes, the Jewish leaders are attempting to demonstrate that **Jesus** is not fit to teach God’s people God’s word. However, these questions prove that **they** are not fit to teach God’s people, and that Jesus has complete understanding of God’s word.

all your strength.²⁰³ **31** The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’²⁰⁴ There is no other commandment greater than these.” **32** And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. **33** And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” **34** And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.²⁰⁵

35 And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, “How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? **36** David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared,

“‘The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet.’”²⁰⁶

37 David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?” And the great throng heard him gladly.²⁰⁷

38 And in his teaching he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces

39 and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, **40** who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense

²⁰³ See Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Joshua 22:5.

²⁰⁴ See Leviticus 19:18.

²⁰⁵ In 12:28-34, another scribe ask Jesus a question. This scribe doesn’t appear to be opposed to Jesus. In fact, he seems to, unlike the other Jewish leaders, have a genuine question that he wants a genuine answer for from Jesus. After Jesus answers his question, the scribe is pleased and affirms that Jesus has answered very well. The positive testimony of this scribe is significant. He is a “witness” from the Jewish leadership that Christ is a trustworthy teacher of the law. The fact that no one else dares to ask Jesus a question demonstrates that he has passed every test and that his teaching has been demonstrated to be trustworthy.

²⁰⁶ See Psalm 110:1 and 1 Corinthians 15:25-28.

²⁰⁷ Verses 35-37 are not presented here as answers to the Jewish leaders. Rather, Jesus is doing what the true teacher of God’s people should do: he is teaching! As the true teacher of God’s people, Jesus rightly understands God’s word and rightly teaches it to God’s people. His teaching brings joy to the hearts of God’s people (see 12:37). Followers of Christ today still receive Jesus’ teaching. Jesus’ teaching is passed on to God’s people today by the Apostles (see John 14:25-26 and 16:12-15). God’s people today, like the people in the first century, receive the teaching of the Christ with great joy!

make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

41 And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. **42** And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. **43** And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box.

44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Compare verses 38-40 and 41-44. In verses 38-40, we see the wicked, self-serving actions of the scribes. In verses 41-44, we see the glorious, people-serving actions of the Christ. By his actions, Jesus demonstrates that he is not like the scribes. In verse 39, we see the scribes looking for the best seats at feasts and in the synagogues. In verse 41, we see Jesus taking a humble seat across from the treasury where he can see God’s people and he can commend their good deeds. In verse 40, we see the scribes stealing from the widows. In verses 42-44, we see Jesus praising the sacrifices made by a widow. Again, Mark is emphasizing Jesus’ fitness to serve as the teacher of God’s people. Jesus is the prophet Moses was speaking about (see Deuteronomy 18:15-19).

MARK 13²⁰⁹

- 1** And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!”
- 2** And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ This chapter needs to be studied carefully. The statements of the Apostles and the questions that they ask provide the important clues necessary to understand Jesus’ words. **His words are connected to their statements and their questions.** Although Jesus’ words in this chapter concern events that are to take place in the future, it is important to remember that Jesus is speaking to Apostles in the first century. In other words, what is future to the Apostles in the first century may be in the past to readers today.

²¹⁰ This chapter begins with the Apostles drawing attention to the temple buildings. Based on the previous chapters, it is likely that the Apostles want some reassurance from Jesus that the physical temple in Jerusalem (and Jerusalem itself) still has a significant place in God’s plans.

It is important to understand that the Jews (and, thus, the Apostles at this time) considered the temple to be the most important place in the world. For them, it was a place of incredible glory—the center of the world. They could not imagine it ever being destroyed. Images of fruit appeared all over the temple and temple grounds because the temple was supposed to be, in a sense, the garden of Eden. The temple was the place where God had said that he would dwell. It was the place where he was to be worshiped. It was the place where forgiveness was to be poured out. It was the place where good fruit was to be produced. The Gentiles were to come to the temple to encounter the presence of God and to marvel at the good fruit produced by God’s people.

As they look at the beautiful temple, the Apostles simply cannot imagine the temple in Jerusalem ever being destroyed. Jesus’ words and actions (particularly in the last two chapters), however, have greatly troubled the Apostles. They have, for some time, seen him do things that suggest that he is a replacement for the temple (for example, he pronounces people forgiven and he pronounces people clean—these are things that were to happen at the temple). The Apostles, however, still do not understand this. They do understand, however, that he has examined the temple and has found it to be fruitless. But, by their statement about the temple’s beauty in verse one, it is clear that they hope he will reassure them with some kind words about the temple. Jesus offers no reassurance about the temple. Instead, he says that the temple in Jerusalem will be torn apart (this literally happens in AD 70). Jesus’ words about the destruction of the temple shouldn’t have completely surprised the Apostles. He had already hinted at it in his teaching (see John 4:20-26). Beyond this, the Apostles should have remembered that God had, in the past, allowed the temple to be destroyed and/or relocated (see Jeremiah 7:1-14). It is not until after the death and resurrection of Jesus that the Apostles truly understand that Jesus is the new temple (see John 2:18-22)—the “place” where people come to meet God, to find forgiveness, and to worship him.

That Jesus is speaking about the destruction of the physical temple is further confirmed by an event that takes place immediately after Jesus dies: “And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom” (Mark 15:38). Thus, at the moment of Jesus’ death, the moment when one would think that Mark would be focusing all of his attention on Jesus, Mark tells his readers about something that is happening at the temple in Jerusalem. Mark seems to be tying the death of Jesus to the “death” of the temple in Jerusalem. The curtain in the temple being torn is heaven’s sign that the temple in Jerusalem is no longer the place where God’s people are to come in order to worship.

This chapter about the destruction of the temple is necessary for a number of reasons. First, it is necessary because the Apostles need a change in perspective. If they are to be effective “heads” of the “tribes” in the true Israel of God, they need to move beyond a “Jerusalem”-focused and a “temple”-focused mindset. Now, because of Jesus’ words in this chapter, they are able to “move beyond Jerusalem” and to focus on all nations and to concentrate on bringing the nations to Christ. It is significant that, in their writings, the Apostles never focus on the importance of the nations coming to the temple in Jerusalem. They don’t focus on this because they know that the temple in Jerusalem (which was still standing as they wrote most of the letters in the New Testament) is no longer the true temple. Instead, they focus on the new and perfect and permanent temple, Jesus. **They focus on bringing the nations to Christ, not the temple in Jerusalem.**

Beyond this, this chapter is important because it demonstrates that God wasn’t defeated when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. Rather, the destruction of the temple demonstrates the power of God. He has judged his enemies! Because of Jesus’ words here, the destruction of the temple, when it did take place in AD 70, didn’t shake the faith of the early church. Instead, the church should have grown stronger in faith, because Jesus’ words about the temple had come to pass.

3 And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, **4** “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?”²¹¹ **5** And Jesus began to say to them, “See that no one leads you astray. **6** Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray.”²¹² **7** And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end²¹³ is not yet. **8** For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.²¹⁴ **9** “But be on your guard. For they²¹⁵ will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. **10** And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.”²¹⁶ **11** And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

²¹¹ The question of the Apostles in verse four relates to Jesus’ words in verse two. They are asking about the destruction of the temple. They want to know when the temple will be destroyed and are looking for signs that will alert them to its upcoming destruction.

²¹² Jesus says that, prior to the destruction of the temple, many “false” christs will appear. These false christs will present themselves as the “savior” of Israel. They will proclaim, with their words, “I am the Christ”. It is significant that Jesus doesn’t do this during his earthly ministry. Instead, he lets the true signs he does speak for themselves (see John 20:30-31). The true signs are the signs from the Old Testament. False christs, however, use false words and false signs to deceive those who are unwilling to love the truth.

²¹³ The “end” appears to refer, in the context of this chapter, to the end of the fruitless temple and of rebellious Jerusalem. Notice, Jesus does not say that he is referring to the “end” of time. Remember, the question of the Apostles in verse four concerns the end of the physical temple in Jerusalem.

²¹⁴ Again, Jesus is answering the question of the Apostles. He is listing different signs that will signal that the destruction of the physical temple is near. In the same way that a mother’s birth pains intensify shortly before she gives birth, Jesus is saying that the signs of the destruction of the temple will intensify before the destruction actually takes place.

²¹⁵ The “they” here refers to Jewish leaders.

²¹⁶ This does not mean that the gospel needed to go to all nations on the globe before the destruction of the temple. It probably means the end of the “known” earth. In other words, Jesus is talking about the civilized world at that time (the Roman empire). This is how the word is used in Acts 2:5, Romans 1:8, and Colossians 1:5-6.

12 And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. **13** And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.²¹⁷

14 "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand),²¹⁸ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. **15** Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, **16** and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. **17** And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! **18** Pray that it may not happen in winter. **19** For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. **20** And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.²¹⁹ **21** And then 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 arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.²²⁰ **23** But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.²²¹

24 "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, **25** and the stars will be falling

²¹⁷ Endurance to the end is a common theme in the Scriptures. A mark of a true follower of Christ is that they believe to the very end (see Colossians 1:23 and Hebrews 10:23-39). Those who abandon the faith are not true believers.

²¹⁸ Mark wants his readers to carefully consider events that are recorded in Daniel (see Daniel 11:31 and 12:11) and to understand that when they see these events taking place, they must flee. They are not to stay and try to save the temple or the city.

²¹⁹ God cares for his "elect". He will not let them be deceived, and he will not let them perish (see Mark 13:20, 22, and 27). Christ's words should have provided strong comfort to "the elect" who were in Jerusalem prior to the destruction of the temple. His words should provide strong comfort to his "elect" today.

²²⁰ This means that it isn't possible to lead the elect astray! Jesus' warnings are one of the ways he keeps the elect from going astray.

²²¹ Jesus' warning is to the Apostles. He does not want them led astray. He wants them to do their job. Beyond this, Jesus' warning can be applied to the church today. He wants the church to listen carefully to his words and to be on guard.

from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.²²²

26 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.²²³ **27** And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.²²⁴

28 “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. **29** So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. **30** Truly, I say to you, this generation will not

²²² Phrases like the ones found in verses 24-25 (“the sun will be darkened”, “the moon will not give its light”, and “the stars will be falling from heaven”) are used throughout the prophetic books in the Old Testament. These phrases are NOT used in the Old Testament to describe the sun literally being darkened and stars literally falling from heaven to the earth. Rather, these phrases are used to describe, in strong poetic language, the awesome judgment of God when it comes against great “kingdoms” that oppose God. This is the language of judgment (see, for instance, Isaiah 13:10, Joel 2:10, 2:30-31, 3:15, and Amos 8:9). Ironically, in Mark 13, the “enemies” of God who will be experiencing God’s judgment are not the Assyrians or the Babylonians. God’s enemies are the temple and Jerusalem! Jerusalem and the temple have become “Babylon”. That is why they must be judged. See also Matthew 23 (especially Matthew 23:37-39) and the parable in Luke 13:6-9.

²²³ The word “coming” should not instantly cause the reader to think of the “second coming”. Remember, this chapter is about the destruction of the temple. It hasn’t, at least to this point, concerned the “second coming” of Christ. The “coming” in this chapter is probably the “coming” of the true king in judgment against rebellious Jerusalem and against the fruitless temple in Jerusalem. The reader living after AD 70 should know that this judgment occurred in the first century!

By using the title “Son of Man”, Jesus is connecting the word “coming” to the way Daniel uses the word when he refers to the “coming” of the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13. Daniel is not referring to a “second coming” of Christ. He is referring to the Son of Man coming to take all authority. Jesus, then, seems to be telling the Apostles when he will be “coming” as king in judgment against the physical temple in Jerusalem and against Jerusalem itself.

This explanation fits with Jesus’ response to the high priest in Mark 14:61-62: “Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ And Jesus said, ‘I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’” Jesus is quoting from Daniel 7:13 here. Jesus doesn’t seem to be talking about his return to earth at the end of the age (that event is still future), but about the “coming” of the Son of Man in judgment against the temple and against Jerusalem.

²²⁴ The word “angels” can also mean “messengers”. This is probably referring to God’s “messengers” being sent out into all the earth to gather God’s “elect” (see Deuteronomy 30:1-4 and Isaiah 43:5-6). Those who proclaim the good news of Jesus are the messengers described in this verse. They are the ones gathering God’s elect “from the four winds”.

pass away until all these things take place.²²⁵ **31** Heaven and earth will pass away,²²⁶ but my words will not pass away.

32 “But concerning that day or that hour,²²⁷ no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. **33** Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.²²⁸

34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. **35** Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— **36** lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.

²²⁵ This is another indication that Jesus is talking about the destruction of the temple. As the prophet (again, see Deuteronomy 18:15-19), he prophesies that “this generation” (in other words, the people who were alive when he was speaking these words in the first century) will not pass away until these things have come to pass. Again, Jesus is probably talking about the people who were alive when he spoke these words.

²²⁶ Jesus seems to be saying, “you can trust me more than you can trust even the heavens and the earth”. The fact that his word came to pass in AD 70 should bring great comfort to God’s people today. They can trust their Prophet! He is ruling the new people of God right now!

²²⁷ In the context of this chapter, Jesus is referring to the day or hour of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (which took places in the first century). Jesus wants the Apostles, instead of worrying about the conditions in the land of Israel, to be busy doing his work. They are not to be following every new “christ” who is deceiving the people. They are not to be trying to “save” the temple or Jerusalem. They are to be busy building the church. The book of Acts documents that they obeyed Jesus’ words!

²²⁸ This probably refers, again, to the time when the Son of Man will “come” in judgement against the temple.

MARK 14

1 It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.²²⁹ And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, **2** for they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.”

3 And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. **4** There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? **5** For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.”²³⁰ And they scolded her. **6** But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. **7** For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. **8** She has done what she could; she has anointed my body

²²⁹ Passover and Unleavened Bread are first mentioned in Exodus 12 and 13. The Passover centers on an unblemished lamb that is killed so that, because of its death, the wrath of God might “pass over” the people of God and they might live. In the Exodus story, the death of the lamb isn’t effective for all people. Rather, it is effective only for those who are covered by the blood of the lamb. Unleavened Bread is celebrated by cleansing all leaven from the house and only eating “unleavened” bread. Both Passover and Unleavened Bread are highly symbolic. Passover foreshadows the death of Christ for his people, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread foreshadows the sin-free life that Christians are to live because of Christ’s death and resurrection. See 1 Corinthians 5:7.

Notice how many times Mark mentions Passover in this chapter. It is significant that he doesn’t mention any other Jewish feasts prior to this point in this book. Mark is tying the death of Christ and the Passover together. He wants his readers to read the account of Christ’s death with the story of the Passover in mind.

²³⁰ A denarius was a day’s wages for a common worker.

beforehand for burial.²³¹ **9** And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”²³²

10 Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. **11** And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.²³³

12 And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?” **13** And he sent

²³¹ Mark goes into great detail concerning the events surrounding the anointing of Jesus. He talks about the type of flask used, the type of ointment, and the cost of the ointment. Mark doesn't normally provide this level of detail in his stories. This level of detail is Mark's signal to the readers that the anointing of Jesus is highly significant. These verses are about the great worth of Jesus' body. The woman recognizes the great worth of Jesus' body and pours out her very best in order that she might prepare Christ's precious body for burial. Mark notes that some of the people seeing this woman's actions do not see Christ's body as precious. They see other things (like giving to the poor) as more precious than Christ's body. Jesus, however, says that this woman has done a “beautiful thing”. She, like the widow who gave “two small copper coins” in 12:41-44, gives everything she has to anoint the place where God is worshiped (the widow anoints the temple, this woman anoints Jesus—the new temple). This woman pours out all of her expensive perfume on Jesus because of the value of Christ's body and because of her love of him. In the same way that the widow, more than anyone in the temple, understood the great worth of the temple, this woman, more than anyone in the house, understands the great worth of Christ. Both of these stories demonstrate how all people are to treasure Christ's body. To fail to treasure Christ's body is a great sin.

It is significant that this story of Jesus' body being “prepared” by anointing is taking place during the time immediately before the Passover when the people are “preparing” their lambs for the Passover feast.

Like the colt in Mark 11:2, the alabaster flask of pure nard has been set aside for this one sacred purpose. The alabaster jar is also a picture of Christ's body. It, like Christ, is broken so that its precious fragrance might be poured out.

²³² Jesus is predicting the spread of the gospel around the world. He also says that this woman's actions will be proclaimed along with the gospel. Her actions are to be proclaimed because she is a model of how all those who come to Christ must treasure his body and how they are to live. Compare this woman's actions to the rich man who considered his earthly goods to be worth more than Christ (Mark 10:17-31). That man “went away sorrowful”. This woman, however, experiences no sorrow. Instead, her actions are praised by Jesus. It is significant, however, that she does experience persecution because of her love of Jesus. All those who love Christ will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12).

²³³ These verses prove that the chief priests are not following God. They are, instead, working closely with the worst criminal in the history of the world. This is another clue that the priesthood is corrupt and needs to be replaced.

two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, **14** and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ **15** And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready,²³⁴ there prepare for us.” **16** And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.²³⁵

17 And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. **18** And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” **19** They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, “Is it I?” **20** He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. **21** For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”²³⁶ **22** And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them,²³⁷ and said, “Take; this is my body.”

²³⁴ As with the colt in Mark 11:2 and as with the alabaster flask of pure nard in Mark 14:3, this room has been “set apart” and is “waiting” to be used by Jesus.

²³⁵ Again, notice the level of detail Mark provides here. This is Mark’s signal to his readers that this event is highly significant. Jesus’ great concern about the setting of the Passover meal (he has prepared things in advance) should prepare readers for the highly significant things that take place during this meal (see, particularly, verses 22-25).

The Passover meal commemorates the night when, because of the slaughtering of a lamb without blemish, the “destroyer” (the one executing God’s wrath—see Exodus 12:23) “passed over” the people of Israel.

²³⁶ The betrayal of Christ by one of his close friends is a crime of unfathomable wickedness and is deserving of the greatest punishment.

Judas is first mentioned by Mark in Mark 3:19. However, he is referred to several times in the Psalms (see Psalm 41:9, 69:25, and 109:1-15 (also see Jesus’ words in John 13:18-19 and Peter’s words in Acts 1:20)). These Psalms poetically recount and poetically celebrate the suffering, betrayal, death, and resurrection of Christ. The book of Psalms has been, for thousands of years, used by faithful followers of God to help them better understand and identify with both the sufferings of the Christ and the glories that resulted because of his sufferings.

²³⁷ Mark’s words here echo the words he used in describing the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000. Based on Mark’s word choices, it is evident the reader is supposed to make a connection between those “feedings” and this meal. Here, we learn that the “feeding” of God’s people requires the “breaking” of God’s son. The bread that was broken in the feeding of the 5,000, the feeding of the 4,000, and on this night, is a picture of the broken body of Christ. There is no bread that brings life and satisfaction to God’s people apart from the broken body of Christ.

23 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. **24** And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant,²³⁸ which is poured out for many. **25** Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”²³⁹

26 And when they had sung a hymn,²⁴⁰ they went out to the Mount of Olives. **27** And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’²⁴¹

28 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”²⁴²

29 Peter said to him, “Even though they all fall away, I will not.”²⁴³

30 And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” **31** But he said

²³⁸ This is a meal celebrating the commencement of a “covenant” (like a wedding feast). The “covenant” that Christ inaugurates on this evening is, in other places, referred to as the “New Covenant” (see Luke 22:20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, 2 Corinthians 3:6, and Hebrews 8:6-13). The establishment of a “New Covenant” shouldn’t have surprised the Apostles. It had been promised in the Old Testament (see Jeremiah 31:31-40). In the same way that a marriage feast signifies that a new “life” has commenced for the couple who have been married, this covenant meal signifies that a new life has commenced for those who are part of the covenant. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the age of the “Old Covenant” is no longer in effect.

²³⁹ With these words and actions, Jesus inaugurates a celebration that continues to this day and that will continue until the day when it is fulfilled “in the kingdom of God”. It is a small “feast” anticipating a much greater feast. Christ will not drink wine again until the day of the great feast. Churches celebrate the “Lord’s Supper” because they are remembering the New Covenant that is based on Jesus’ death and resurrection and they are rejoicing in their participation in that covenant. When they celebrate this meal, they are proclaiming that they have life because of the broken body and spilled blood of the Lord Jesus. Beyond this, they are proclaiming that they have unity with Christ and with one another only because of the broken body and spilled blood of Christ. See 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

²⁴⁰ On this night, Jews traditionally sing Psalms 113-118. Jesus himself, after his resurrection, testifies that the Psalms speak of his sufferings and the glories that follow based on his sufferings (see Luke 24:44)! The Apostles are singing Psalms about Christ and the gospel event!

²⁴¹ See Zechariah 13:7. Notice the phrase “I will strike the shepherd”. God is the one doing this to Jesus. See Psalm 22:15, 69:26, 118:18, and Isaiah 53:4, 10.

²⁴² Jesus is constantly reminding the Apostles of his resurrection. Even though they don’t understand his words at this time, after his death they, by the help of the Holy Spirit (see John 14:25-26), will remember his words. Jesus’ words about the resurrection, which are spoken before the resurrection takes place, will increase their faith in Christ and in his words.

²⁴³ Jesus trusts the Scriptures more than he trusts Peter’s words.

emphatically, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.”²⁴⁴ And they all said the same.

32 And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” **33** And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.

34 And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.” **35** And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. **36** And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”²⁴⁵

37 And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? **38** Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” **39** And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. **40** And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. **41** And he came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

42 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”²⁴⁶

43 And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. **44** Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard.” **45** And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” And he kissed him. **46** And they laid hands on him and seized him. **47** But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. **48** And Jesus said to them, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? **49** Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize

²⁴⁴ The fact that Peter denies Christ three different times serves as proof that Jesus is suffering alone. No one stands with Jesus. No one, in any way, eases his burdens. See Psalm 22:11.

²⁴⁵ Christ is in anguish. He is bearing the sins of all of God’s people. The sorrow he bears is almost enough to kill him. See Isaiah 53.

²⁴⁶ Again, we have proof that Christ is suffering alone. He receives no help from his Apostles. The only place he can turn is God the Father.

me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.”²⁴⁷ **50** And they all left him and fled.

51 And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, **52** but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.²⁴⁸

53 And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. **54** And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire.

55 Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none.

56 For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. **57** And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying,

58 “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’”²⁴⁹ **59** Yet even about this their testimony did not agree.

60 And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” **61** But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”²⁵⁰

62 And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the

²⁴⁷ Jesus is saying that everything happening to him has been prophesied in the (Old Testament) Scriptures. The sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow after his suffering are a major theme of the Old Testament. See Luke 24:25-27, 24:44-48, and 1 Peter 1:10-12.

²⁴⁸ This little story about the “young man” appears only in Mark. It serves as evidence that other people, aside from the Apostles, are witnesses of these events. This person, like the Apostles, abandons Christ. This man is probably Mark. This passage echoes the events prophesied in Amos 2:16.

²⁴⁹ Again, notice the emphasis on the destruction (and replacement) of the temple. This has become a major theme in Mark.

²⁵⁰ Notice, the high priest refers to God the Father as “**the Blessed**”. The high priest is trying to avoid dishonoring God by not saying his name. He doesn’t honor God by speaking in this way. Instead, he greatly dishonors God by condemning Jesus to death.

clouds of heaven.”²⁵¹ **63** And the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further witnesses do we need? **64** You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death.²⁵² **65** And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophecy!”²⁵³ And the guards received him with blows.

66 And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, **67** and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.”

68 But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.” And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed.

69 And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” **70** But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” **71** But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.” **72** And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.²⁵⁴

251 Jesus answers the high priest with the words “I am”. He is, by his answer, identifying himself with the most sacred name of God. See Exodus 3:13-16 and 6:2-8.

In verse 62, Jesus, again, refers to the “Son of Man” prophecy in Daniel 7:13-14. This passage continues to play a major role in Mark. Jesus is not speaking to the high priest alone. When he says “you” will see Christ coming in judgment, he is speaking to all of his enemies who are present (“you” is plural). This doesn’t mean that his enemies will see his “second coming”. Rather, it seems to mean that they will see, with their own eyes, Christ being vindicated. This happened when the temple was destroyed in AD 70.

252 The high priest has charged the Christ with blasphemy! Again, this serves as strong testimony against the corrupt priesthood serving in Jerusalem at the time of Christ. By charging the Christ with blasphemy, the high priest is committing a great crime deserving of great punishment.

253 Jesus is mocked because they believe he is a false prophet. But Peter’s denial, happening at the very moment Jesus is being mocked, demonstrates that Jesus is a true prophet.

254 Christ’s sufferings are caused by all people—even by his friends. Peter’s denial of Christ is a great sin. Christ suffers for even this sin. Peter’s denial of Christ serves a redemptive purpose in Peter’s life. His problems with pride, almost certainly, ended on this night. After this night, he no longer argues that he is the greatest. He knows that he is not.

MARK 15

1 And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate.²⁵⁵ **2** And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?”²⁵⁶ And he answered him, “You have said so.” **3** And the chief priests accused him of many things. **4** And Pilate again asked him, “Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.” **5** But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.²⁵⁷ **6** Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. **7** And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. **8** And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them.²⁵⁸ **9** And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” **10** For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. **11** But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. **12** And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” **13** And they cried out again, “Crucify him.” **14** And Pilate

²⁵⁵ The Jewish leaders agree that Jesus must die. They have examined his life, his teachings, his signs, and his claims, and they reject them all. Jesus is the stone rejected by the builders (see Psalm 118:22). The rejection of the Christ is a great crime. The Jewish leaders take Jesus to the Gentile governor. Thus, Jews and Gentiles (represented by Pilate and the Roman soldiers) join together in the crucifixion of Christ. He is killed by representatives of all the peoples of the earth. See the comments of the Apostles in Acts 4:23-31. See also Psalm 2:1-3.

²⁵⁶ Mark emphasizes the fact that this trial and Jesus' suffering and death are because Jesus is the “King of the Jews”. This title is used in verses 2, 9, 12, 18, and 26. “King of Israel” is used in verse 32. “Christ” is used in verse 32.

²⁵⁷ Jesus offers no defense because he wants to obey his Father and, thus, he wants to die. Jesus' obedience is because of his great love for the Father (see John 14:31). Jesus, by refusing to argue on his own behalf, demonstrates that he is trusting in God, the righteous judge, to do what is right: “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:22-23). Jesus' silence is a fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture (see Isaiah 53:7).

²⁵⁸ It isn't just the Jewish leaders and Gentile rulers who are behind Jesus' death. The crowd, also, wants him to die. By their choice, they demonstrate that they prefer rebellion (Barabbas) to righteousness (Jesus). See also Acts 3:13-15.

said to them, “Why, what evil has he done?”²⁵⁹ But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.” **15** So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.²⁶⁰

16 And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. **17** And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. **18** And they began to salute him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” **19** And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him.²⁶¹ **20** And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

21 And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus,²⁶² to carry his cross. **22** And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). **23** And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.²⁶³ **24** And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for

²⁵⁹ Pilate affirms that Jesus has committed no crime worthy of death. Pilate’s testimony demonstrates that Christ is not dying for his own sins. He is dying for the sins of others.

²⁶⁰ In verses 6-15, Mark deliberately compares Jesus with a man named Barabbas. He wants his readers to consider their lives together. One of these men is to be released and the other is to be killed. Barabbas should die. He is guilty. He is a rebel and murderer. Jesus should live. He is innocent. However, the innocent man is killed instead of the guilty man. Jesus takes the punishment that should have gone to Barabbas. Because of Jesus’ death, Barabbas is allowed to go free. This is a small picture of the gospel message. Each person who comes to Christ in faith is like Barabbas. They are guilty, but righteous Jesus has died in their place. See, again, Acts 3:13-15.

²⁶¹ The soldiers are mocking Jesus by dressing him as an earthly king. But Jesus isn’t like other kings. As the heavenly warrior, fighting for his people, the true King doesn’t wear royal robes to show how different he is from the people. Rather, he takes the wounds of the people, showing that he has identified with them. The true King is stripped naked and is “dressed” with bloody wounds on his back, bruises, and spittle on his face. Never has a king been dressed in more magnificent “garments”. The royal “garments” of the Christ are described poetically in Genesis 49:11 and Isaiah 63:1-3.

²⁶² Mark’s words seem to indicate that his first readers would personally know Alexander and Rufus. These two men are, because of their father’s involvement in carrying the cross, additional “witnesses” of the crucifixion.

²⁶³ See Psalm 69:21.

them, to decide what each should take.²⁶⁴ **25** And it was the third hour when they crucified him. **26** And the inscription of the charge against him read, “The King of the Jews.” **27** And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. **29** And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads²⁶⁵ and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, **30** save yourself, and come down from the cross!”²⁶⁶ **31** So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. **32** Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

33 And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.²⁶⁷ **34** And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”²⁶⁸ **35** And some of the bystanders hearing it said, “Behold, he is calling Elijah.” **36** And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.”²⁶⁹ **37** And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. **38** And the curtain of the temple was torn in two,

²⁶⁴ See Psalm 22:18.

²⁶⁵ See Psalm 22:7 and Psalm 109:25.

²⁶⁶ Again, Jesus’ death is tied to the destruction of the temple.

²⁶⁷ The fact that there is darkness over the land is significant. According to the Old Testament prophets, “darkness” is a sign of God’s judgment (see also Mark 13:24-25). A sign of God’s judgment appears in the sky because the readers need to know that God is pouring out his judgment on wickedness at this time. It is as if creation is being reversed. We are seeing “de-creation”. God does this as he pours out his wrath on Jesus. He will start his new creation with the resurrection of Christ.

²⁶⁸ Jesus is quoting the first verse from Psalm 22. However, he is not thinking of just one verse. Jesus is almost certainly thinking of the entire Psalm. Based on Mark’s earlier references to this Psalm, it is clear Mark wants his readers to see Psalm 22 as connected to Jesus’ death.

²⁶⁹ Verses 35-36 demonstrate that those watching the crucifixion are confused. They don’t understand what is happening, even when Jesus points them to Psalm 22—a Psalm which clearly speaks of Christ’s crucifixion (and resurrection!). In the coming days, they will hear, from the mouths of the Apostles, a clear explanation of what is happening. See Acts 2:14-36, 3:11-26, and 4:1-22.

from top to bottom.²⁷⁰ **39** And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”²⁷¹

40 There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. **41** When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

42 And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, **43** Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.²⁷² **44** Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. **45** And when he learned from

²⁷⁰ At the precise moment of Jesus’ death, Mark moves from the scene of the crucifixion to the temple. He wants his readers to know that, at the precise moment of Jesus’ death, the curtain in the temple has been torn. This is not a coincidence. Mark wants his readers to connect Jesus’ death with the tearing of the curtain. The fact that the curtain is torn from the top demonstrates that heaven is the one tearing the curtain. This tearing signals the end of the temple’s ministry. It also signals the beginning of the age of the “new” temple, when people can boldly come into God’s presence through Christ. In regard to the curtain being “torn”, see the note at Mark 1:10.

²⁷¹ It is very significant that immediately after Jesus dies and the curtain in the temple is torn, a Gentile “sinner” professes that Jesus is the Son of God. The curtain was intended to keep unholy people from seeing and entering God’s presence. Immediately after the curtain is torn, a Gentile “sees” the Son of God with eyes of faith and gives him great praise. He is the only human in the book of Mark (aside from Mark himself in Mark 1:1) to use this title in reference to Jesus. The “tearing” of the curtain has opened the eyes of the blind! In regard to the title “Son of God”, see the note at Mark 1:1.

²⁷² Joseph is presented as someone who is “looking for the kingdom of God”. His desire for the kingdom of God has led him to the body of Jesus! Indeed, his desire for the kingdom of God seems to be the reason that he, unlike the other council members, looked on Jesus favorably, and “took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus”. This is similar to how both Simeon (see Luke 2:25-35) and Anna (see Luke 2:36-38) are described. Their desire for the kingdom of God led them, like Joseph, to the King!

the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.²⁷³

46 And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.²⁷⁴

MARK 16

1 When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.²⁷⁵ **2** And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. **3** And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” **4** And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. **5** And entering the tomb,²⁷⁶ they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. **6** And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You

²⁷³ Mark emphasizes the fact that Jesus is dead. The witnesses of Jesus’ death are from different “groups” of people: a Gentile centurion, Jewish women, a Jewish member of the council, and the Gentile Roman governor.

The centurion sees Jesus die, and, by the words he speaks at the time of his death, declares that Jesus is no longer living: “this man **was** the Son of God”. The women see Jesus die and see where he is laid. A respected member of the council, Joseph from Arimathea, acknowledges that Jesus is dead by asking for Jesus’ body. Pilate is unsure of Jesus’ death until he questions the centurion. After Pilate questions the centurion, Pilate demonstrates that he believes Jesus to be dead by giving his body to Joseph. The centurion testifies to Pilate that Jesus is dead. Mark also testifies that Jesus is dead by referring to Jesus’ body as a “corpse”. The gospel message requires the death of the Son of God.

²⁷⁴ Notice Mark’s emphasis on the women who witness Christ’s death and see his tomb. He clearly sees these women as significant in the story he is telling about the Son of God. Mark’s positive references to women are different from how other ancient cultures saw women. Mark’s words demonstrate that all people of faith in Christ are significant and welcome in the kingdom of God. See Galatians 3:28-29.

²⁷⁵ The women going to the tomb do not believe Jesus is alive. They still do not understand that Jesus will be raised. They want to anoint his body, which they believe is still in the tomb. The resurrection is a surprise to all of Jesus’ followers.

²⁷⁶ The reason the stone is rolled away is not to let Jesus out of the tomb. Rather, it is rolled away to let people into the tomb so that they might be witnesses to his resurrection.

seek Jesus of Nazareth,²⁷⁷ who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. **7** But go, tell his disciples and Peter²⁷⁸ that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”²⁷⁹ **8** And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ It is surprising, especially after the centurion calls Jesus the “Son of God”, that the angel speaks of Jesus using a very “earthly” title: “Jesus of Nazareth”. In fact, this is the last title for Jesus used in the book of Mark. By emphasizing Jesus’ earthly hometown (“Jesus of Nazareth”), the angel seems to be emphasizing that Jesus is, even after his death and resurrection, a real person. He has a real body and is a real man. He is not some sort of ghost. Christ’s resurrection is the guarantee that all those who are in him will also be raised. Like the first piece of fruit picked off a healthy fruit tree, Christ’s resurrected body is the first fruit (see 1 Corinthians 15:20) of the resurrection. The “first fruit” (Christ) is proof that all the rest of the “fruit” (those who are in Christ) will also be raised. Those who are in Christ will, like the resurrected Christ, have real bodies. See 1 Corinthians 15.

²⁷⁸ By specifically mentioning Peter, the young man is declaring that Peter has been forgiven for the sin of denying Christ. The Apostles, also, have been forgiven for the sin of fleeing.

²⁷⁹ Mark concluded the previous chapter by introducing his readers to witnesses to prove that Jesus had died. Mark concludes his book by introducing his readers to three different witnesses to prove that Jesus is alive. The first witness Mark presents is a group of women. It may seem surprising that Mark selects women to serve as the first human witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection. Women were, in the first century, not considered to be trustworthy witnesses in a trial. If Mark was inventing this story, it is not likely he would have chosen women as his first witnesses. He would have chosen men of high standing (certainly not former fishermen or tax collectors!), because they would be considered to be more “reliable” witnesses. But he did choose women because that is how the story truly happened (once again, Mark’s readers see that the kingdom of God does not operate like the world). These women have the honor of being the first human witnesses of Christ’s resurrection! But they aren’t the only witnesses Mark presents. He also presents the empty tomb. The emptiness of the tomb also testifies that Jesus is alive. Mark’s final witness is a “young man ... dressed in a white robe”. Mark wants his readers to think hard about the identity of this “young man”. Why is this “young man” in the tomb? How did he get there? Where does he come from? Why does he know all about Jesus and what he is about to do? Clearly, this “young man” is an angel sent from heaven to help the people on earth. He isn’t sent to raise Jesus from the dead. He is sent as a witness to his life! Mark provides a very small sample of the witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection. These witnesses are enough, however, for everyone to believe. Paul refers to other witnesses of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8. There is no excuse for anyone to doubt the resurrection.

²⁸⁰ Fear is a response frequently seen in Mark. See 4:41, 5:15, 33, 36, 6:50, 9:6, and 32.

[Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9–20.]²⁸¹

9 [[Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.

10 She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. **11** But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

12 After these things he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. **13** And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

14 Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. **15** And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole 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 cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; **18** they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

²⁸¹ Verses 9-20 are not likely part of Mark's original gospel. Factors leading scholars to question the authenticity of verses 9-20 include: (1) some of the earliest and best Greek manuscripts of Mark (the gospel was originally written in Greek) end at verse 8, (2) some of the Greek manuscripts that do include verses 9-20 include a note indicating that these verses are not original, (3) some ancient Greek “fathers” (these scholars and pastors lived after the time of the Apostles) commenting on Mark do not seem to know of these additional verses, (4) the writing style in verses 9-20 is very different from the rest of Mark. For these reasons, verses 9-20 are probably not part of Mark's original writing.

Verses 9-20 may have been “added” because verse 8 seems to be a very abrupt ending to Mark's book. But it is possible that the “abrupt ending” at verse 8 is how Mark wanted to end this book. The ending is quite powerful. Mark tells his readers that the stone has been rolled away. We see the women enter into the empty tomb. We hear the angel testify that Jesus is alive. This gospel ends with the women leaving the tomb, afraid because they do not know what will happen to them as a result of Jesus' resurrection. They do not see Jesus himself. Instead, they need to believe the testimony from heaven about his resurrection. Those who follow Christ now are like the women in Mark. We do not see Jesus himself. Instead, we need to believe the testimony from heaven about his resurrection. We need to place our faith in a resurrection that we haven't seen.

Mark hasn't, in all likelihood, cut the story short. His purpose was to tell the story of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mark 1:1). He has, with the resurrection, told that story. His purpose wasn't to tell the story of what happened to Jesus' followers after his resurrection. That story is still being written.

MARK 16

19 So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. **20** And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.]]

NOTES



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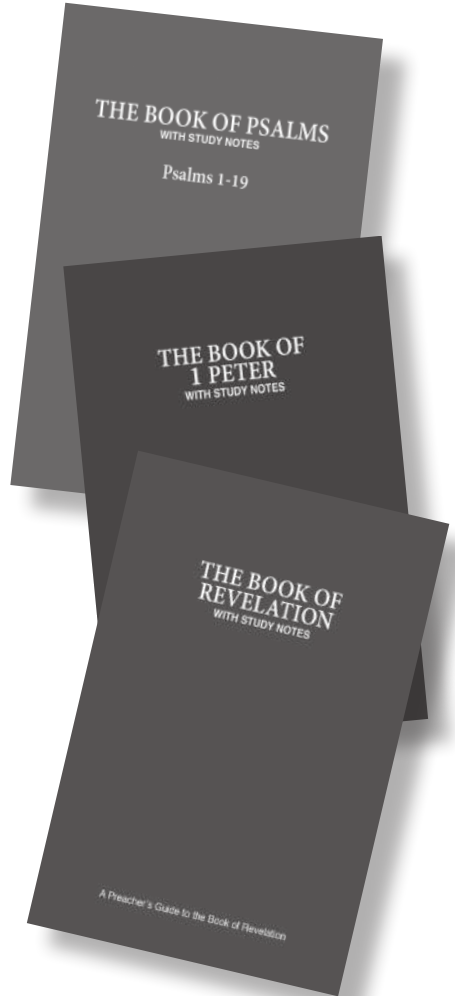
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