

JESUS CHRIST:

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

An Inductive study of the Gospel of Mark

by

O. William Cooper

**This book is intended to be used for the furtherance of
the Gospel of Christ.
It is not for sale or resale.
All rights reserved.**

JESUS CHRIST:

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

An Inductive study of the Gospel of Mark

by

Dr. O. William Cooper

Copyright © 1990-2002 by Logos Ministries, Inc.
4742 Westbury Drive
Fort Collins, CO 80526

Second Edition – June 1994
Third Edition – June 2002

Scriptures quoted in **The Gospel of Mark** are from "The Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION, Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers."

Some of the maps in this study have been adapted from "PC Bible Atlas for Windows" software, Copyright 1993, Parsons Technology, Inc. Used by permission of Parsons Technology, Inc., Hiawatha, Iowa.

**This book is intended to be used for the furtherance of
the Gospel of Christ.
It is not for sale or resale.
All rights reserved.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
TABLE OF MAPS	iv
TABLE OF PICTURES	iv
TABLE OF DIAGRAMS	iv
LESSON 1 - THE INTRODUCTION	1
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 1	8
CHAPTER TITLES FOR THE BOOK OF MARK	9
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 2	11
LESSON 2 – MARK 1:1-45	15
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 3	27
LESSON 3: – MARK 2:1-28	29
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 4	37
LESSON 4: – MARK 3:1-35	39
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 5	45
LESSON 5: – MARK 4:1-41	47
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 6	55
LESSON 6: – MARK 5:1-43	57
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 7	63
LESSON 7: – MARK 6:1-56	65
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 8	73
LESSON 8: – MARK 7:1-37	75
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 9	79
LESSON 9: – MARK 8:1-9:1	81
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 10	87
LESSON 10: – MARK 9:2-50	89
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 11	101
LESSON 11: – MARK 10:1-52	103
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 12	112
LESSON 12 – MARK 11:1-33	115
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 13	123
LESSON 13: – MARK 12:1-44	125
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 14	135
LESSON 14: – MARK 13:1-37	137
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 15	145
LESSON 15: – MARK 14:1-72	147
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 16	163
LESSON 16: – MARK 15:1-47	167
QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 17	179
LESSON 17: – MARK 16:1-20	181
CONCLUSION	189
OTHER BOOKS WRITTEN BY DR. COOPER:	191

TABLE OF MAPS

Map 1: The Route Jews took from Galilee to Jerusalem	13
Map 2: These Events happened at Capernaum	26
Map 3: The Home Regions of Jesus' Hearers	36
Map 4: The Country of the Gerasenes	56
Map 5: Jesus Taught from Tyre to the Decapolis	74
Map 6: Jesus moved from Galilee to Judea	88

TABLE OF PICTURES

Picture 1: The Wilderness of Temptation	20
Picture 2: A Wilderness Stream	20
Picture 3: Lamps like those Jesus Mentioned	50
Picture 4: Relief Map of the Sea of Galilee	53
Picture 5: A Watchtower	125
Picture 6: Dominus Flevit Church	156

TABLE OF DIAGRAMS

Diagram 1: The Temple as it was in Jesus' Day	113
Diagram 2: The Inner Area of the Temple	122
Diagram 3: Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives	136
Diagram 4: Locations for Jesus' Arrest and Trial	144
Diagram 5: The Locations of the Sanhedrin and the Praetorium	165
Diagram 6: The Location of the Tomb and the Upper Room	178

LESSON 1 - THE INTRODUCTION

This is a study of the Gospel of Mark. We want to reflect upon this book to discover what God is saying to us through this author. In Acts 17:11, the Christians in Berea were exemplary in that they searched the Scriptures daily, seeking to discover the will of God. In David's great hymn concerning the Scriptures, Psalm 119, he wrote, "Mine eyes anticipated the night watches, that I might meditate on thy word." The word "**meditate**" means "to pour over," to examine with extreme care. The early Jewish people did not have personal copies of the Old Testament, so they would daily sit and reflect upon the many passages they had been required to commit to memory as children. We want to search the scriptures; we want to meditate "to pour over" the scriptures in our minds. We want our lives also to be exemplary.

In this session together, we will seek to discover the message God has given us in the Scriptures. We will focus our attention on a study of the Gospel of Mark. Repeatedly, through this study, we will ask ourselves, what is the author saying to us in this book? We will ask questions as a way to penetrate to the core of the message of the Gospel of Mark.

This study has been designed in such a way that you can approach it from one of two ways. You can read the body of the text and hopefully the portion of Scripture will take on new meaning and life for you as you study with us. We will attempt to help you see the message through the eyes of the author. The second approach is that you can answer the questions found in the marked pages which precede the interpretation of the text. This will enable you to compare your observations with ours.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE GOSPELS

Did you ever wonder why we have four different Gospel records? Anyone who has studied the Gospel records, even casually, knows that the four Gospel records are quite different, though they have much in common. Each of the four has a different writing style. Each Gospel record has some words or phrases which are characteristic to its particular author. One of the trademarks of the Gospel of Mark is the use of the words "immediately" and "and."

Each Gospel record uses the Greek language in a slightly different way. Mark used a very unpretentious form of the language. The author of John, however, used words which are much more complex. There are more compound words in John than in Mark. Mark uses a very simple uncomplicated style of writing, whereas the Gospel of John is more complex and penetrating in its style.

Did it ever bother you that the Gospel writers made no real effort to be identical in their presentations? Look at the opening of each Gospel. Matthew begins with a genealogy of Jesus. Mark, on the other hand, begins with John the Baptist's preaching and Jesus' baptism. Luke includes a genealogy, but from a slightly different perspective than Matthew. Luke begins as a letter promising to help the Greek reader to discover the certainty concerning the things in which he had been instructed. John, on the other hand, begins in a very philosophic way.

Notice the way each Gospel writer concludes his work:

- Matthew ends with the great commission.

JESUS CHRIST: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

- Mark concludes with the ascension of Jesus.
- Luke concludes with the ascension and then reports that the apostles were praising God in the temple.
- John ends his Gospel with Jesus' rebuke of Peter for his unwarranted concern for John's future. John then closes with the fact that if all the details of Jesus' life were given, the world would not contain the necessary books.

Each Gospel has a different author who represents a different level of intelligence and training. The age difference between Mark and John would be obvious in their way of writing, and it is. The background of each writer is also different. One would expect a physician to see and write from a different perspective than a tax collector or a fisherman.

II. THE FOCUS OF EACH GOSPEL RECORD

A. THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Matthew appears to have been written to Jewish readers. In the opening chapters, careful attention is paid to the fact that Jesus was a descendant from Abraham through David. This would be particularly important to a Jewish reader, but not nearly as important to the average Gentile. Matthew focuses attention upon Jesus as the **KING**. The Sermon on the Mount, most prominent in Matthew, has many references to the kingdom. The kingdom idea is dealt with repeatedly in the rest of Matthew's Gospel.

B. THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke helps us out a bit. He identified a specific Gentile, named Theophilus, as the recipient of his writing. As a physician, it is not surprising that he would focus attention on the **HUMANITY** of Jesus. The phrase "Son of man" was used repeatedly throughout the book.

C. THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John wrote for a Jewish audience. It is not surprising that he focuses our attention on the **DEITY** of Jesus. This Gospel contains a number of word pictures of Jesus as the Shepherd, the Door, the Light of the world, the Great Physician, etc.

D. THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Mark is probably the earliest of the Gospel records. He stressed the **SERVANTHOOD** of Jesus. This Gospel contains no genealogy, but that is not surprising. The genealogy of a king is very important, but the genealogy of a servant no one would read. It is fair to assume that Mark wrote the book, but he had to receive information from other sources because he was not present for many of the events which he records as if they were being seen first hand. The Gospel of Mark was written for a Gentile audience. Mark explains things that a Jewish reader would understand without explanation - i.e. he told us what "the day of preparation" means. It has been suggested that this Gospel was written to be read by the Roman Christians. The truth is that we do not know.

III. THE AUTHOR OF MARK

We know that Mark was a third generation Christian and the nephew of Barnabas. Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on a missionary journey, but left them and went home when the going became too heated for his liking. This was a source of friction between Barnabas and Paul when Barnabas wanted to take Mark on another journey. Paul and Barnabas separated over this issue and each went in a different direction. Mark is next seen in Rome, with Paul, at the time the book of Colossians was written.

Tradition has it that Mark received his information from Peter. If that is true, one needs to ask, why didn't Peter write his own Gospel record? We are not really sure. We know that Peter was deeply upset over the fact that he had denied knowing Jesus. Some authors believe that Peter was reluctant to affix his name to a Gospel account because of his unfaithfulness. Again, the truth is that we do not really know. It may be that Peter dictated the material and Mark served as a scribe for him. This Gospel is particularly severe on the failures of Peter. There is no doubt, however, that Mark was recording some information that was not first hand for him.

IV. INDUCTIVE STUDY

As we begin this study of the Gospel of Mark, we need to note that we will be using what is called **INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY**. It is not pouring one's own interpretation into the text, but letting the text speak for itself. Very often, the way a message is written carries as much meaning as the message itself.

We will focus on three parts of Inductive Bible Study:

- Observation - Discovering what the book/passage says
- Interpretation - Discovering what the book/passage means by what it says
- Application - applying what the book says to our lives.

In the course of this study, we will attempt to focus our attention on each of these parts.

V. AN OVERVIEW OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Any good book will contain a host of words, but it will contain only one simple idea. When you study a book, one of the things you must do is discover that important, simple idea. This is precisely what we want to do as we study the Gospel of Mark together. In order to accomplish this goal, we will use several means in order to find out just what it is Mark was trying to tell us about Jesus.

The study of a good book is a lot like observing a beautiful flower. You enjoy it from a distance as long as you continue to discover different features about the flower:

- The location of the flower in the yard
- The general color of the flower
- The size of the flower
- The shape of the flower
- The direction in which the blossom points
- The shading of the petals.

Eventually, however, as you come right up close, you observe intricate details about individual petals and their shape which you could not see from a distance. That is exactly how we begin a study of the book of Mark. We will make observations about the book as a whole before we begin to look intricately at individual chapters, paragraphs, sentences and words. We are going to assume that we know nothing about the Gospel of Mark.

When you read a good book, it is a good idea to read the preface before you begin with chapter one. When reading the Bible, however, there is no preface to read. You can solve that problem by writing your own preface. In order to do that, you will need some general information. The things that we will do in this session should give you the information you need to write a brief preface to the Gospel of Mark.

We will begin this overview process by reading the book casually. It is good to just sit down and read the whole book of Mark in an hour or less. You will come away with some interesting impressions. Some of the information I have shared with you already was gained in this manner. After reading the book in one sitting, then read it again a chapter at a time. It is helpful to summarize each chapter in seven words or less. When you have done this for the whole book, you will be able to study the list and it will give you even more information than you found before. It is not important that you have the same titles as I have, but they need to summarize what you found when you read the chapter. Only after we have gone through this process are we really ready to study the book itself.

As you read chapter one, you become aware of the fact that Mark was describing the way Jesus' ministry began. I entitled chapter one - **THE BEGINNING OF JESUS' MINISTRY.**

In chapter two, I discovered Jesus changing the lives of people. I gave chapter two the title - **JESUS CHANGED LIVES - HEAL PARALYTIC, CALL OF LEVI.**

As I read chapter three, I noticed that there was some strong opposition to Jesus' teaching. I used the title, **INTENSE OPPOSITION BEGINS.**

In chapter four, Jesus was busy teaching parables about the kingdom of God. I gave it the title, **PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

Chapter five is the story of Jesus healing three people. I used the title, **JESUS HEALED THREE PEOPLE - DEMONIAK, WOMAN WITH ISSUE OF BLOOD, JAIRUS' DAUGHTER.**

In chapter six, I found two things - the obvious rejection of Jesus on the one hand and miracles that Jesus performed on the other. I gave this chapter the title, **JESUS' REJECTION AND MIRACLES.**

In chapter seven Jesus performed a healing in the city of Tyre. Naturally, I gave this chapter the title, **HEALING IN TYRE.**

In chapter eight, there are miracles which point to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah. For this reason, I gave this chapter the title, **MIRACLES POINTING TO THE MESSIAH.**

INTRODUCTION

Chapter nine contains specific teaching concerning the passion and resurrection of Jesus. I gave this chapter the title, **TEACHING OF JESUS' PASSION AND RESURRECTION**.

In chapter ten, Jesus taught His disciples about the perils of riches and power. I gave this chapter the title, **PERILS OF RICHES AND POWER**.

In chapter eleven, you have the emotionally charged Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. I gave this chapter the title, **TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM**.

In chapter twelve, Jesus invaded the turf of His enemies and they were not happy with that action. I gave this chapter the title, **RELIGIOUS ENEMIES ATTACK JESUS**.

In the midst of the struggle with religious leaders, Jesus took time out to teach His disciples about the events of the end times. The title I gave to chapter thirteen was, **JESUS TEACHES DISCIPLES ABOUT END TIMES**.

In chapter 14, the events begin to quicken. Jesus was betrayed by Judas and denied by Peter. Jesus was arrested and brought to a mock trial by the religious leaders. I gave this chapter the title, **BETRAYAL, DENIAL AND TRIAL OF JESUS**.

In chapter fifteen the trial continued, but it was quickly followed by the crucifixion and burial of Jesus. I gave this chapter the title, **TRIAL, DEATH AND BURIAL OF JESUS**.

Chapter sixteen is a bit different from the rest of the book. It deals with the resurrection. I gave this chapter the title, **THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS**.

Now just stop for a minute and ask yourself, what observations can I make about the book of Mark?

1. This book does not try to give every detail. The author is very selective about what is mentioned and what is omitted. He is giving more of a general impression than a specific history of events.
2. This book is fast moving; it focuses on action. The words "and immediately" are used at least 16 times.
3. The ministry of Jesus stressed the miraculous.
4. This is a confrontational book. Jesus and the religious leadership, in the Gospel of Mark, seem bent on confronting each other with their opposing views.
5. Jesus' enemies are the religious leaders of Israel.
6. The book deals with the ministry of Jesus more than it does with the life of Jesus. The book spotlights the final week of Jesus' life.
7. It appears that the book moves toward a climax in the resurrection of Jesus.

8. There are two major sections of the book:

- a. Chapters 1 - 9
- b. Chapters 10 - 16

Now we have completed an overview of the book. This will become the foundation of everything we do in our study of the Gospel of Mark.

While doing this overview, I became aware of the places mentioned in the book. I wondered just what the significance of this information might be. I decided to read the book again to discover just what locations were identified. As we go through this, you may want to write these locations down for further reference.

Chapter one takes place in the Judean wilderness and then in Galilee. Chapters two through five take place around the Sea of Galilee. Chapter six takes place in the villages around Jesus' home. Chapter seven takes place in Tyre, Sidon and other parts of Galilee. Chapter eight takes place in Bethsaida and Caesarea Philippi, both of which are in the Galilean area. Chapter nine takes place on the Mount of Transfiguration, in Capernaum and elsewhere in Galilee.

Chapter ten moves south to the borders of Judea, beyond Jordan, on the way to Jerusalem. Chapter eleven takes place in Bethphage, Bethany, the Mount of Olives and in Jerusalem. Chapters twelve and thirteen take place in the temple in Jerusalem. Chapter fourteen takes place in Bethany, the upper room, the Mount of Olives, Gethsemane and before the Sanhedrin. Chapter fifteen also takes place in Jerusalem, at the Praetorium, at Golgotha and the tomb. Chapter sixteen also takes place in Jerusalem, the road to Emmaus, and the Mount of Ascension.

Having studied the book to see where things happen, what did you find? As I studied my notes, I noticed that chapters one through nine take place in Galilee, in the north. Chapters ten through sixteen, however, take place in and around Jerusalem, in the south. It is not clear yet what this tells us, but it is a significant piece of information and we will want to refer to it again later in our study. The final 44% of the book, chapters ten through sixteen, take place in and around one city - Jerusalem. This part of the book is the focal point of the entire writing.

While I was giving each chapter a title, I was also becoming alert to the general time designations in the Gospel of Mark. The book opens at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. I also noticed that the book closes with the Ascension. This means that the book, in total, covers approximately three and one half years. As I looked more closely, I discovered that chapters one through nine cover roughly three and one half years. Chapters ten through sixteen, on the other hand, cover just about one week. It is clear that there is a specific focus on these closing chapters of the book both from the standpoint of time as well as location. We do not have enough information, as yet, to indicate just how important this is, but it is significant. We must watch to discern, later, the hints about the meaning of this information.

Again, while giving titles to the chapters, I noticed that there were repeated references to Jesus' teaching and to his actions. I decided to read the book again just to see what I could find out about that. You may want to take notes About what you found.

In chapter one, Jesus was healing and praying. In chapter two, Jesus performed another healing and did some teaching. In chapter three, Jesus healed the withered hand, among other miracles and did some teaching. In chapter four, Jesus taught the parables of the

INTRODUCTION

Sower and the Mustard Seed. In chapter five, Jesus healed the Demoniac, the woman with an issue of blood and Jairus' daughter. In chapter six, Jesus preached in His own country, healed the sick, did some teaching and fed the 5,000. In chapter seven, there was a serious conflict with the pharisees and a healing in Tyre. In chapter eight, Jesus fed the 4,000, he healed the blind man and did some teaching. In chapter nine, Jesus was teaching about His passion and resurrection. In chapter ten, Jesus was also teaching about divorce and the use of power. In chapter eleven, Jesus took part in the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the temple. In chapter twelve, Jesus taught the parable of the vineyard, the issue of tribute and about whose wife a woman will be in the resurrection, as well as the greatest commandment. In chapter thirteen, Mark portrays Jesus teaching His disciples. In chapter fourteen, Jesus was betrayed, denied and placed on trial. In chapter fifteen, Jesus was standing trial, died and was buried. In chapter sixteen, Jesus rose from the dead.

Having completed this observation concerning Jesus' teaching versus His actions, we need to make some observations from the search. First, in eleven of the sixteen chapters, Jesus performed some kind of service. This is nearly 69% of the book given over to His actions. On the other hand, in only eight of the sixteen chapters, Jesus was teaching either the disciples or the crowds. This is only 50% of the chapters. It is clear that Mark has placed a deliberate emphasis on Jesus as a servant. Action, rather than teaching, is clearly the emphasis of this book. One of the most common phrases in the book is, "and immediately..." These pieces of information have a serious impact upon our understanding of the whole book. The message of the entire Gospel must be seen in the light of these observations.

As a result of our general observations of the whole book, there are some things I want to be sure to remember. The emphasis of this book is clearly upon the servant actions of Jesus. Everything appears to move toward the very last chapters of the book. The opening chapters clearly prepare us for the emphasis on the time spent in Jerusalem from chapters ten through sixteen. As we continue the search for information concerning the book of Mark, we will need to discover what it is that Mark was trying to lead up to in the closing chapters.

Now I would like to invite you to take the lesson questions following this introduction and the questions which precede each lesson in this commentary and do the study for yourself. I would encourage you to be careful not to use the chapter titles that I have used. Let the text speak to you.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 1

THE INTRODUCTION

1. **Read** the Gospel of Mark through in less than an hour.
 - a. What general impressions do you have of the writing?
 - b. What general emphasis can you detect in the book?
2. **Read** the Gospel of Mark, chapter by chapter. Upon reading each chapter, summarize the content of each in seven words or less. Record your summary on the following table.
3. **Study** your summaries to see what information you can gather concerning the book as a whole.
4. **Scan** the Gospel of Mark looking for time designations. Record your findings, chapter by chapter. Study your findings. What did you learn?
5. **Scan** the Gospel of Mark looking for geographical locations. Record your findings chapter by chapter. Study these findings. What did you learn?

CHAPTER TITLES FOR THE BOOK OF MARK

Mark 1	
Mark 2	
Mark 3	
Mark 4	
Mark 5	
Mark 6	
Mark 7	
Mark 8	
Mark 9	
Mark 10	
Mark 11	
Mark 12	
Mark 13	
Mark 14	
Mark 15	
Mark 16	

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 2

THE BEGINNING OF JESUS' MINISTRY

MARK 1:1 – 45

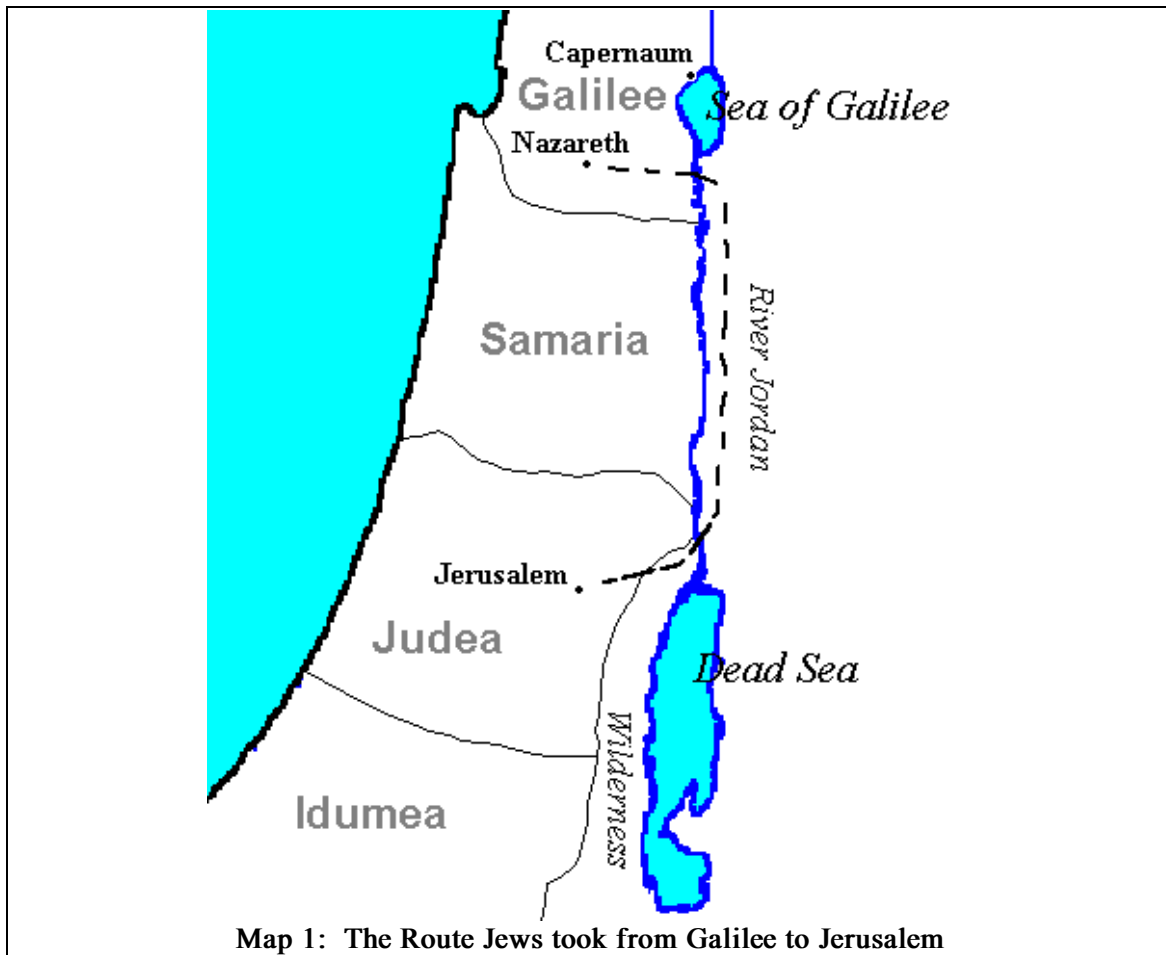
1. In the best Greek manuscripts there are eleven paragraphs in this passage. Please read each paragraph carefully. On the table below, write a title, of seven words or less, for each of these paragraphs. The paragraphs are as follows:

Mark 1:1-3	
Mark 1:4-8	
Mark 1:9-11	
Mark 1:12, 13	
Mark 1:14, 15	
Mark 1:16-20	
Mark 1:21-28	
Mark 1:29-31	
Mark 1:32-34	
Mark 1:35-39	
Mark 1:40-45	

2. Read Mark 1:1-3 carefully. Now read Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. Now read Mark 1:1-3 again. What did you discover? Why would Mark find it necessary to quote from two Old Testament sources at this point?
3. In view of what you read in Malachi and Isaiah, what is the significance of the message about John the Baptist in Mark 1:4-8?
4. In Mark 1:9-13, there is a contrast between the way the Father and Satan view Jesus.
 - a. Record what you find.
 - b. Again, read Mark 1:9-13 in view of Mark's quotation from Malachi and Isaiah, as recorded in Mark 1:2,3. What did you discover?
5. In Mark 1:14,15 Mark summarizes Jesus' message as He began His ministry. How would **you** summarize this message?
6. Read Mark 1:16-20. What observations can you make from what you read? What does Mark tell you about these people?
7. There are two themes in Mark 1:21-28:
 - a. Jesus' teaching in the Synagogue.
 - b. The confrontation with the man possessed with a demon. What does each contribute to our understanding of the other theme?
8. In two paragraphs, Mark 1:29-31 and Mark 1:32-34, Mark talks about the healing ministry of Jesus. In Mark 1:29-31, Mark tells of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. What facts can you find in this paragraph? In Mark 1:32-34, Mark tells of the multitude of the sick brought to Jesus. Why would Jesus command the demons not to speak?
9. Early the next morning, after these healing experiences, Jesus went to a desolate place to pray. There is a contrast between His thinking and that of the disciples' concerning the response to popularity. Write down what the paragraph indicates about both positions.

JESUS CHRIST: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

10. Chapters 13 and 14 of Leviticus deal with the dread disease of leprosy. Read these chapters and then study Mark 1:40-45. What did you learn about leprosy? What did you learn about the leper in this passage? What did you discover about Jesus in relation to leprosy and the leper?
11. Choose a verse, from this passage, that is most meaningful to you. Memorize the verse.
12. As you reflect upon this chapter, what specific things will you do to make your Christian life more like that of Jesus?



LESSON 2 – MARK 1:1-45

THE BEGINNING OF JESUS' MINISTRY

INTRODUCTION

In our best Greek text, this chapter is made up of eleven paragraphs. They are as follows:

Mark 1:1-3	The Introduction
Mark 1:4-8	John the Baptist Preaches
Mark 1:9-11	The Baptism of Jesus
Mark 1:12, 13	The Temptation of Jesus
Mark 1:14, 15	The Introduction to Jesus' Ministry
Mark 1:16-20	Jesus called Simon, Andrew, James and John
Mark 1:21-28	Jesus Teaches in Capernaum
Mark 1:29-31	The Healing of Peter's Mother-in-law
Mark 1:32-34	Jesus Healed the Sick
Mark 1:35-39	Jesus Prayed in a Solitary Place
Mark 1:40-45	Jesus Cleansed the Leper

MARK 1:1-3 THE INTRODUCTION

MARK 1:1 THE ANNOUNCED PURPOSE OF WRITING.

The opening statement in several books of the Bible give you a clue as to what the author is trying to accomplish in the writing. The way the Gospel of Mark begins causes one to wonder if that is what the author is trying to say with these words. Look at what Mark says,

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Mark 1:1

The word "beginning" has at least two meanings. In this instance, that is important. The root word primarily means something of worth; the essence of the issue. The word was also used to indicate the origin, the cause of that which is being discussed. There is a measure of both meanings in the use of this word in 1:1. Mark gave the essence of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is also a sense in which Mark is giving the origin, or cause, behind the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whatever the author's intent, it is clear that in the following chapters he will discuss the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As you study the book, you need to continue to reflect upon this statement to see whether this is what Mark is doing. If this is the case, then there will be recurring pieces of information that help us to understand what he meant when he described the Lord as "Jesus Christ, the Son of God." We will return to this phrase when we come to the end of our study.

MARK 1:2, 3 - THE QUOTATION FROM ISAIAH

Did you ever wonder why so many New Testament writers quoted from the Old Testament so often? They used quotations from the Old Testament to give credence to the ideas they were trying to convey. They also quoted from the Old Testament because Jews

considered these Scriptures so sacred that they could not be questioned or contested. Thus, a quotation from the Old Testament became information which the authors' enemies could not refute. Mark wrote only one sentence before he felt that need. Notice his introduction to the quotation.

It is written in Isaiah the prophet. Mark 1:2

This statement means that the quote which follows is going to give information which substantiates the affirmation with which Mark begins the Gospel record. The quotation is an illustration of what had been said in times past.

Verse 2 begins with the statement, "It is written in Isaiah the prophet." The words which follow that statement, however, do not appear in the book of Isaiah. They are found in Malachi. If this is true, then why did Mark speak about Isaiah?

Mark 1:2 is a quotation from Malachi 3:1. Mark 1:3 is a quotation from Isaiah 40:3. Read verses two and three together. Even though they are taken from two different prophets, they are speaking to the same issue. This is frequently done by New Testament writers for very good reasons. Turn to Matthew 18:16. Jesus was talking about a brother who will not listen when you discuss trouble you have with him. Jesus said,

But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. Matthew 18:16

It was understood, in their culture, that the testimony of two or more witnesses was required to establish the legal validity of a statement.

Mark's quote from Malachi describes a picture of what would happen when a king was traveling. A messenger was sent ahead of the king and his associates to let people know that the king was coming and to make the appropriate preparations.

Mark's quote from Isaiah 40:3 suggests the same kind of message,

A voice of one calling: In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Isaiah 40:3

This, too, is a picture of the herald, who was sent ahead of the king and his consorts, to cry out so that everyone would know that the king was indeed coming. Paved roads were rare. Workers were sent ahead to smooth out the road ahead of the king so that he could pass comfortably.

This should remind us that Mark is pointing out the royal position of Jesus.

MARK 1:4-8 JOHN THE BAPTIST PREACHES

a. Verse 4-8 Illustration of Verses 2,3 - John is the Crier.

The previous quotations establish the fact that the king is preceded by heralds and workers who announce his coming and prepare the way. Mark, in verses four through eight, shows how this happened in the life of Jesus.

b. Verse 4 The Significance of Preaching the Baptism of Repentance unto Remission of Sins.

Mark records that John the Baptist was baptizing in the wilderness. We have a certain mental image about what a wilderness would be like. There was a great wilderness to the East of Jerusalem which reaches beyond the River Jordan. It is thought by some scholars

that the place of which Mark speaks is Northeast of Jerusalem, on the East side of the Jordan. The map on page 13 will give an impression of the area.

John preached the baptism of repentance. This is a way of saying that the object of his preaching was to call the people to repentance of their sins. The direction of this preaching was to release these guilty, rebellious people from their sins.

c. Verse 5 The Significance of John's Preaching

Mark said, in verse five,

"The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River."
Mark 1:5

Judea and Jerusalem were set apart as a very special place; the location where God dwelt in the midst of His people. As happened so often, the people abandoned the plan of God and fell into serious rebellion and disobedience.

Often, people do not realize the pressure under which John the Baptist ministered. Several pieces of information may put this into perspective for us.

1) Origin of the Listeners - Mark identifies the area from which the people came to listen to John's preaching.

The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Mark 1:5a

Luke chapter one indicates that Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was a priest of the course of Abijah. This division of the priesthood took their turn serving at the altar of the temple in Jerusalem. Luke 1:39 also tells us that Mary visited Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, in a city of Judah in the hill country. The name of this city is not identified. This means that John the Baptist was preaching a very severe message to people from the area of Israel in which he had grown up. John was also preaching to the people from the very center of the religious life of Israel. His message was that they were sinners and needed to repent of their evil. We do not know just how long John the Baptist preached, but it had to be for quite some time. If you keep in mind that the only transportation for the common Jew was walking, it took two days for them to travel to where John was preaching **after** they had heard about him. And for the people to come from Jerusalem, it was also a long walk. Therefore, we can conclude that John the Baptist was a powerful, convincing preacher with a great following. Two possible sites identify the wilderness place, to which the people came to hear John preach:

- A site on the West bank of the Jordan, immediately North of the place where the Jordan empties into the Dead Sea. An Orthodox church marks this site today.
- A second site is located just East of the Jordan, on a tributary which feeds into the Jordan River several miles North and East of Jerusalem.

2) What They Confessed

Mark tells us that the people came out to hear John preach. They were baptized in the Jordan River confessing their sins. Baptism did not originate in the Christian faith. It was a ritual used by the Jews to affirm a Gentile's adherence to the Jewish faith. It is used, in

this instance, to announce that the persons being baptized were making a public confession of their sins.

d. Verse 6 John's Decorum

- 1) John's Clothes - It is not accidental that Mark tells us what John the Baptist wore. John wore a garment made of camel's hair and a leather girdle, or belt. The Jews, who saw him, would immediately be reminded of two things
 - II Kings 1:8 indicates that this was the attire of the prophet Elijah. This is very important because the Jews knew that the Messiah would be preceded by Elijah.
 - This attire was also the clothing of the poorest of the poor. It was rough and anything but luxurious.
- 2) John's Diet - Mark also tells us that John ate locusts and wild honey. That is not the most appetizing meal we have ever heard described, but not uncommon in that area and time. The Arabs were known to make a delicacy from the locusts. We should be reminded that the book of Leviticus includes the locust among the foods which they were permitted to eat. The same word for locust was sometimes used to describe a nut we now call the carob. The important thing about this diet was the fact that it was the daily fare of the poorest of the poor.

e. Verse 7,8 John's Message

1) Verse 7 Jesus' Worthiness

In verses seven and eight, Mark gives a brief summary of the message preached by John the Baptist. John talked about Jesus. John gave his hearers a promise: there was one coming after him that was far greater than John himself. John stressed this fact by making a contrast. He taught that he was not worthy to loosen the thongs of Jesus' shoes. This is a significant statement because the responsibility of removing a visitor's sandals was given to the very lowest slave in the household. These people had come out to hear John as an outstanding preacher, but Jesus was so great that John was not worthy to take the responsibility of the lowest slave on Jesus' behalf.

2) Verse 8 Contrast in Baptisms

In verse eight, John makes a strong contrast between his baptism and that of Jesus. Look at what he said. He begins by identifying his own baptism. It was a baptism with **water**. Water baptism was commonly used as a symbol of purification and to announce to the Jewish faithful that a Gentile had requested to become an adherent to the Jewish faith. John was saying, my baptism is an announcement that these persons have confessed their sins.

On the other hand, John told them that Jesus would baptize them with the **Holy Spirit**. This is not a ceremony, but an enabling. The baptism with water was to make an announcement. The baptism with the Holy Spirit was to enable them for the task of ministry.

The herald always announced the coming of the king, as illustrated in verses two and three. In the same manner, John the Baptist announced the coming of the eternal king by saying, one is coming after me and he is so great that I am not worthy to perform the lowly

servant task of removing his sandals. With this announcement of the coming of the king, Mark immediately speaks of the coming of Jesus.

MARK 1:9-11 THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Notice how Mark begins the paragraph. Repeatedly throughout the book, he begins a paragraph with the word "and". It conveys an atmosphere of urgency; a sense of being an eyewitness report.

Jesus left Nazareth, in Galilee, and came to the Jordan to be baptized by John. This baptism did not suggest that Jesus had confessed His sins, because He had not sinned. It was an announcement of His sinlessness as He begins His public ministry. He begins by announcing that sin is **not** present in His life.

Matthew, chapter three, includes an account of a discussion between John and Jesus about who should baptize whom. Characteristically, Mark has no time for details, but simply gives the news flash account of the events.

Notice, in verses 10 and 11, Mark describes what many preachers refer to as an action of the Trinity. As Jesus came out of the Jordan, He saw the heavens torn asunder. This is the same word Luke used, in Luke 23:45, to tell that the veil of the temple was ripped from top to bottom. When the heavens opened, Mark indicates that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, as a dove would descend. I believe this simile was intentionally chosen. The dove is a symbol of both purity and gentleness. John had come in much the same way as the prophets, who had proclaimed the harsh message of judgment. By contrast, Jesus had come with the gentleness and purity that befits the beautiful dove.

Notice, in verse 11, Mark identifies the ministry of God, the Father, in this symphony of the Trinity. God, the Father, spoke from the heavens. God did not speak to the crowds saying, "**THIS** is my Son." The Father spoke directly to Jesus saying, "**you** are my Son." The Father went on to affirm the pure gentleness of Jesus, saying, "with you I am well pleased." What better credentials could one have for his/her ministry than for God, the Father, to say, "with you I am well pleased."

As you study this passage, you will note the obvious presence of the Trinity. **Jesus** was present in human form. The **Holy Spirit** was present in the form of a dove. **God the Father** was present in an audible voice.

MARK 1:12,13 THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Look at verse 12. Matthew tells us that Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit "**being tempted.**" Matthew is identifying the purpose of the Spirit, leading Jesus into the wilderness. Mark, on the other hand, just says that the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness. It is interesting that the word Mark used for "drove" is exactly the same word Luke used to describe Jesus' purging the temple of money changers.

JESUS CHRIST: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

I would like for you to get an idea of the wilderness. To us it seems uninhabitable, a desert. Truthfully, it was inhabited in that time, to a certain degree, and still is today. But there are barren, high mountains and precipitous valleys.



Picture 1: The Wilderness of

When I first saw the area, I was certain no one could survive there without outside help. Within a few minutes I encountered a young boy shepherding a large herd of sheep and goats. He was well fed and not at all hesitant about this barren area. The animals that he shepherded were in good health and surviving quite nicely on what appeared to be nothing. I wondered where they would find water. Soon I saw

a little stream flowing. As I made my way through the area I encountered several wild animals of the rodent family as well as others. These animals lived in the area all the time. This is a picture of the area where many scholars believe Jesus was tempted by Satan. As far as you can see, it is bleak. You wonder how Jesus could survive here for 40 days. Today there is an Orthodox monastery in the same area. These priests will spend their whole lives in this remote place. Shepherds graze their sheep and goats in this steep, almost barren wasteland.



Picture 2: A Wilderness Stream

Customarily, Mark does not go into detail concerning the temptation, as Luke does in 4:1-13. Mark simply gives four details concerning the temptation: First, Jesus was in this experience for 40 days. This was no brief interlude in Jesus' life. Second, this temptation was carried out against Jesus by Satan himself. Third, Jesus was with the wild beasts. It is a way of saying that Jesus was all alone. Wild beasts will leave when a group of people come near. The angels ministered to Jesus during this devastating experience of what it is like to be human. The second picture was taken at approximately the same place as the previous one. This is a "Wadi", which is an Arabic word for river bed or canyon. In the bottom of the wadi you can see a small channel of water flowing. This indicates that this desert is made up of many, tall mountains, cut down through the centuries by the force of water. Everything in the picture appears to be abandoned. This is not the case.

MARK 1:14,15 THE INTRODUCTION TO JESUS' MINISTRY

In one short sentence, Mark identified the conditions surrounding the onset of Jesus' teaching ministry. This sentence, verses 14 and 15, begins with the word "and" in the Greek text. The two previous paragraphs also begin with this word. This suggests a continuation of the same kind of reporting.

First, though Mark does not tell us about it, there is a considerable amount of time between verses 13 and 14. Characteristically, Mark just gives the highlights. In this brief paragraph, Mark described the events which follow the arrest of John the Baptist. When that happened, Jesus returned to Galilee and began preaching the Gospel of God. Mark then gives a capsule view of the message of Jesus. He preached that the time was fulfilled for the kingdom of God to be revealed. On the basis of this fact, He urged the hearers to repent and believe in the good news.

For the Jews to hear of the "Kingdom of God" could only mean an earthly kingdom, a fulfillment of the promise to David, a kingdom established in Jerusalem! And of necessity, it would mean to them that the hated Romans would be replaced by His kingdom. How that must have jolted them into paying attention to what Jesus said and who He was! What a way to get their attention!

MARK 1:16-20 JESUS CALLS SIMON, ANDREW, JAMES AND JOHN

Mark does not tell us about it, but these were not just run-of-the-mill men. They were disciples of John the Baptist. They were men of great devotion to God. They were well known in religious circles. At the time of the trial of Jesus, James and John entered into the High Priest's home freely because they were well known even there. Fishermen are commonly thought of as poor men. This was not the case here. Notice that in verse 20, James and John left their father in the boat with the **"hired servants."** This represented sizable wealth.

Notice Jesus' appeal to the men. You have been fishermen, now I will make you fishers of men. This is exactly what He did. Their response did not need careful, prolonged thought. They immediately left the nets and followed Jesus. They treated Jesus as their Rabbi; they behaved as His learners.

MARK 1:21-28 JESUS TEACHES IN CAPERNAUM

Verse 21 gives a picture of how others thought of Jesus. The Jews in the Capernaum synagogue treated Him as a Rabbi. He was given the opportunity to do the teaching on the Sabbath. Notice, in verse 22, Mark carefully identifies the way Jesus taught:

The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Mark 1:22

It was the custom of the scribes not to interpret the passages which were read, but to recite what **other** great Rabbis had said about the passage. Jesus did not do this. He rather interpreted the passage of Scripture Himself. This was so unusual that the people were shocked to hear it.

There was a man present, who had an unclean spirit. This is commonly understood to have been a demon. Notice, in verse 24, the unclean spirit speaks to Jesus directly,

"What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are-the holy one of God." Mark 1:24

Notice that the spirit speaks in the plural. "What do you want with **us** ... have you come to destroy **us**?" This is an indication that there was not just one unclean spirit present, but many. Mark does not tell us why only one spoke. We do not know for sure. It may be that one served as spokesman for the rest. The unclean spirit speaks of Jesus as the **Nazarene**. The word "Nazarene" can be used in two ways:

- It is used of a person who comes from Nazareth.
- It is also used of a person who has taken the Nazarite vow to live an especially holy, sacrificial life.

The unclean spirit demonstrated that he knew who Jesus was when he said, "the Holy One of God." This is a special name for Jesus. The "Holy One" is a special identification. It is a way of identifying the Messiah. Notice the progression of the segment. It began with a prophetic statement concerning the herald of the coming king. John the Baptist, in fact, fulfilled that prophecy. The segment closes with even the unclean spirit acknowledging that Jesus is the Messiah.

The unclean spirit is also acknowledging that Jesus had the power to destroy all of these unclean spirits. Jesus is not just a surprising teacher, but one who was powerful enough to destroy evil spirits.

In verse 25, Jesus responded, but He did not answer the question of the unclean spirit concerning whether or not He had come to destroy them. Mark tells us that Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit.

There are two words for "rebuke." One word carries with it an implied conviction. The other word is a simple rebuke. This latter one is the word which Jesus used. In the rebuke, Jesus gave the unclean spirit two commands:

- Be quiet.
- Come out of him.

Verse 26 is the unclean spirit's response to the command of Jesus. It says that the spirit shook the man violently. A better phrase for "shook violently" would be to convulse. Note the response of the unclean spirit to the command of Jesus.

- He convulsed the man.
- He cried with a loud voice.
- He came out of the man.

The unclean spirit was under the powerful command of Jesus. The spirit found it necessary to do as Jesus commanded.

Verses 27 and 28 describe the response of the people who observed this experience in the synagogue. They were all amazed. "Amazed" means to be held in wonder to the point of being rendered immovable. They also were puzzling among themselves,

"What is this? A new teaching! And with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." Mark 1:27

It is certain that others had commanded unclean spirits, but the unique thing about what they observed here was that the unclean spirits obeyed what Jesus told them to do.

These same people went to tell everyone they could find. The result was that everyone in the region around Galilee knew about Jesus.

MARK 1:29-31 THE HEALING OF PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

As you read verse 29, it sounds as though Jesus and the disciples walked out of the synagogue and into the home of Peter and Andrew. The truth is that the home of Peter was just a very few feet away from the door of the synagogue. It was made up of at least twenty rooms. One-family-dwellings were almost unheard of at that time. Families liked to be close together. As a person married, a room was added for them. This is still a practice in many parts of the Near East. The fact that Peter's mother-in-law lived with them may well indicate that she was without a living son who would be charged with her care if he were alive. The fact that Peter was married to her daughter placed no responsibility for her care upon Peter, but it tells us something about the quality of this son-in-law, Simon Peter.

When this story is discussed, an emphasis is placed on the fact that Peter's mother-in-law immediately rose and served the others. This is true. The emphasis of the text, however, is on healing and not on service. The fact that she rose up and served them identifies the degree of her restoration. She was so completely healed that she could begin working immediately.

MARK 1:32-34 JESUS HEALS THE SICK

Notice, in verse 32, the identification of time. It is now evening. Contrary to our practices, life, for these people nearly came to a standstill when the sun went down. There were no street lights. People seldom went out at night. Nevertheless, all the sick and demon possessed people of the town were brought to the door where Jesus was staying. These people were gathered in the narrow street outside the door of Peter's home.

Verse 34 indicates that Jesus healed every sick person they had brought to Him. Jesus delivered every one who was possessed of a demon. Mark is dealing with motive in this brief paragraph. When Jesus cast out the demons, He did not allow them to speak because they knew of His identity in a way that these local people did not. It was not that Jesus wanted to hide His identity. It was not yet time for such a revelation.

MARK 1:35-39 JESUS PRAYS IN A SOLITARY PLACE

In the midst of the success and attention of the local people, Jesus felt a deep need for solitude. In verse 35, some translations use the word "desert place." When we think of a desert, we think of the Sahara. There is no such place in Galilee. The word that is used here means a place that is uninhabited. It does not mean desert like the Arabian desert. Jesus had a deep desire to be alone to pray.

Simon Peter had not learned much about Jesus as yet. He went looking for Jesus because the people would be looking for Him. The natural thought at such a time would be much like that of Simon. When you are popular, you should be available to the crowd. Simon gives Jesus a mild reprimand because He had not kept that in mind.

Jesus, however, had a different idea. His purpose was not to appeal to the crowd in order to become even more famous. He purposed to fulfill His task, which was to preach

in all of these towns and villages. Jesus did just as He felt He ought to do despite the urgings of His host.

MARK 1:40-45 JESUS CLEANSED THE LEPER

The story of the leper is startling. We can learn a number of things about him from the text.

First, the leper came to Jesus. This was absolutely forbidden. A leper was responsible to flee from people and forbidden to approach any person who had not contracted the disease.

Second, the leper failed to cry out as he was required to do. Whenever a leper was approached by a person without the disease, the leper was required to cry out, "Unclean, Unclean!" This man said nothing of the kind. He rather came right up to Jesus.

Finally, the man knelt down before Jesus. This was the position of supplication. It was an admission of the fact that Jesus was greater than he was; that Jesus could do something that he needed, but could not do for himself.

The man believed in Jesus. Notice what he said,

"If you are willing, you can make me clean." Mark 1:40

Mark does not tell us how the leper came to this belief, but the man was convinced that Jesus had the power to heal him completely of this incurable disease.

Verse 41 describes Jesus' response to this unusual request. Jesus was filled with compassion. The word "compassion" means to be so moved that it has a physical effect upon the intestinal area of the body. This is extreme emotion. It is a devastating reaction.

Verse 41 also states that Jesus reached out and touched the man. This tells us a lot about Jesus. Leprosy was the AIDS virus of the first century. Nothing was feared more than the possibility that one might contract leprosy. No one would voluntarily touch a leper. If a leper were to accidentally touch a person free of the disease, that person and every one around him would pelt the leper with stones. To touch a leper would automatically make one unclean. This meant that Jesus could not take part in any religious observances until He had made ceremonial sacrifices for His cleansing. This was an extreme departure from normal behavior for Jesus.

Jesus said to the man,

"I am willing... Be clean." Mark 1:41

Jesus identified two things with His response:

- He was willing to take the risk of contracting the disease in order to minister to the needs of one who trusted in Him.
- Jesus knew that He was able to cure the incurable disease. Verse 42 teaches that the leprosy immediately left the man and he was completely whole.

The balance of the paragraph describes the understandable disobedience of the former leper. Jesus commanded the man to say nothing to anyone about the startling thing that had happened to him. It is like giving someone ten million dollars and then telling the person that he/she will lose it all if one person were told of it. Jesus made this command for a

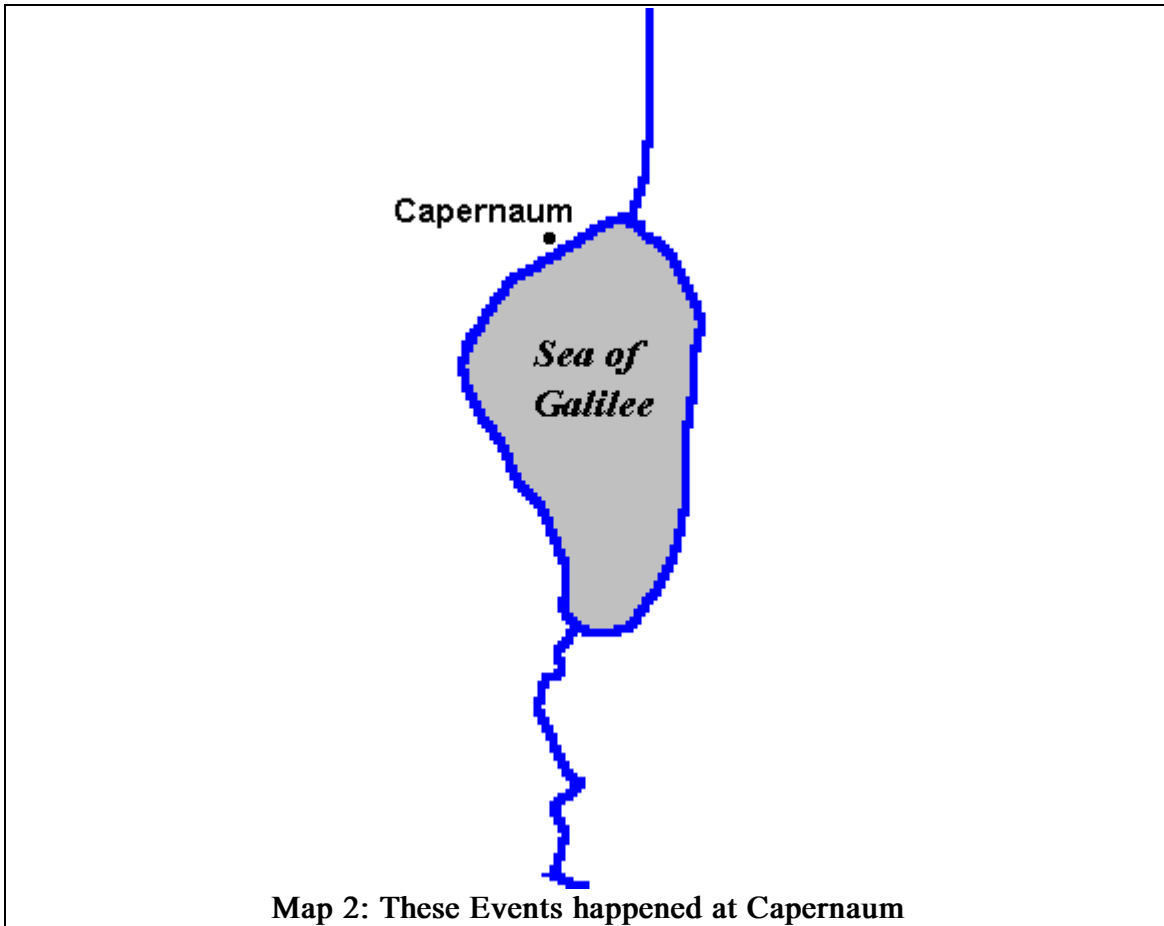
THE BEGINNING OF JESUS' MINISTRY

very good reason. If the man told the people, then it would stir up curiosity about Jesus to the point that He would be unable to witness or minister.

Jesus also commanded the man to go and present the appropriate sacrifices to the priests. These sacrifices are described for us in Leviticus 13 and 14. This accomplished two things:

- It carried out the stipulations of the law which they were expected to observe in order to be good citizens of the land.
- It was a witness to the religious authorities of the power of God, evident and demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus.

Verse 45 tells the sad story. The man was unable to do as Jesus commanded and it brought so many people around that Jesus was unable to minister any longer there. He had to go to other cities and villages to preach the Gospel.



QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 3

JESUS CHANGES LIVES - HEALED PARALYTIC, CALL LEVI MARK 2:1 - 28

1. In our best Greek documents, there are five paragraphs in this segment. Read each paragraph carefully. On the table which follows, give each paragraph a title of seven words or less.

Mark 2:1-12	
Mark 2:13, 14	
Mark 2:15-17	
Mark 2:18-22	
Mark 2:23-28	

2. In Mark 2:1-12, there is a story of astonishing faith. In this paragraph there is also a strong comparison between Jesus and the scribes. Record what you learned about both in terms of their attitudes and values.
3. Read Mark 2:13,14. Place yourself in the sandals of Levi. What would you feel? Meditate on Levi's (Matthew's) response to Jesus' invitation. What did you learn?
4. In Mark 2:15-17, there is a strong contrast between Jesus and the other guests. Give as much detail about this as you can. Notice also the contrast between Jesus' response to these guests and the response of the teachers of the law. What did you discover? Meditate on Jesus' reply to the challenge of the teachers of the law. What was He saying?
4. In Mark 2:18-22, study Jesus' answer to the question about fasting. In your own words, what is Jesus saying?
5. In Mark 2:23-28, Jesus is confronted concerning His disciples' use of the Sabbath. What is the difference between Jesus' outlook on this subject and that of the pharisees? What does Jesus' reminder about David have to do with the issue? What is Jesus saying in verses 27, 28?
6. Choose a verse, from this passage, which is most meaningful to you. Memorize the verse.
7. Think carefully about what you have learned about Jesus in this chapter. In what way will your life have to change in order to be more like Him?

LESSON 3: – MARK 2:1-28

JESUS CHANGES LIVES - HEALED PARALYTIC, CALLED LEVI

MARK 2:1-12 JESUS HEALS A PARALYTIC

Jesus has returned to Capernaum. Notice, the text says that they discovered that Jesus had returned to the city. The NIV text, in Mark 2:1, indicates that, "he had come home." But the Greek text reads differently. It simply states that Jesus was in a house. The intent may very well have been that they thought of this as Jesus' home in Galilee, but the text does not literally say that.

The emphasis in the paragraph is not on Jesus, however, but on the paralytic whom He was going to heal. Again, the people of Capernaum filled the narrow street outside the house so that no one could get in. Jesus preached to the crowd under these difficult circumstances.

Verse three tells the story of faith. Several men brought a paralyzed man on a stretcher, or pallet, to Jesus. The crowd made it impossible for the men to bring the paralytic into Jesus' presence. They were so certain that Jesus could help the man, that they went up on the roof of the house and removed the roof tiles or sections. This was a very large job, but it was not uncommon for roof sections to be removed for repair.

The roof of a house was usually made in one of two ways. The very rich put beams across between the walls and then individual tiles made up the roof. The poorer people installed beams and then cross braced between them. Branches were placed on the cross members. This provided a foundation upon which dirt was placed. This was usually covered with mud, which was dirt mixed with water; baked by the sun, to form a hard surface. Flowers and weeds would often grow on the roof. Apparently, the latter kind of roof was found on this house.

At any rate, the paralytic man was lowered into the immediate presence of Jesus, because the men were determined that their friend was going to be healed.

Note verse five,

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Mark 2:5

Jesus was able to see something that we can not always discover. In this situation, it appears that Mark was saying that the determined action of the pole bearers was evidence that they were completely convinced that Jesus could and would heal the man of his paralysis if they persisted in getting him into the presence of Jesus.

Jesus' statement is a little surprising. It was clear that they had come believing that Jesus would heal the man. Jesus said nothing about healing him, but forgave him of his sins. Jesus was very often dealing with more than one issue at a time. However, how do you suppose these determined friends and the crowd reacted to that? Could they possibly understand what Jesus had said? Were they disappointed because they didn't see their friend jump up and down instantly? How would you have reacted? In the next verse, Mark tells us that there were some teachers of the law present. It is clear that it is for their benefit that Jesus talked about forgiving the man his sins. The teachers noticed immediately that Jesus had spoken of forgiving sins. To them, this was blasphemy. Only God could forgive sins and they did not believe that Jesus was God.

Though nothing was said, Jesus knew what they were thinking. He spoke to them directly. In this you have the second miracle. Jesus confronted them, asking whether it was easier to say your sins are forgiven or to say rise, take up your pallet and walk. Obviously, these were both powers that God could exercise. Without waiting for their reply, He said,

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins," said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Mark 2:10, 11

Jesus wanted them to see His power. It is not possible to see the forgiveness of sins. He therefore demonstrated His power to heal the body. Both the forgiveness and the healing were far beyond human ability and the people knew it.

Verse 12 is a report of the results of Jesus' commands.

He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" Mark 2:12

As you can see, the results were twofold:

- The man got up, took his mat and went home.
- Everyone who saw it was amazed and they praised God saying they had never seen anything like this.

As you reflect upon this segment, notice how many things have happened which these people had never experienced before. Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law; He healed many others, and cast out many demons; He healed the man with leprosy; He healed the paralytic, forgave his sins and understood even what the teachers of the law were **thinking** in their anger toward Him. This is all further evidence of what John the Baptist was talking about when he described how great Jesus really was.

People of every era must discover just how great Jesus is on their behalf. The drug addict must know that Jesus can deliver him from his bondage as He delivered the man from the confinement of his pallet. The thief must discover that Jesus will forgive him as willingly as He forgave the man who was let down through the roof.

Into every life there come those experiences and situations which seem impossible. The measure of one's faith determines how one will approach these difficulties. How about you? When the difficulty comes, do you look for a way to explain its reasonableness, or do you look for a way to accomplish what appears to be impossible? What do you really expect God to do in your life? What kind of witness is produced by your expectations?

MARK 2:13, 14 - THE CALL OF LEVI

Looking back at the previous paragraph, note the effect of this experience upon Jesus. If I had been able to heal someone of his/her paralysis, I would have been elated. It would be difficult for this not to have had an effect upon my impressions about myself. Jesus was not that way. There is no record of any effect, here, or in the other Gospel records, of these miracles having any personal effect upon Jesus.

In the passage we are studying today, Jesus left the house of Peter and went down to the seashore. This is a distance of less than a hundred yards. Because so many people

were trying to get a glimpse of Him, the crowds went with Him wherever He went. This did not disturb Jesus at all. He taught the crowd as they walked. While they walked, they passed the tax booth of Levi. He was the disciple we call Matthew. The text clearly identifies Levi as the son of Alphaeus. This creates a problem for us. There are two disciples identified as the sons of Alphaeus. Both Levi and James are called the sons of Alphaeus. Nothing conclusive is known about the two. It is thought that both James and Levi were tax gatherers. This does not mean that they were brothers, though they might have been.

In the presence of this great crowd, Jesus confronts Levi with a command of two words, "Follow me." Levi's response was immediate. Mark tells us that he rose and followed Jesus. It is just possible that this was not a new idea to Levi. He may have thought about that possibility in the past. For Levi, the consequences were severe. When James and John started to follow Jesus, they simply left the work to their father and the hired servants. It meant the hiring of one or two additional servants at the most. For Levi, it was different. He had to abandon a large investment. He had paid the Roman authorities an excessive fee to permit him to collect the taxes. Now he would not be able to recoup his investment by charging the people high taxes. He had a very lucrative business and this, too, would be a total loss to him.

Normally, the disciples came to the Rabbi requesting permission to become his disciples. In this instance, however, Jesus went to Levi and each of the disciples, and invited them to follow Him.

MARK 2:15-17 - INTENSE OPPOSITION - EATING WITH SINNERS

Look at verse 15. Some time has passed since verse 14. They have now left the seashore and have gone to the home of Levi. This is a picture of Jesus and His disciples, reclining at a feast with tax collectors and sinners, in the home of Levi.

In our text, it appears as though Mark is simply identifying the dinner guests. There is much more to it than that. Tax collectors were considered traitors to Israel because the Jews believed they should be subject to no power but God. To cooperate with a superior political power worked against their view of what God intended Israel to be. Tax collectors were considered to be immoral people. The respectable Jew could think of no one lower than a tax collector. It is not coincidental that the guests in the room were other tax collectors and "sinners." Sinners were thieves, murderers, prostitutes and the like. These were all enemies of the people. These were all people who overtly dishonored God. If a tax collector did not consort with "sinners" or other tax collectors, he would be totally isolated in the culture.

The Jews thought that if you ate with a person, then you accepted that person as your equal. You affirmed the kind of person he/she was and were willing to be considered like them. A tax collector could not be a witness in court. Any person, who would eat with a tax collector, would not be able to be a witness in court, even in his/her own defense, for the rest of his/her life. You may remember that Jesus did not witness at His own trial and probably for that very reason - He knew that He was not acceptable as a witness. A person who ate with a tax collector was not welcomed to participate in worship. Anyone who would eat with a tax collector was considered unclean. Before such a person could take part in worship, prescribed rituals and sacrifices had to be made. This could also produce complications for Jesus' ministry. People would be apt to judge His ministry on the basis

of the people with whom He associated and the identity of those who followed Him. This was far more than a casual choice.

In verse 16 the disciples of Jesus were challenged by the scribes and pharisees with, "Why is he eating with them?" This was a slam. They were saying that Jesus was doing something totally unheard of; something He had no right to do. He was socializing with people, like tax collectors and prostitutes, whom He should have been avoiding at all cost. He should be seeking out the very best people rather than consorting with the worst.

The differences between Jesus and the pharisees had to do with their interpretation of a symbol. To eat with a tax collector or sinner was to publicly extend forgiveness to that person. For the Jews, there was no such thing as forgiveness for collaborating with the Romans. To eat with a tax collector was to announce to all that this person and his actions were acceptable to you. This caused the scribes to think that Jesus was as treasonous as the tax collectors. To eat with a publican was to publicly acknowledge that you identify with this person just as he is. It was to say, I accept him as my kind of person; he is a person with whom I want to be identified.

In verse 17, Jesus responds. He used the simile of a doctor. If a doctor is to carry out his mission, he must spend time with the sick, not with the healthy. Jesus used the same idea to describe His mission. He saw His task as seeking out the alien, the undesirable. These are the ones for whom He came. This is the ministry for which He gave Himself. To ignore these would be to abandon His purpose. It is very clear that both Jesus and the scribes knew that these people were publicans and sinners. The difference was in their response and attitude. Both Jesus and the pharisees understood the symbolism - To eat with them was to forgive them their wrongs against society. To eat with them was to accept them as desirable persons. We are talking about a contrast in outlooks:

JESUS	SCRIBES
Identified with publicans	Shunned publicans
Ate with publicans	Did not eat with publicans
Sought out the worst - to change them	Sought out the best - to enjoy them
Was not overly concerned about reputation	Were preoccupied with their reputation
Had a divine plan - call sinners to repentance	Planned to share with other righteous
His principle was openness	Their principle was exclusiveness

MARK 2:18-22 THE ISSUE OF FASTING - THREE SIMILES

We need to keep in mind, that the authorities who opposed Jesus, were looking for a means to destroy both Jesus' person and His reputation. One of the things they took pride in was their observance of the fast. At best, the attack of the authorities is false. They were interested in embarrassing Jesus, not in seeking for the truth as they appeared to be doing. They were not so interested in keeping the law as they were in getting rid of Jesus.

First of all, the attack was false and it must be viewed in this light. Jesus chose to respond to the false attack by the use of three different similes. They were the "picture of the bridegroom", the "picture of a patch made of new cloth" and the "picture of new wine in old wineskins."

We need to look at the meaning of the three similes which Jesus used:

THE BRIDEGROOM

Remember, this all has to do with the customs surrounding the observance of the fast. The bridegroom was a symbol of great joy. Fasting is the symbol of sorrow. To speak of bridegroom and sorrow at the same time is a contradiction in terms. Jesus is comparing Himself to the bridegroom. Fasting was appropriate for the disciples of John and the disciples of the pharisees. It was a ceremonial necessity. For Jesus' disciples to fast would be like celebrating the coming of the bridegroom with a dirge.

Jesus was focusing on relationships and not on ceremonies. One would no more fast in Jesus' presence than to fast when the bridegroom arrives. It would be considered the ultimate insult. Jesus' disciples did not fast because it was contradictory to their relationship with Him.

THE NEW CLOTH

Jesus was painting a picture that every person who heard Him would understand clearly. Every one of them had seen the results of this at one time or another. Look at the picture Jesus used. Notice that Jesus frankly states that this is something that **no one** would do. Used cloth that needs to be patched is old, flimsy and weak. New cloth, on the other hand, is strong, firm and durable. When this new cloth gets wet for the first time it will shrink substantially. The old cloth to which it is sewn does not have the same elasticity and can not give as much as the new cloth requires. The natural result is a tragedy. The old cloth is torn in order to accommodate the new cloth.

Again, the issue here is why the disciples of Jesus do not fast. The fasting is an old ceremony. Jesus did not come to insure the old ceremonies, but to establish a relationship that is far more substantial. To place the relationship, which Jesus came to offer, within the framework of the old ceremonies is to invite disaster. It does not fit. It will do severe damage to the old ceremonies.

What is Jesus saying? The disciples of Jesus do not fast because Jesus came to offer something far more meaningful and beneficial than the fast. To attempt to place the relationship, which Jesus came to offer, within the framework of the old ceremonial situation is as destructive as patching an old flimsy garment with new, strong cloth.

NEW WINE IN OLD WINE SKINS

The third simile which Jesus used was the picture of placing new wine in wine skins which have been previously used. Again, Jesus speaks of this situation as something absurd; something that no one would ever do. Every person, who heard this statement, knew exactly what Jesus was talking about. When it was time for the grape harvest, they would take the skin of an animal and sew it in such a way that it could be used as a bottle for the wine. The grape juice was placed in this skin bottle to ferment. As the juice fermented, the skin bottle expanded. The animal skin, being new, was strong and elastic. It had the capacity to stretch far enough to accommodate the expansion of the fermented grape juice. Once the skin had expanded during this fermenting process, it lost its elasticity. If anyone then puts new grape juice in this already stretched skin bottle, the skin would be unable to

stretch as the fermentation process required. At a given point, the skin would tear and the wine would be lost.

Again, Jesus is talking about why His disciples do not fast. Jesus is saying that it is as absurd for His disciples to fast as it would be to put fresh grape juice into wine skins that had already been used for that purpose. The old ceremonial system would be totally unable to contain the new relationship which Jesus came to offer His disciples and all those who love Him. His disciples did not fast because the personal relationship Jesus came to offer was more powerful and meaningful than the old ceremonies they had all observed.

It is appropriate to put new wine into new wine skins. You place the new relationships, which Jesus came to offer, in a new setting rather than trying to force them into the old ceremonies.

MARK 2:23-28 - PICKING GRAIN ON THE SABBATH

In this paragraph, Mark is dealing with another of the attacks on Jesus. The pharisees felt that Jesus took exceptional liberties with the law of the Sabbath. Everything in the paragraph focuses around this accusation.

Notice that the field of grain in question is not specific. It is a general term used to identify plants which produce grain as opposed to other kinds of food. The fact that it speaks of "ears" does not conclude that this grain is corn, as we know it. It might be any of the grains which we commonly use in the making of bread and the feeding of animals.

This paragraph could seem finicky to modern Americans. This is because there were some very strong regulations concerning the observance of Sabbath which we do not observe. For instance, if you go to Jerusalem today, on Sabbath the hotel doors are open because it would be a violation of the Law of Sabbath for them to open a door on this day. In these same hotels, the elevator, on Sabbath, runs continually, opening at each floor. This is so that it will not be necessary for a strict Jew to push the button to select the floor to which he wishes to go. To push the button would be a violation of the Sabbath law. It is not uncommon to see a sign in a restaurant forbidding the smoking of cigarettes on Sabbath. Again, this would be a violation of the Sabbath rule.

Note that the disciples picked the grain in Jesus' presence. It was not something they had to do in hiding. It is not unreasonable to think that they had probably talked about this situation previously. No pharisee, however, would consider this acceptable behavior. We should note that the disciples did not change their behavior just because they were in the presence of pharisees.

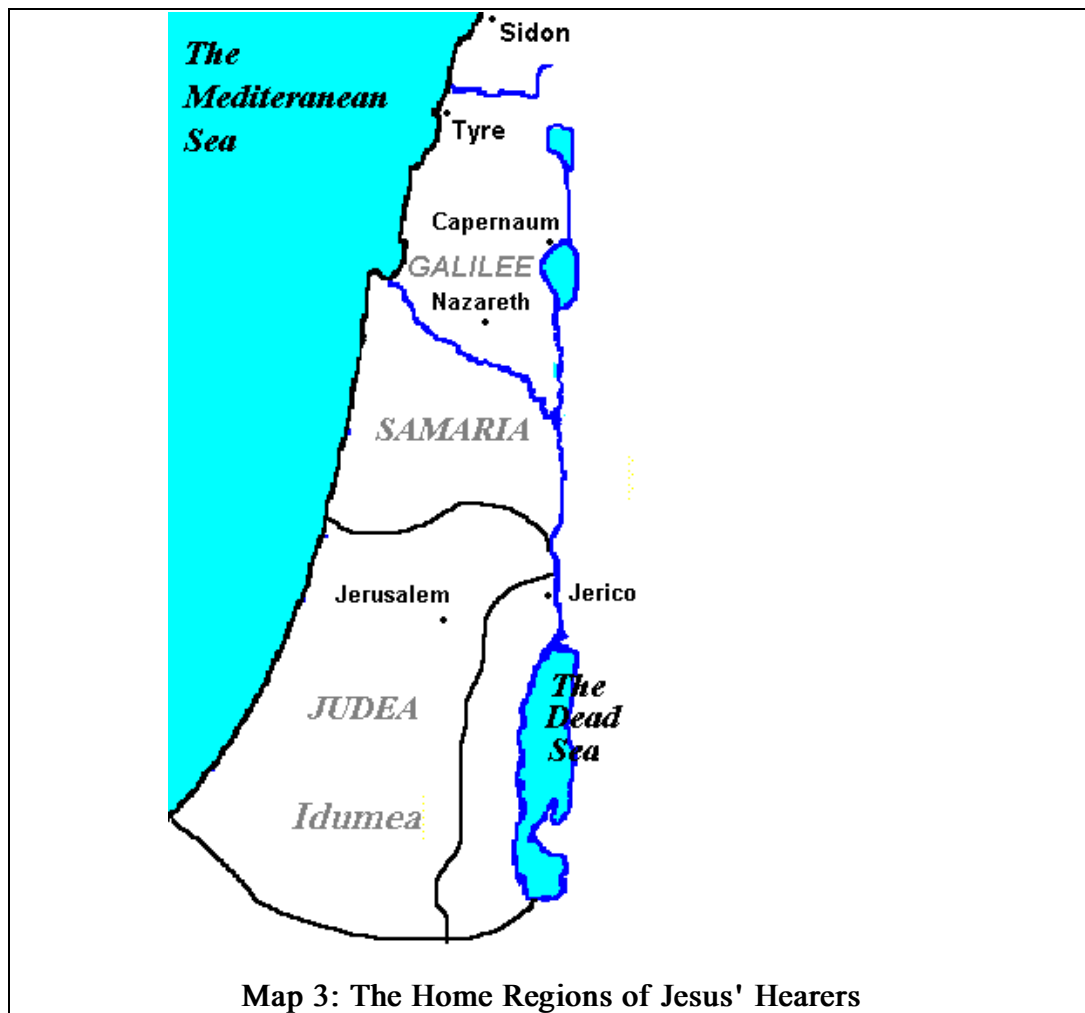
Jesus did not answer the question as it was put to Him. He did answer it in summary fashion. He appealed to the Scriptures to help His hearers understand the idea He was presenting. He answered by directing their attention to I Samuel 21:1 ff. David and his men had been hard pressed and they were hungry. He went to the temple and asked for food for his men. There was none to be had except the Bread of Presence. This bread was holy - set apart for those who were purified. They usually understood this to mean that it was to be eaten by the priests exclusively. Jesus spoke of this in such a way that it was clear that He did not condemn what David and his men had done. He was saying, the condition of need dictated a change in the recipients, but not in the qualifications necessary to partake of it. They had to first determine whether the soldiers with David had been clean, separated from women for a required length of time. Jesus applied the same principle to the Sabbath. The rule of the Sabbath is as firm as the decision of who eats consecrated

bread. It is clear that circumstances of need brought a change in the rule, but it could not change the qualifications. In verse 27, Jesus said,

"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Mark 2:27, 28

Jesus established this rule. The purpose of the rule was to enable mankind, not to put them in bondage.

Jesus is claiming control of the Sabbath as He controls creation. He rules at His discretion. The challenge of the pharisees is inappropriate. The difference between what Jesus is saying and what they claim is sharp. They are saying, "look at the power of the Sabbath law". Jesus is saying, "look at the power of the Messiah".



QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 4

INTENSE OPPOSITION BEGINS

MARK 3:1 - 35

1. In our best Greek documents, there are five paragraphs in chapter three. Read each paragraph carefully. On the table below, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

Mark 3:1-6	
Mark 3:7-12	
Mark 3:13-19	
Mark 3:20-30	
Mark 3:31-35	

2. In Mark 3:1-6, Jesus was busy healing a man on the Sabbath. Notice the contrast between Jesus and the people who were watching for a way to accuse Jesus. List the differences between them. Write a list of the things Jesus did and said in this passage. What did you learn?
3. Mark 3:7-12 is a response to Mark 2:2-3:6. In the midst of great attention, why did Jesus order the evil spirits not to tell who He was?
4. Notice that in Mark 3:13-19, where Jesus calls His disciples, immediately follows a time when Jesus healed many and was challenged repeatedly because of His ministry and beliefs. Think about this fact. What does it suggest to you? Study the list of disciples carefully. What can you learn from the list?
5. In Mark 3:20-30, there are two themes present. First, His family is concerned about His emotional stability. Second, the teachers of the law came from Jerusalem to announce that He was possessed by Beelzebub. Study Jesus' response to the Teachers' charge. What did He say?
6. In Mark 3:31-35, there is a shocking encounter with Jesus' own family. Why did His family come? What was His real response to their presence?
7. Choose a verse, from this passage, which is most meaningful to you. Memorize the verse.
8. How do you account for the fact that Jesus and His disciples eventually encountered strong opposition and eventual persecution; yet we rarely if ever encounter suffering?

LESSON 4: – MARK 3:1-35

INTENSE OPPOSITION BEGINS

In Mark 3 there are five paragraphs. The table which follows contains a brief summary of each paragraph.

Mark 3:1-6	Healing The Man with a Withered Hand
Mark 3:7-12	Jesus Thronged by the Sick
Mark 3:13-19	The Call of the Twelve
Mark 3:20-30	Jesus Refuted the False Attacks by Teachers
Mark 3:31-35	Who is My Mother?

MARK 3:1-6 HEALING OF THE MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND

This paragraph also deals with the observance of the Sabbath. Notice how Mark begins the paragraph. It is as though he is randomly choosing one illustration out of several possibilities.

Mark sets the stage beautifully for this episode in the life of Jesus. It is the Sabbath day. The place is the synagogue. A man with a withered hand was present for this time of worship. A withered hand is literally one that is dried up. This was not a condition he had sustained from birth, but one which had subsequently come into his life.

In verse two, Mark points out that there were some present who had not come just to worship. These men were looking for some reason with which to accuse Jesus. They could not be overlooked. They were religious officials and the front row seats were reserved for them.

Mark tells us that they were there to watch Jesus closely, to see if He would heal on the Sabbath. Jesus is often portrayed as a quiet man who never challenged a difficult situation. That is far from the case. Jesus knew that He was challenging the pharisees. He could have waited to heal the man on the following day. The teaching of the Rabbis was clear. You could act to save life. You could offer medical attention to protect the patient from dying, but you could not do anything to improve the condition in any other way. Jesus had compassion on the man and decided not only to heal the man, but to confront the pharisees in the process.

In verse three, Mark tells of Jesus' command to the man with the withered hand, "stand up in front of everyone." We have to ask ourselves, why would Jesus tell the man to do this? The act of healing would not be impeded if the man were sitting down. It would not be less a miracle if the man were seated when it took place. The command gives us a glimpse into the motive of Jesus. He knew that the pharisees were there to see if He would break the law of the Sabbath and heal the man. Jesus decided to challenge them in their own subversive design. If the man were standing, then everyone in the synagogue could see and know what Jesus was doing and what this said about His ministry.

Jesus asked them. He was not talking to the man who was about to be healed. Jesus was talking directly to the people who had come to spy on Him. He confronted them with an impossible question. Jesus said,

"Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" Mark 3:4

The impossibility of this question is that they could not give a simple answer. It was lawful to do certain good things on the Sabbath. One could assist so that a person would not lose his/her life, but one could not do anything so as to improve a person's life or condition on the Sabbath. It was not lawful, however, to do evil deeds on the Sabbath. The Jews were not free to engage in war or the preparation for it.

The thing that Jesus was about to do was certainly a good thing. If the pharisees said it was wrong to do a good thing, they would be in a very compromising situation in front of all the people in the synagogue. The people would consider it a bad thing to leave the hand useless when Jesus had the power to heal the infirmity completely. The only response the pharisees had was to remain totally silent.

Jesus responded with great intensity. Mark gives two details about the response of Jesus. These are vivid and intense.

- He looked at them in anger.
- He was deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts.

There are at least two words which can be translated with the word "anger". One word describes a sudden burst of wrath which flashes hot and is over. The other word, which is used here, describes a settled, ongoing frame of mind which frequently results in what the offended considers an appropriate revenge. The latter word (ὀργή) is the one used in the text.

Mark also tells us that Jesus was deeply distressed. Here our English language does not serve us well. The word that is used in the Greek text is vivid. It is a compound word:

- Sun - with
- Lupeo - to experience pain, distress, sorrow.

It is to be grieved together with another person. This suggests that there is sympathy on the part of Jesus because these people are willing to see themselves afflicted through their own stubbornness.

Jesus said to the man, "stretch out your hand." Mark 3:5

The truth is that Jesus could just as easily have healed the man whether or not he stretched out his hand. Again, this was not necessary to the miracle. It was Jesus' way to confront these religious leaders with the consequences of their own stubborn ways. The result was that the man was completely restored.

Look at the response of the pharisees. They did not challenge Jesus' activities on the Sabbath. This was probably because it would have placed them in an awkward position with the people who celebrated the healing of the man.

The pharisees did not deny what Jesus had done. They would be hard pressed to say that Jesus had not done this when it was visible to all and the people knew this man well. They had seen his infirmity year after year.

Mark said,

Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. Mark 3:6

This is a surprising statement. Normally, the pharisees thought of the Herodians as unclean, immoral. Anyone who consorted with the Romans was unclean. The Herodians were probably people who preferred the rule of Herod to the rule of Roman Prefects. In the minds of some scholars, Herodians were Sadducees who would rather have Herod rule than to have the direct rulership of Rome. The pharisees were willing to compromise their stand in order to find a way to destroy Jesus. It gives us a sense of just how frustrated and hopeless their case seemed in their own eyes.

MARK 3:7-12 JESUS THRONGED BY THE SICK

This whole paragraph is a picture of the results of Jesus' ministry. They are portrayed in several ways. There is the large crowd that followed Him from the synagogue to the Sea of Galilee. Mark includes a statement about the homeland of those who were in the crowd. If you look at the map on page 36 you will discover that the list includes people from every direction converging on the area around the place where Peter lived.

The results of Jesus' ministry are portrayed by the fact that so many people had been healed and that those who were still suffering with disease were clamoring just to touch Jesus. They were convinced that Jesus could heal their diseases.

Again, the results are portrayed by the fact that the people possessed by evil spirits did two things to acknowledge the greatness of Jesus:

- They fell down before Him - a picture of submission.
- They cried out, "You are the Son of God." Mark 3:11

This is the ultimate acknowledgment of the deity of Jesus. It is the ultimate victory over the forces of evil.

Jesus did not begin to dwell on the acclaim of the people. He rather insisted that the evil spirits tell no one who He was. It was not because He was afraid to be identified. It was because it was not time for this disclosure to be completed.

MARK 3:13-19 THE CALL OF THE TWELVE

This paragraph indicates a turn in the thinking of the author. He has been focusing on the opposition. Now he is focusing on the ministry of Jesus as He trained the future apostles of the church.

The text says that Jesus went up into the hills and called to Himself those whom He had chosen. As I have indicated, this is out of character for a Rabbi. People who wanted to be a disciple had a ceremony which identified their desire to be a disciple. It was their initiative. Jesus broke these understandings and called the ones He wanted to be with Him.

Mark tells us that Jesus had two reasons for calling those who were to be His disciples:

- He wanted to send them out to preach.
- He wanted them to have authority to drive out demons.

Mark makes it clear that Jesus decided to have twelve disciples. This immediately raises the question, why did Jesus choose 12? Why did He not chose 10? Or 25? Why 12?

The most obvious possibility is related to the idea of symbolism. The Jews were very fond of the use of symbols. It would not be uncommon for Jesus to choose one disciple to represent each of the tribes of Israel. Jesus nowhere tells us why He chose 12 disciples or even why He chose these men.

In verses 16 through 19, Mark gives us a list of the disciples. Just look at the list for a moment. Remember that names were very important to the Jewish people. As you observe these names, questions come to your mind. Why are they in the order in which they are given? It is not because this is the order in which they were called. Why is it that Jesus gave special names to the first three disciples, but He did not do this for the other nine? Is it intentional that the name of Judas appears last?

Simon Bar Jonah had been called this all his life. He became a follower of Jesus and his name was changed to Peter. What is the significance of this? The name Simon is probably a contraction of the Hebrew name Simeon, which means "hearing." Jesus changed this name to Peter. The name Peter is a Greek form of Petros, which means "rock." Jesus also referred to James and John as "Boanerges", which is the Hebrew for "sons of thunder." We can only conjecture as to the meaning of this name. Usually, writers conclude that they were men of short tempers and were thus given the name. It seems fair to assume that Jesus changed the names of these three because they were closest to Him.

The name Judas Iscariot is literally Judas of Iscariot. Iscariot is the name of the village from which Judas came. The village name literally means ish = man, kerioth = man of Kerioth. The village is located in southern Judah, near the southern border of Simeon, which was within the borders of Judah. This is in the vicinity of the area we know as Beersheba. Judas was the only one of the disciples who was not from Galilee. When choosing close associates, a leader would normally choose people with whom the populace could readily identify. Jesus did just the opposite. He chose eleven people from the radical area of the country and only one from the refined, acceptable area. Isn't it ironic that the latter turned out to be the one who betrayed Him?

MARK 3:20-30 JESUS REFUTES FALSE ATTACKS BY TEACHERS

Verses 20 through 30 deal with an accusation against Jesus by the scribes. Mark does not tell us where this took place, but we assume that it was also in Capernaum. Jewish leaders were so concerned about the growing popularity of Jesus that teachers of the law were sent up to Galilee, a distance of approximately 75 miles, to find some way to accuse Jesus so that they could do away with Him.

The scene takes place in a home. There are so many people crowding around, that Jesus and His disciples could not eat. The news of this popularity traveled fast and soon His family knew about it. The text is not clear concerning the reason for their concern. It may have been that they feared He would get into trouble with Roman authorities. It may also have been that they feared He was losing His grip on reality. Whatever the reason, they decided that they would go and get Him to take care of Him.

At the same time the teachers of the law, from Jerusalem, decided upon their accusation - Jesus is possessed by Beelzebub. This was a heathen deity. The meaning of the name is not clear. It is thought by some to mean the "dung god", the "prince of moral impurity". The teachers of the law, from Jerusalem, concluded that Jesus was driving out demons by the power of the prince of demons.

INTENSE OPPOSITION BEGINS

Jesus gives a careful response to this charge, in verses 23 through 29. He begins by pointing out a flaw in their accusation. He said, "how can Satan drive out Satan?" He then points out, by way of a parable, the weakness of such an idea. He said,

*"If a kingdom is divided against itself that kingdom can not stand."
Mark 3:24*

Basically, He is saying that their accusation is literally impossible. He uses a second parable concerning a house.

"If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand." Mark 3:25

Both the statement about the kingdom and the statement about the house are common sense statements that anyone would understand and accept.

In verse 26, Jesus now turns to the specific accusation itself.

"And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he can not stand; his end has come." Mark 3:26

The logic of Jesus' statement is precisely the same as the common sense statement about the house and the kingdom.

Jesus continues, in verse 27, with another parable - the house of a strong man.

*"In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house."
Mark 3:27*

When one power conquers another, the conqueror must be greater than the conquered. Only then can the conqueror do whatever he wishes with the defeated enemy. Jesus is clearly saying that He is different from the demons He commands. He is more powerful than the demons and He will ultimately destroy them. Having made His point, Jesus then issues a devastating warning.

"I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." Mark 3:28, 29

In this entire experience, no one has mentioned the Holy Spirit. Yet Jesus gives a warning concerning blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. Why? It appears that Jesus may be saying that to accuse Him of casting out demons by the power of Satan, when the Holy spirit is the one through whom He exercises power, is indeed a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. His words are abrupt. Jesus is saying that for the pharisees to speak in such a way is blasphemous and ultimately unforgivable. It is indeed an eternal sin. This is not because it makes Jesus more angry than other sins, but because the Spirit is the one through whom the power of God is exercised, and if one rejects that power, then there is no power available to bring to him the forgiveness of God. Verse 30 spells this out more clearly,

He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit." Mark 3:30

MARK 3:31-35 WHO IS MY MOTHER?

This paragraph is closely related to the previous one. Remember, word reached the family that a great crowd was following Jesus. It seems reasonable to assume that they

knew the claims He was making. The text does not tell us whether they feared that He might get into difficulty with the Roman officials or whether they feared He had become mentally unbalanced. They may just have wanted to keep Him from severe personal embarrassment. Whatever the reason, they came to talk to Him. Verse 31 tells us something about Jesus' family. They were courteous people. They did not just barge into the house to take Jesus home. They observed the decorum of the home in which Jesus was teaching. They sent a message to Him that they would like to speak with Him.

Jesus' response seems harsh and rash.

"Who are my mother and my brothers?" Mark 3:33

There is a strong tradition that neither His mother nor His brothers were in sympathy with His ministry or His claims about Himself. The statement by Jesus about His mother and brothers was not suggesting that He was disowning them. Jesus was talking about allegiance. It is the same thing that He said to His parents when they found Him in the temple arguing with the teachers. On that occasion, He said,

"Why were you searching for me?...Didn't you know I had to be in the affairs of my Father?" Luke 2:49

In verse 34 and 35, Jesus makes this issue even clearer.

Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." Mark 3:34, 35

This statement is very carefully worded. When a person is forgiven, he/she is brought into the family of God. Jesus said that He and the Father are one. Therefore, if the forgiven person is made a child of God, then that person is also family to Jesus as well.

Many today talk about forgiven people being children of God. Not all of God's children conduct themselves like family members. Not all God's children are being treated like family members, however. The thing that assures one of being part of God's family is obedience, not just belonging to a church or group. It is important that every child of God live his/her life in such a way that those outside the family can see the family resemblance.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 5

PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

MARK 4:1 - 41

1. There are seven paragraphs in this segment of the book. Read each paragraph carefully. On the following table, write a summary of seven words or less for each paragraph.

Mark 4:1-9	
Mark 4:10-20	
Mark 4:21-25	
Mark 4:26-29	
Mark 4:30-32	
Mark 4:33, 34	
Mark 4:35-41	

2. In Mark 4:1-9, Jesus told a parable. Make a list of the facts Jesus offered in the parable. Study the list and record what you discover.
3. Mark 4:10-20 is an explanation of the parable in Mark 4:1-9. Identify the participants in this story, i.e., the farmer, the birds, the seed, the soil, etc. Now read the story again. Record each piece of information you discover about them.
4. If you were one of the crowd by the lake, in Mark 4:21-25, what would you understand Jesus to be saying to you?
5. In Mark 4:26-29, Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to the way a seed grows. What is Jesus saying about the Kingdom of God?
6. Jesus said the Kingdom of God was like a mustard seed. Read the parable, Mark 4:30-32, and record what Jesus said about it. Now reflect on these facts to see what you have learned.
7. Mark 4:33, 34 form a summary of the way Jesus taught. What do these verses tell you?
8. Mark 4:35-41 tell of Jesus stilling the storm. Make a list of the events in this story. Study this list. Record what you learn. Put yourself in the place of one of the disciples. How would you feel in this experience? What would have happened to you?
9. How does what you have learned in this section apply to your own life. What difference should it make? How has it helped you?
10. Choose one verse, from this section, that is most meaningful to you and memorize it.

LESSON 5: – MARK 4:1-41

PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

In chapter four of the Gospel of Mark, there are seven paragraphs in the Greek text. They are as follows:

Mark 4:1-9	The Parable of the Sower
Mark 4:10-20	The Explanation of the Parable
Mark 4:21-25	The parable of the lamp
Mark 4:26-29	Comparing the Kingdom of God to Seeds
Mark 4:30-32	The Kingdom of God is Like Mustard Seed
Mark 4:33, 34	A Summary
Mark 4:35-41	Jesus Stills a Storm on Galilee

MARK 4:1-9 THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Jesus taught about the kingdom of God through parables. He did this for at least two reasons.

1. This is a very difficult teaching and the parable is helpful in understanding it.
2. Jesus has something to say to everyone, but there are pieces of information He wishes to share with the disciples only.

Notice, Jesus is teaching from a boat, but He is talking about how a farmer plants seeds. We need to remember where this teaching takes place. It is on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. This is in an area where the yield of the harvest of planted crops is higher than in most any other place in the Near East. Their per acre yield in that area, today, is nearly twice that of the best yields in America.

The parable Jesus chose would be understood by everyone who heard Him. They had all seen the things He pictured many times. In the parable, Jesus described four different kinds of ground conditions. One could easily find all four ground conditions in most any field one might see. Read the parable again and write down some of the things you discover about the parable. For instance, all of the conditions were natural. All of these conditions were passive - that is, they were not the product of anything good or bad which the seed had done. Jesus began by describing the experience of the worst and moves toward the very best. The seed was presumed to be good in each scenario. The weakness in three of the pictures was in the soil, not the seed.

SEED BY THE WAYSIDE

Some seed fell by the wayside. The ground, in this area, had been packed down by repeated use of it as a path and there was no way for the seed to get into the ground. The seed had no way to germinate and no protection from destruction by birds or people. The result of this effort was that the birds ate the seed. There was no harvest at all.

SEED ON ROCKY GROUND

Jesus then presents a picture of seed falling on rocky ground. This was a common scene in Palestine. There are two kinds of rocky ground in Palestine.

1. The land was a rock shelf covered by a thin layer of soil.

2. Many fields were so full of stones that you could make the fence to totally surround the field with the stones taken from it, and still have many rocks left in the field.

This rocky ground, whichever kind Jesus was talking about, had little soil into which the seed could fall. The seed sprang up quickly. There was no depth of dirt, the roots could not penetrate the rocks, and when the sun came up, the plant was quickly scorched. Because there was no depth of root, the plant died.

SEED FELL AMONG THORNS

Jesus also talked about seed falling among thorns. As happens so often with weeds, they take over the land and choke out the good plants as they attempt to grow. The result was that there was no harvest at all.

SEED FELL ON GOOD GROUND

Some of the seed fell on good ground. It was the same kind of seed. It probably experienced the same growing conditions, but it had the advantage of falling on good soil. The result was that in every case there was a harvest. Some was a thirty percent appreciation of the amount of seed sown. Other parts of the field produced a fifty percent appreciation of the amount of seed sown. At still other parts of the field, there was a one hundred percent appreciation of the amount of seed sown. Jesus concludes the parable with the oft repeated statement,

"Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Mark 4:9

It is a way of saying, if you can comprehend the meaning of this parable, then take it to heart and do something about it. With that He concluded the parable.

MARK 4:10-20 EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE

On many occasions, the people did not completely understand what Jesus was teaching. It was not uncommon for the disciples to be equally unable to comprehend the import of Jesus' message. This was one of those occasions.

When the multitude had left, the disciples and those who had also stayed with Jesus asked Him to clarify what He had been teaching. Jesus told the story again, but with far greater explanation.

He began by saying that it was their privilege to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God. Whatever else may be involved, this has to do with an understanding of the nature of the Kingdom of God. Mark indicates, in verse 13, that Jesus was surprised that they did not understand the parable. On the other hand, Jesus said that they had no basis for understanding all the parables.

He now explains in simpler terms. The sower sows the Word. The seed is the Scripture. Jesus did not indicate who the sower might be. In view of what Jesus said, it is appropriate to think of God as the sower.

Jesus dealt with the parts of the parable in the same order as previously given. He indicates, in verse 15, that the different kinds of soil are people.

He begins with the seed which fell by the wayside. These people heard the Scriptures, but Satan came and immediately took away the Scriptures which had been sown in them. Jesus makes no effort to prove the existence of Satan or his efforts to inhibit the Scriptures from their effect upon our lives. Jesus assumes both the existence of Satan and his intent to inhibit the Scriptures to be true. He is saying that if the Scriptures do not have the opportunity to lodge in our lives, Satan can stand in the way of our benefiting from its wisdom.

Jesus continues with a careful description. He explained what He meant by the "rocky ground". This seed represents the ones who receive the Word with joy, but have no root; no foundation for their faith. These are able to endure for a while, but when persecution and trouble come because of the Word, they stumble.

Jesus explained the story of the seed which fell among thorns. He said that they have heard the Word and that the effect of the Word was choked by three things:

- The cares of the age
- The deceitfulness of riches
- The lusts of other things

He continued by saying that when these things choke the effects of the Word, it becomes impossible for such persons to grow in their spiritual life. Jesus is saying that one's failure to make obedience to the Word the first priority of life inhibits the effectiveness of the Scriptures in one's life.

On the other hand, Jesus also describes what happens when the Word falls into good ground. As Jesus explained, the good ground is the person who is willing to allow the Scriptures to give direction to his life in order to allow God to control all that he is or does. Jesus spoke of a yield that was thirty times that which was sown. He also spoke of yields that were fifty times and a hundred times that which was sown. He is not speaking of scientific accuracy, but trying to convey the idea that there is a great yield from good ground when there are receptive hearts to the implanted seed of the Scripture. When we allow the Scriptures to become the blueprint for our lives, we can count on great spiritual growth.

MARK 4:21-25 THE PARABLE OF THE LAMP

Again, in this parable, we want to remember that Jesus is teaching about the nature of the Kingdom of God. Jesus begins this parable with a double question. He asked,

"Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed?" Mark 4:21

In order to interpret this parable, you need to understand the things Jesus was talking about. He is talking about a small lamp. It was not an electric light. It was a lamp consisting of a covered bowl with two openings in the top. The larger opening was used to replenish the supply of oil. The smaller opening was used for the insertion of a wick.



Picture 3: Lamps like those Jesus Mentioned

These oil lamps were the only form of light available in most homes. We must remember that this was a time when people did not have matches or automatic lighters as we have on our kitchen stoves. They had to preserve their flame. To do this they would, during the day, place their lamp under a clay bowl or basket that had two holes in it. This would preserve the flame, but greatly reduce the amount of oil used in the process. Jesus was saying that the lamp did not exist just to be placed under the bowl. Nor did it exist to be placed under the bed.

Now most of the people in that day had no beds. They slept on mats spread out on the floor of their house. Some houses, however, did have bedrooms with beds in them. These were the homes of the wealthy. The common people knew about beds though they may never have slept in one. It is similar to our situation. Some of us may know a good deal about a Rolls Royce, though we may never have ridden in one or owned one. Jesus is saying that the Kingdom of God is not like the way the Jews thought of a lamp, putting the lamp under a clay bowl to preserve the flame. The purpose of the lamp is to give off light. In the same manner, the purpose of the Kingdom of God is not to preserve the flame, but to share it with the people. It is not to be kept as a secret within the family. If a lamp is put on the floor or under the bed, the circle of light is very small and dim. If, however, the lamp is put on a lamp stand, then the circle of light is much brighter and larger.

Jesus said,

"For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought into the open." Mark 4:22, 23

Whatever else we may know about the Kingdom of God, God intended it to be a band of people dedicated to sharing the Good News; sharing their faith with those who do not know Jesus Christ. When the people of the kingdom fail to do this, they fail to accomplish God's intended purpose for the kingdom.

Jesus continues the parable with an imposing promise.

"Consider carefully what you hear,...with the measure you use, it will be measured to you - and even more. Whoever has will be given more; who-soever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him." Mark 4:24, 25

Again, we must remind ourselves that Jesus is describing the nature of the Kingdom of God. In the parable He is saying that the purpose of a lamp is to give light in the most obvious way. The message of the parable is that the nature of the Kingdom of God is to re-

veal God's character in the most obvious way possible. While we are fulfilling that purpose, God will minister to us according to our use of what He has placed at our disposal.

MARK 4:26-29 COMPARING THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO SEEDS

Jesus uses yet another parable to describe the nature of the Kingdom of God. He said it is like the process of growing grain from a seed. The details of the parable are as follows:

A man scatters the seed.

- The man has no further input.
- The process is produced by the seed.
- The process follows a definite pattern.
- The end of the process is harvest.
- The purpose of the process was harvest.
- The planter is also the harvester.

The message Jesus is teaching in this parable is that the harvest is the product of the Word and not of the planters' efforts or skills. The harvest is the reason for the planting. If one's efforts do not result in harvest, then the purpose of the Kingdom of God is not being realized.

MARK 4:30-32 KINGDOM OF GOD LIKE MUSTARD SEED

Jesus chooses yet another parable to describe the Kingdom of God. The parable of the mustard seed is sometimes misinterpreted to describe the importance of small beginnings. In our western culture, we tend to think of the mustard plant as a small plant about 12 inches in height. The mustard tree is much larger than this. On the temple mount in Jerusalem, there is a mustard tree which is about five feet in height and it can hold birds quite nicely on its branches. Whatever else the parable tells us, it is a description of what the Kingdom of God is like. Talking about the Kingdom of God, Jesus said that it starts out smaller than anything else, but grows up larger than anything else. Jesus goes on to tell of the utilitarian value of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is beneficial in its relationship to the world, just as the mustard plant provides shade for the birds. People tend to think of the kingdom of God as small and getting smaller. But it is just the opposite. The Kingdom of God is growing and ministering to the needs of others.

MARK 4:33,34 A SUMMARY

This paragraph consists of one sentence. It focuses on a summary of the rest of Jesus' teaching. This is more of the same kind of parabolic teaching that has already been recorded. Mark indicates that Jesus said everything in parables and then explained it to the disciples when they were alone.

MARK 4:35-41 JESUS STILL'S STORM ON GALILEE

There is a complete change in this paragraph from the balance of the chapter. Until now, Jesus has been describing the nature of the Kingdom of God. In this paragraph, Mark describes one of the miracles of Jesus.

Jesus was still being followed by large crowds. In verse 35, Mark quotes Jesus as saying,

"Let us go over to the other side." Mark 4:35

This sounds monotonous enough. It changes, however, when one realizes what it meant to the inhabitants of Western Galilee to travel to the East side of the Sea of Galilee. Prior to their becoming disciples of Jesus, few, if any, of these men had ever been on the East side, the Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee. This means that these men were already under some degree of pressure. The Decapolis area was populated mostly by Gentiles who worshipped a number of idols. There were at least two pagan temples in each of the ten major cities of the Decapolis.

Artists portray this scene as a single boat in the midst of a storm. Mark makes it clear that there were other boats going with them. There were two kinds of boats that sailed the Sea of Galilee. The small boats stayed close to the shore. The larger boats ventured out into the middle of the Sea. The boats in which Jesus and the disciples were riding were small. This probably means that they had not ventured out into the middle of the Sea.

Verse 37 indicates that

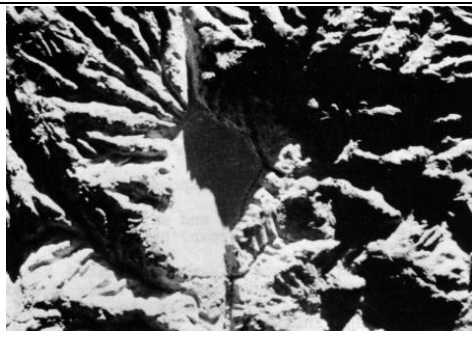
A furious squall came up. Mark 4:37

There is a strange weather situation which exists on the Sea of Galilee. The Sea can be extremely calm and then suddenly a vicious storm will break loose. People who sail the Sea live in fear of these surprise storms. This condition is produced by two geographical situations:

1. There is a natural trough from the Mediterranean Sea eastward to the Sea of Galilee. This valley becomes a funnel for the strong winds from the Mediterranean when they buffet the western shore. The winds come quickly from the West to the Sea of Galilee, from the vastness of the Mediterranean to the confined area of this valley and hit the Sea of Galilee full force.

Picture 4, a relief map of the Sea of Galilee, accurate to within one meter, will give you an impression of what the area is like. The topography of the area creates a natural bowl effect into which the winds are funneled from the Mediterranean Sea. The force of these winds create almost unbelievable storms.

2. The Sea of Galilee is 696 feet **below** sea level. It is almost completely surrounded by high hills. There is a significant difference between the temperatures on the tops of these hills and that on the surface of the water. This can also contribute to the sudden unstable weather conditions on the Sea of Galilee. Mark gives us two pieces of information which indicate the severity of the storm:



OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Picture 4: Relief Map of the Sea of Galilee

a. The waves were so high that they broke over the boat. This may also indicate that Jesus was using one of the small boats found frequently on the Sea of Galilee.

b. The waves that broke over the sides of the boat nearly swamped the craft.

In verses 38 through 41, there are five distinct responses. Mark gives us several pictures of the events which accompanied this storm. First, let us look at Jesus:

Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. Mark 4:38

Jesus treated the situation as though it were not even happening. He was in the back of the boat, sound asleep. There was no apparent tension level in Him at all.

Jesus also responded to the storm by confrontation. He spoke to the waves.

"Quiet!"... Mark 4:39

The Greek word for "quiet" literally means to be silent, to hold one's peace. It is in the Present Imperative tense. One might express this in English by saying, "Be quiet, and keep on being quiet."

Jesus also said,

"Be still!" Mark 4:39

The Greek word, translated "Be still", means literally to muzzle. It is used to describe something placed over the mouth of an ox when it is treading grain. It is as though Jesus was saying, "wind, muzzle yourself and make no more sound."

Now look at the response of the disciples.

The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" Mark 4:38

Their words and actions clearly indicated that they were frightened almost beyond control. Their question had an angry ring to it. It appears to speak of distress, frustration and inability to comprehend how Jesus could treat the dire situation in this manner. It is as though they could not believe that Jesus had no more concern than to allow them to perish. This outburst points to the fact that they were convinced that they were perishing. Their approach was, 'Don't just sit there, do something!'

Mark tells us that the wind died down. The sea had been threatening and turbulent. Jesus spoke one word and the sea became completely calm. This is incredible!

In verse 40, the spotlight shifts from the sea to the disciples. Jesus said to them,

"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Mark 4:40

The Greek word, translated "afraid", literally refers to cowardice or timidity. The question, I am certain, was confusing to the disciples. It certainly appeared to them that they had good reason to be frightened. Then Jesus asked, "Why are you so afraid?" They must have thought, "We are afraid because there is good reason to be afraid". Fear is the product of conditions which appear to be threatening beyond one's control. Jesus saw the

conditions from a different perspective. It does not mean that Jesus saw smaller waves; it does not mean He overlooked the water coming into the boats. They all saw the same things. Jesus, however, knew that God would sustain them while the disciples saw only the dangerous waves and assumed that this meant they were facing death by drowning.

Jesus asked them two questions:

- "Why are you so afraid?"
- "Do you still have no faith?"

These are very telling questions. Notice the surprise in His words. "Why are you so afraid" suggests that He does not understand why they are afraid. His second question is stronger yet. The emphasis is on the word "still". It is as though He is saying, 'after all that you have seen and experienced, do you **STILL** have no faith? What is it going to take to convince you that you can trust Me?'

In the closing verse of chapter four, Mark describes the disciples' reaction to each other. He points to two factors in their response.

- They were terrified
- They were confused

In the Greek text, it says,

And they feared a great fear. Mark 4:41

This was the understatement of the year. The Greek word for fear is "Phobias", from which we get our word phobia. The word literally means to "put to flight". When a soldier was convinced he could not win, he would flee the battle. Mark tells us that they feared a great fear. Their fear was totally devastating.

They were confused. They said to one another,

"Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" Mark 4:41

I am certain that they had not forgotten who Jesus was. They had known Him for some time. Their confusion was over the fact that though He was a man, the winds and the waves, the powerful forces over which they had no control and of which they were deathly afraid, were obedient to His command. The text is silent concerning people in the other boats; the people on land. How did it affect them?

We, as Christians, know a lot about Jesus. Beyond what we know about Him, we need to learn to trust Him in those areas which seem so frightening and so impossible to us.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 6

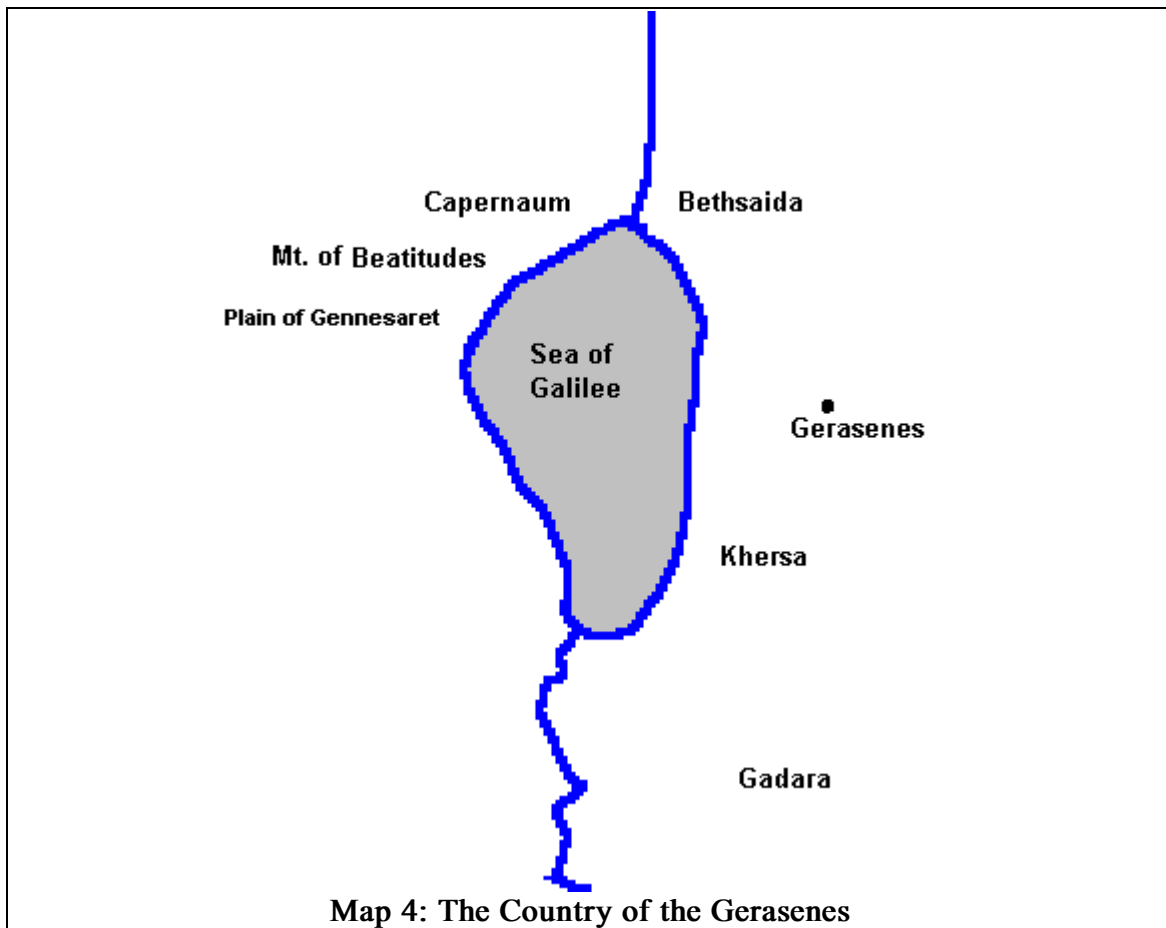
JESUS HEALED THREE - DEMONIAK, WOMAN-ISSUE, JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

MARK 5:1 - 43

1. In Mark chapter five, there are four paragraphs. Read each paragraph carefully and write, on the following table, a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

Mark 5:1-20	
Mark 5:21-24	
Mark 5:25-34	
Mark 5:35-43	

2. In Mark 5:1-20, he tells the story of a miracle. Look at the map on page 56 to see where this took place. Think about this location. Why is it important? What information does Mark give you about the demoniac? Study Jesus' response to this man. What does Mark say about Jesus? What is the significance of the herd of swine? Of the swine drowning themselves? Notice the contrast between the man in Mark 5:1-7 and the same man in Mark 5:15. What change has taken place? How did the local people respond? Read the conversation between the man and Jesus in Mark 5:18-20. What was the man trying to do? What was Jesus trying to do?
3. Read Mark 5:21-24 and 35-43 carefully. Where did this episode take place? What do these paragraphs say about the man? Study Jesus' response to Jairus. How did Jesus treat Jairus? Notice the contrast between Jesus and the other people in the story. What does it tell you about them? About Jesus? In Mark 5:41, Mark inserts a translation of Jesus' instruction to the dead girl. What does this tell you? Mark includes a parenthesis which indicates that the girl was twelve years of age. How does this information help us? Again, Jesus insists that no one be told. What would this accomplish?
4. Mark 5:25-34 is sometimes called a miracle on the way to a miracle. Verse 26 is a medical commentary. Can you see any reason for this condition? Why would the woman say, "If I just touch His clothes, I will be healed"? Study the encounter between Jesus and the woman. List the things the text says about Jesus and the woman. What do you learn from these lists?
5. Choose a verse from this chapter that is most meaningful to you. Memorize the verse.
6. In view of your study of Mark chapter five, what impact will the healing of these people have on the way you live your life and trust in Jesus?



LESSON 6: – MARK 5:1-43

JESUS HEALED THREE - DEMONIAK, WOMAN-ISSUE, JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

In Mark chapter five, there are four paragraphs in the best Greek texts. A brief summary of their contents is as follows:

Mark 5:1-20	Jesus Healed the Demoniac
Mark 5:21-24	Jairus Pleads with Jesus
Mark 5:25-34	Jesus Healed Woman With Issue of Blood
Mark 5:35-43	Jesus Raised Jairus' Daughter

In this chapter, the disciples are headed toward the uncomfortable Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee. It was uncomfortable for them because some of them had probably never entered a Gentile village prior to the time of their discipleship with Jesus. It meant they would be unable to get kosher food. It meant they would become ceremonially unclean by their contact with Gentiles. It meant being confronted with pagan idols on the streets. In most every respect, it was uncomfortable for them to go to the East side of the Sea of Galilee.

MARK 5:1-20 JESUS HEALED THE DEMONIAK

This experience apparently took place on the East side of the Sea of Galilee. It was in the region of the Gerasenes. This could be anywhere between the Sea of Galilee and the city of Gerasa, some 30 miles southeast of the Sea. This encounter probably took place near what is now known as Khersa. There are caves with tombs in that area.

The hill country, in which this experience took place, is made up of limestone slopes in which there are many caves. It was common, in that day, to use these caves as burial places. The very poor and infirm often lived in these caves. Mark tells us that this demon-possessed man lived in these caves.

The man had a tragic life. People had put chains on his hands and feet, but he was so strong that he had broken the chains, and because of that, the people were afraid of him. The people thought of him as a possessed person. He was a driven man. Day and night he was screaming in the caves and cutting himself with stones. This is a vivid picture of what an evil spirit can do.

In verses 6 through 13, Mark records the confrontation between Jesus, the Son of God, and the Gadarean man possessed by demons. Notice the actions of the demoniac. He fell on his knees before Jesus. This is a picture of subservience. It is the position of petition. The demoniac identified Jesus, calling Him, "Jesus, Son of the Most High God." The demoniac also made a petition of Jesus,

"Swear to God that you won't torture me!" Mark 5:7

The man made this petition because Jesus was commanding the demon to come out of him. It is a clear admission that the demon knew that Jesus had power over him.

Jesus asked the demon,

"What is your name?" Mark 5:9

The demon responded, through the man,

"My name is legion...for we are many." Mark 5:9

The demon was saying that there were many demons, not just one, who had taken refuge in the body of this man.

The demon begged Jesus repeatedly not to send him out of the area. This was a significant request. A demon is a spirit and has no body. Because of this, a demon will seek to occupy another body. Remember, this is a pagan, non-Jewish area. A great many pigs were herded on the hillside near Gadara. Pigs were often used as sacrifices in the worship of idols. The demon pleaded with Jesus to send them into the pigs. Imagine what happened in the minds of the disciples when they heard the demon ask to be sent into the body of a pig. The disciples had never eaten or touched a pig in their lives.

In verse 13, Mark tells us that Jesus gave the demons permission. The demons came out of the man and entered into the pigs. The herd of pigs, about two thousand of them, literally went crazy and rushed down the bank, into the water and drowned.

The men who had tended the pigs, ran in terror to the village and frantically told everyone what had happened. The people then rushed to see for themselves. Many of these people had owned some of the pigs that had died. They had lost their income. These Gentiles did not like Jews to start with, and now to think that they had lost 2,000 pigs because of **one** Jew was more than they could handle.

When the people came, they were terrified to see the demoniac, whom they had known for a long time, sitting there by Jesus. They could not imagine what had happened nor could they understand it. The man was fully dressed; he was in his right mind. The shock of the local people turned into great fear, and the eye-witness account did not alleviate it in the least.

The people who had come out to see what happened to the pigs pleaded with Jesus to go away and leave their region. Their emotions ran high. They were terror stricken. They were now impoverished, and they did not know what to make of the fact that this man, whom they had feared, was now sane and gentle.

In verses 18-20, Mark describes Jesus' response to their pleading. He did not argue with them. He simply got into the boat.

As Jesus was getting ready to leave, the former demoniac pleaded with Him for permission to become one of His followers. But Jesus could not grant the man's request. Can you imagine what the reaction of the disciples would have been to have this Gentile join the group? They were not ready to accept him as one of their own. Also, the presence of a Gentile would have precluded any ministry Jesus might have to Jews between this time and the end of His earthly ministry. Jesus gave him a task to perform. He said to him,

"Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you." Mark 5:19

It would have been exciting to go with Jesus. Even though there are some scholars who believe that Jesus denied this man's request because His own disciples were not yet prepared to share the Good News with anyone who was not a Jew, the text does not say that this is what motivated Jesus. The purpose of Jesus' ministry was not excitement, but carrying out the task of witnessing to the power of God being demonstrated among the people through His life.

It may not have been as exciting, but Jesus' commission to the man was vital. Being a Gentile, he could have a fruitful ministry telling other Gentiles what the Lord had done for him. The man went and did exactly as Jesus had commanded him.

He told his story in the Decapolis. This is a compound word: Deca - means ten; Polis - cities. The word simply means "ten cities". These ten cities, built by the Romans, were to be found from the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee to the area of the present Amman, Jordan. These cities were inhabited mostly by Greeks, but there were some Jewish residents there as well. The response of the people to the story of the healed demoniac was, as Mark tells us, sheer amazement.

MARK 5:21-24 JAIRUS PLEADS WITH JESUS

In verse 21, Mark tells us that Jesus had now returned to the western, more comfortable side of the Sea of Galilee. Upon His arrival, Jesus was surrounded by a large crowd.

Before Jesus could leave the shore, Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogue, came to Him. This may have been a reference to the Synagogue at Capernaum. A ruler of the Synagogue was the administrative leader of the place of worship. He helped decide who would participate in the services, made the necessary preparations and decided what was to be done, but he did not personally participate in them. He was one of the most respected people in the Jewish community. Coming to Jesus would insure that this man's orthodox friends would have nothing to do with him in the future.

Jairus fell at Jesus' feet. This was an act of petition, and he was pleading earnestly with Jesus, when he said,

"My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." Mark 5:23

More information, concerning this situation, can be gained from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. From Matthew we learn that Jairus said,

"My daughter has just died." Mt. 9:18

There is no way to determine which statement is accurate. Luke and Mark tell us that the young girl was 12 years of age. In the Jewish community of that day, a girl of 12 years and one day was considered a woman. She was of marriageable age and would be treated much as a woman in her twenties in our culture.

Whether the girl was dying or already deceased, Jairus was absolutely convinced that if Jesus would place His hands on the girl, she would be healed and live. It was clear to Jairus that there was something in the touch of Jesus that brought healing and life. This is strong faith in the power of Jesus. Therefore, Jesus went with the man.

MARK 5:25-34 JESUS HEALED WOMAN WITH ISSUE OF BLOOD

These verses are affectionately referred to as the miracle on the way to a miracle. In the crowd that went with Jesus, as He started for the home of Jairus, was a woman who had a bleeding condition for 12 years. She had suffered with this debilitating condition as long as Jairus' daughter had lived. Leviticus 12 indicates that a woman with a flow of blood was unclean and could not touch anything sacred during that time. This would mean that this woman had been a religious outcast for 12 years.

In verse 26, Mark describes her dilemma. He said,

She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. Mark 5:26

We must not consider the care she received in any way comparable to the medical care of people in the U.S.A. today. William Barclay refers to the Talmud in his description of some of the treatment prescribed for women in her condition:

The Talmud itself gives no fewer than eleven cures for such a trouble. Some of them are tonics and astringents; but some of them are sheer superstitions like carrying the ashes of an ostrich-egg in a linen rag in summer and a cotton rag in winter; or carrying a barley corn which had been found in the dung of a white she-ass.¹

Some doctors, in Jesus' time, felt that a person's health would be improved if some of the problems were released through blood-letting. This woman had already lost too much blood. Further loss only made her condition worse. Mark's picture was vivid. She had spent her last penny and was now physically worse than before.

Mark's brief account tells us some important things about the woman. She apparently had known Jesus for only a short time. Both Matthew 9:20 and Luke 8:44 indicate that she touched the fringe of His garment. The garment worn by Jewish men was called the "tsitsit." At each of the four corners of this garment was a fringe. The length of these fringes was a symbol of a person's position in the community. The longer the fringe, the more important the person. She came up behind Jesus and touched the fringe of His tsitsit.

The woman thought to herself,

If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed. Mark 5:28

This was faith. She acted upon what she believed and she was completely healed. Imagine her response. She had been trying to find a cure for 12 years. Disappointment had been her constant companion. Suddenly, at no cost, she touched the fringe of this man's garment and she was instantly healed, freed from her suffering. The exaltation she must have felt had to have been beyond description.

Jesus shocked His disciples. He said to them,

"Who touched my clothes?" Mark 5:30

The disciples were incredulous. In the jostling of a large crowd, Jesus wanted to know who it was that touched His clothes? It seems certain that all of them had been touched by numerous people, but there was a difference. Mark helps us when he wrote,

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. Mark 5:30

It was not just that someone had touched Him. It was that power was transferred and He knew it, though the disciples did not.

Jesus kept looking for the person who had touched Him. I'm sure He knew instantly who it was, but gave her time to own up to it. This took great courage. Finally, the woman came to Jesus. Two feelings struggled within her:

¹ Barclay, William, The Gospel of Mark, The Daily Study Bible Series, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976) p. 129

1. She knew that something had happened in her body. We assume this means that she was convinced she was healed. She had to feel unbelievable joy. She apparently felt intense gratitude for what Jesus had done for her.
2. She fell at His feet trembling with fear. She was afraid because there were strict rules concerning a woman who had an issue of blood. If she touched any man or if he touched her, he would be unclean. He would be barred from the exercise of religious services for a period of time. She had been a religious outcast from the time Jairus' daughter was born. She had been forced to avoid people for more than a decade. This takes a toll on people. Fear was her constant companion. She had to risk being rejected or punished by Jesus for being so brazen as to touch Him, when she knew what that meant in their society.

The woman told Jesus the whole story of her life. He responded to her confession with great kindness. He called her "daughter". It was not a way of speaking of her as a little girl. It was a way of identifying with her, a way of giving her a sense of belonging.

Jesus said that it was her faith that had healed her. He then gave her two instructions:

1. Go in peace. The struggles and tensions of her life, up to this point, were over.
2. Be freed from your suffering. The text literally says, "Be sound, hale, wholesome in health." It was a way of saying, "Your difficulties are over! You're healed." In our times, we know that people often remain ill because they can not accept the possibility of being well. Jesus' instruction was an invitation to believe the unbelievable.

MARK 5:35-43 JESUS RAISED JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

In verse 35, the spotlight shifts back to the story of Jairus' daughter. Study the encounter between Jairus and Jesus. Word had just come that the daughter was dead. It is possible that Jairus was pursuing Jesus despite what they had told him? His servants tried to reason with Jairus,

"Your daughter is dead, why bother the teacher any more?" Mark 5:35

This is a difficult passage. To help with its understanding, put yourself in the shoes of Jairus. As he struggled with this information, Mark tells us what happened,

Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the Synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe." Mark 5:36

The messengers said, "Your daughter is dead, why bother the teacher?" Jesus said, "Don't be afraid, just believe." What should Jairus do? He believed Jesus could heal his daughter, but could He raise her from the dead? This was the dilemma of Jairus.

Jesus left the crowd and took with Him Peter, James and John and went to the home of Jairus. When they arrived, Jesus saw the confusion of people, crying and wailing very loudly. He responded to their uncontrolled sorrow, saying,

"Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead, but asleep." Mark 5:39

Wailing was a vital part of their observance of the dead. This is still true in the Near East today. The family was to take part in the wailing or hire someone to do it for them. Wailing is prolonged, intense screaming and crying. The persons, family or professional,

behave in an erratic manner. They would tear their clothes, throw dirt into the air and let it land on their heads. It was a way of symbolizing how great their loss was. It was a way of expressing just how important the deceased was to the family. The more they wailed and cried, the more they showed their love for the deceased.

Jesus challenged their premature wailing because in His mind the girl was alive. The mourners had seen the body. They knew that the girl had died, so they laughed at Jesus. The difference was that they saw the human fact while Jesus saw the divine possibility.

Verse 40 states that Jesus put the mourners out. This suggests that these were probably hired mourners. He sent them away. There was no need for mourning in this house.

Jesus took the mother and father along with his three disciples and went into the place where the dead body was placed. Put yourself in the place of the parents. You know your child is dead, but Jesus is treating her as though she were taking a nap. You want to believe, but you are afraid to because you know the child is dead.

Jesus took the child by the hand and said to her, "Talitha kum which means 'Little girl, get up.'" Mark actually gives the Hebrew command and then translates it into Greek. This tells us that the people to whom Mark was writing might not understand the Hebrew language. When Jesus commanded the young girl to rise, she immediately stood up and walked around. Mark then explains that this girl was twelve years old. Some translations have this information in parentheses, indicating that it was probably not a part of the original text. There appears to be no basis for thinking that this was not in the original text.

Mark tells us that "they" were completely astonished. He does not identify who "they" are. It appears that it is a reference to the disciples, if not the parents as well, and of course, all the crowd outside!

Verse 43 indicates that Jesus gave two strict orders:

- Do not let anyone know about this.
- Give her something to eat.

The first command seems impossible. How do you hide such a miracle. Many people knew that the girl had died, for the mourners were already present. Jesus simply did not want curiosity to hinder His ministry. The instruction to give her something to eat removes all doubt concerning her return to life.

CONCLUSION

There are several records in the Gospels of Jesus healing the sick. In our time, we must ask ourselves, was this something that happened then, but does not happen in our times? There are some who believe that. Is this something that we should expect Jesus to do in our time? There is a piece of information in Hebrews that seems helpful at this point:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Hebrews 13:8

This suggests that everything that Jesus did in that time, He is still doing today. On the basis of this information, what will you expect Jesus to do in your life, now? How will this study change the way you think? How will it affect the way you live your Christian life?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 7
JESUS' REJECTION AND MIRACLES
MARK 6:1 - 56

1. There are six paragraphs in our best manuscripts of Mark chapter six. On the table below, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

Mark 6:1-6	
Mark 6:7-13	
Mark 6:14-29	
Mark 6:30-44	
Mark 6:45-52	
Mark 6:53-56	

2. In Mark 6:1-6, Jesus was rejected in His home town. What was the basis of this rejection? What was the result of this encounter?
3. In Mark 6:7-13, Jesus sent His disciples out to preach. Study carefully the instructions Jesus gave. There are a number of very specific instructions. What difference would these make? What was the result of their evangelistic effort?
4. The author shifts the spotlight in Mark 6:14-29. Read this story carefully. What purpose can this story serve at this point? What does this story tell you about Herod? About John the Baptist? About Jesus?
5. The well known feeding of the five thousand is described in Mark 6:30-44. What is the immediate context of this miracle? Both Jesus and the disciples recognized the problem in verse 36. They suggested different solutions. Study the disciples' solution, in view of Mark 6:30,31. Study Jesus' solution. Compare and contrast the two.
6. In Mark 6:45-52, the disciples were in another storm on the Sea of Galilee (see Mark 4:35-41). Study these experiences carefully. What did you learn? Why did they cry out in Mark 6:49?
7. In Mark 6:53-56, they landed at Genesaret rather than Bethsaida as planned. Reflect upon and think carefully about the people's response when they recognized Jesus getting out of the boat. What did they discover?
8. Reflect upon Mark chapter six. Specifically, how does this passage give direction to your daily discipleship in your community?
9. Choose a verse, from this passage, that is most meaningful to you. Memorize the verse.

LESSON 7: – MARK 6:1-56

REJECTION AND THE MIRACLES

Look at the following chart. It lists the titles of the paragraphs for chapters 5 and 6.

CHAPTER FIVE	CHAPTER SIX
5:1-20 - Demoniac healed	6:1-6* - Jesus rejected - Nazareth
5:21-24 - Jairus' plea	6:7-13* - Disciples sent out
5:25-34 - Woman- Issue of blood	6:14-29* - Herod fears Jesus
5:35-43 - Jairus' daughter raised	6:30-44 - 5,000 fed
	6:45-52 - Jesus Walked on Water
	6:53-56 - Sick healed - Gennesaret

Notice that all of chapter 5 deals with positive, upbeat concerns. On the other hand, three of the six paragraphs in chapter six deal with confrontation and rejection (see* above). This sets the background against which chapter six is to be understood.

MARK 6:1-6 JESUS REJECTED AT NAZARETH

Following the glowing experiences of chapter 5, Jesus and His disciples went to Nazareth, Jesus' home town. This means that Jesus was coming to His home town as a visiting Rabbi, attended by His disciples. On the Sabbath, Jesus was allowed to teach in the synagogue. Mark tells us that the people who heard Him, were amazed at what He knew and taught. They remembered Him as a carpenter, not as a Teacher of the Law. Certainly they were as amazed by who He was as they were by what He said. Their response was both astonishment and confusion.

"Where did this man get these things", they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" Mark 6:2, 3

The hometown folks were confused by the things Jesus shared with them. They did not see how He could possibly know these things. They remembered Him as a carpenter who could do manual work, but not perform miracles. Their questions about His family were not so much questions about His identity, as questions which focused upon His local origin and formed a basis for their thinking that He was a fraud. This is substantiated by their response to what Jesus said,

And they took offense at him. Mark 6:3

It is interesting that Jesus did not respond to the issue they raised. He simply said to them,

"Only in his home town, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet 'without honor'." Mark 6:4

A number of scholars understand this sentence to mean that family members were among those who were offended at Jesus. The old maxim proved true again, "Familiarity Breeds Contempt."

Verses 4 through 6 tell us that Jesus was not able to do any miracles in Nazareth. Mark is not describing the helplessness of Jesus. He is rather describing the unwillingness of the people of Nazareth to believe that their home town boy could do the miraculous. His power was unquestionable, for Jesus had healed many before He came to Nazareth. But Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith. To the people of Nazareth, the issue was that He was still the home town boy who had become a carpenter, not a Rabbi or miracle-worker.

MARK 6:7-13 JESUS SENDS OUT DISCIPLES, TWO BY TWO TO PREACH

This paragraph is made up of three parts:

- The training, v.6,7
- The instructions, v.8-11
- The results, v.12,13

Jesus left Nazareth and taught in the many villages in the area. The disciples were with Him, for it was to be a training period for them. He was showing them what He wanted them to do. Then Jesus called the disciples to Him and sent them out, two by two.

There are a number of possibilities why Jesus did it this way. One of the most promising possibilities is that Jesus did this in keeping with long standing legal codes. According to the Old Testament, on the confirmation of two or three witnesses, a testimony was verified. Jesus sent these 6 pairs of disciples into the villages of the area to witness.

Jesus gave them authority over evil spirits. It is fair to assume that prior to this action, the disciples did not possess this power.

Jesus gave them instructions for the journey:

"Take nothing for the journey except a staff - no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals, but not an extra tunic. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them." Mark 6:8-11

This was a call for implicit faith. They were to go just as they were.

- The staff was an aid for walking.
- They were to take no bread. This put them at risk of not being able to find a Jewish community in which to buy bread. They would risk being unable to get kosher food. This was totally foreign to most of the disciples prior to their discipleship with Jesus.
- They were to take no bag. This could be a knapsack capable of holding a two day supply of food. It was carried over the shoulder. It could also be a reference to a beggar's bag, which many religious people used, to beg for their daily needs. This was to be a time of complete trust.
- They were to take no money in their garment. They could not depend on their ability to buy. They had to depend upon the power of God to provide for their needs.

REJECTION AND THE MIRACLES

- Jesus instructed them to wear sandals. They were to travel comfortably, as sons, not as slaves. Sons wore shoes or sandals; slaves went barefooted.
- They were not to take an extra tunic. The tunic is the undergarment which most of them wore. It was a full-length garment worn by both men and women. They were not to go with excess baggage.
- Jesus had some definite plans in mind for their hospitality. When they went into a village, they were to stay in the home into which they were first welcomed until they left that town. This dealt with the problem of being upstaged by wealthier families.
- Jewish law required people to care for the wayfarer without being asked. Jesus told them that if no one invited them into the home or if no one would listen to them, they should shake off the dust from their feet and leave town. We need to remember that they treated footprints as something real. Scholars tell us that when a Jew went through a Samaritan town, someone would take straw and burn it on each footprint. This was probably a slap at a Jewish requirement. When strict Jews came into a Jewish community, after passing through a Gentile area, they must first shake off the dust from their feet so as not to contaminate the Jewish community. Jesus is saying to them, if these people will not welcome you or listen to you, shake off the dust of their community from your feet lest you contaminate any other welcoming community, even a Gentile one. This is a testimony against that community.

The disciples went out to do as Jesus had asked them to do. Notice what they did:

- They preached that people should repent.
- They drove out demons.
- They anointed people with oil and healed them.

In this, the disciples give an excellent example of how the followers of Jesus are to share the Good News about Jesus Christ. These things should be characteristic of the followers of Christ.

MARK 6:14-29 HEROD FEARS JESUS IS JOHN THE BAPTIST RISEN

The entire paragraph is a flash back. It reports something that happened prior to the time of the other experiences in the paragraph.

There are five sub-sections in this paragraph:

- verses 14-18 Herod is frightened
- verses 19,20 The conflict
- verses 21-25 The confrontation
- verses 26-28 The dilemma
- verse 29 The aftermath

Mark begins the paragraph by pointing out that Jesus' popularity had reached the palace. Herod knew all about it. Jesus was being talked about in a variety of circles. The

rumors were as pervasive as Jesus' popularity. Some said Jesus was John the Baptist, raised from the dead. Others said that Jesus was Elijah. Still others claimed that Jesus was a prophet like one of the ancient prophets.

Herod was not a personal name, but a family name.

There were several rulers called "Herod".

- Herod the Great - He was an Idumean who ruled from 37 BC - 4 BC. He had five wives.
- Herod Archelaus, 4 BC - 6 AD. He was the eldest son of Herod the Great, by Malathake, a Samaritan.
- Herod Antipas, 4 BC - 39 AD. He was the tetrarch who ruled only half of his father's realm for that time. He was the son of Herod the Great, by Malthake.
- Herod Philip, 4 BC - 34 AD, tetrarch of the other half of the realm, son of Herod the Great, by Mariamne, the Boethusian.
- Herod Agrippa I, 37 AD - 44 AD, son of Herod the Great, by Mariamne, the Asmonaeon.
- Herod Agrippa II, 53 AD - 70 AD, son of Agrippa I.

The ruler in this story is Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. He ruled for 43 years over half of the former realm of his father. Antipas married Herodias, the former wife of his brother, Herod Philip.

Mark explains why Herod Antipas was so sensitive. John the Baptist had confronted Herod Antipas about his relationship with Herodias, and there was a confrontation between Antipas and Herodias over John the Baptist. Herod liked to listen to John. Herodias was threatened by him and wanted to get rid of him.

Herod celebrated his birthday by giving a banquet for his high officials, military commanders and leaders of Galilee. The daughter of Herodias danced so well that she pleased both Herod and his guests. To show his appreciation, Herod invited her to ask whatever she wished, up to half of his kingdom. He sealed this promise with his oath. This meant that he could not change his offer, and it was made before all his guests.

The daughter went to her mother to ask what she should request. The mother sensed the opportunity to get even with John the Baptist and requested his head on a platter. Herod Antipas was trapped. He did not want to kill John the Baptist, but he was unable to go back on his word. Therefore, he had to have John the Baptist killed.

Out of this background, Herod Antipas was frightened when he heard of the popularity of Jesus. He did not know Jesus and his guilty conscience caused him to think this was John the Baptist raised from the dead.

MARK 6:30-44 THE FEEDING OF THE 5,000

The story of the feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle that is reported in all four Gospel records. It made a tremendous impact upon the disciples. The location of the feeding of the 5,000 was apparently near the north-western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Look at the opening of this paragraph and you will see that Jesus and His disciples had come out here to get away from the crowds. The disciples had returned from their preaching mis-

sion and were trying to give their report. There were so many people around that they could not even eat. Jesus took the situation in hand and said,

"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."
Mark 6:31

Jesus, by teaching and example, sometimes led His disciples to go aside for rest and reflection. Evidence of this can be found in Mark 1:35, 6:46, Luke 5:16, 6:12, 22:39 and several other places. In this instance, Jesus and the disciples got into the boat and went to a solitary place. The text does not say where this is, but it appears to be on the west side of the Sea of Galilee in the vicinity where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount. It is a solitary place even today. There is, from this place, a beautiful view of the Sea of Galilee.

Many of the people, however, recognized them and followed them along the shore. The large crowd drew upon the compassion of Jesus. He viewed them as sheep without a shepherd. Sheep by themselves will mill around and get nowhere. They need someone to give them direction and help. This is how Jesus saw these people. He became their shepherd and began to teach them. Mark does not give us any detail about what He taught. For that we must turn to Matthew 5-7. As usual, Mark gives only the bare essentials of the story. It was now late in the day and the place was some distance from a town where they could buy food. The disciples were becoming concerned and talked with Jesus about sending the people home.

Verses 36 and 37 are a confrontation of understanding between Jesus and His disciples. The problem was simple for the disciples. It was time to eat and they had nothing to give to the people. The only thing to do was to send them home. Jesus, however, saw it differently. It was time to eat and they had a responsibility. He had received these people and according to the rules of that section of the world, you must care for the needs of the person you accept into your care. Jesus knew that if the people went into the village to buy bread, there would not be any bread for sale at this time of day. If there were bread for sale, there would not be enough. The disciples were really saying, "Send them away; let them care for themselves". Jesus was saying, "You care for their needs"

The disciples then turned to logic. They argued with Jesus,

"That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat." Mark 6:37

This appears to be sarcasm. Chances are that they did not have eight months' wages in their purse to buy that much bread, even if they had decided to do so. It appears that they were trying to point out how ridiculous this situation was becoming.

Jesus was untouched by their sarcasm. He said to them,

"How many loaves do you have?...Go and see." Mark 6:38

Jesus was trying to get them to stop assuming that this was a hopeless situation. The disciples went through the crowd to see how much bread there was. They returned with the pitiful report - five loaves and two fish. John tells us that Andrew was the one who found a small boy who had the five barley loaves and two small fish for his lunch.

Imagine the frustration of the disciples when Jesus said for them to have the people sit down in groups on the green grass. This last phrase indicates that it was winter time, and not the dry, summer season. The people did exactly as Jesus instructed them.

There are two beautiful pictures here. You might miss them unless you put yourself into the scene. Imagine yourself as Jesus, holding the five small barley biscuits, about three inches in diameter, and two sardine sized fish and praying over them in front of nearly 10,000 people. There were probably at least 10,000 people because the 5,000 only included the men. There were probably at least that many more women and children. Jesus took what He had and gave the Father thanks for it. Then He broke the loaves before giving them to the disciples. He had to break the loaves because there was not even a half biscuit for each disciple to distribute.

Now imagine yourself as a disciple. Jesus gave you less than a full biscuit and a tiny part of a sardine sized fish and sent you to divide that food among nearly a thousand people. My amazement is that the disciples were willing to do as Jesus instructed them.

Verses 42 and 43 give the results of this experience. Every person ate enough to be satisfied. The disciples picked up twelve baskets full of broken pieces of bread and fish. The text does not say, but it appears that this would serve as a strong reminder to the doubtful disciples that Jesus could indeed make that little bit of food sufficient for the crowd.

Again, picture the scene. You are one of the disciples. You had been trying to reason with Jesus that there was not enough for everyone. One of your number was even sarcastic with Jesus about how much it would take to buy enough bread. Now, each of you is bringing a basket full of leftovers back to Jesus. Do you feel a little sheepish? Are you afraid He will say, "I told you so!?"

Verse 42 is almost a statement of shock. It records that 5,000 men had eaten. This means that, counting women and possibly children, there were probably 10,000 people who had eaten. Imagine how speechless the disciples were.

MARK 6:45-52 JESUS WALKS ON WATER

The story of Jesus walking on the water is well known, even to non-Christians. The story is told only by Mark and Matthew. If you look at Matthew 14, you will find pieces of information which Mark does not include. Interestingly enough, some of these have to do with Peter walking on the water.

The feeding of the 5,000 took place on the north-west side of the Sea of Galilee. Bethsaida, the town to which Jesus sent His disciples, is the farthest point to the north-east, about twelve miles away. As you read this paragraph, it appears that it took the disciples about twelve hours to cover that short distance. This is possible when the sea is as rough as the Sea of Galilee can be. It is important to remember that the Sea of Galilee is a difficult place to navigate because of the surprise storms which spring up almost instantly. This is due to the location, near the Mediterranean Sea, and the natural corridor through which the winds travel from the Mediterranean to the Sea of Galilee.

Following many of His miracles and healings, Jesus sought seclusion to pray; to spend time with the Father. For this reason the disciples were traveling alone.

The central teaching in this paragraph focuses on the response of the disciples. They were frightened of water, terrorized by a storm and suddenly they saw Jesus walking on the water and thought He was a ghost. Mark says that they were terrified. The word for "terrified" means an agitation growing out of confusion or consternation. They did not know what to expect next and it terrified them. At this point, Jesus spoke to them. He said,

"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." Mark 6:50

Nothing had changed. The winds were as strong as before. Jesus expected His presence to make a difference in their lives. The fact that He was there was intended to enable them to take courage; it should enable them to cease being afraid. But Jesus walked on the water! Who but a ghost could do that!

Then Jesus climbed into the boat with them and the wind died down. Of course, this amazed the disciples. Jesus **could** walk on water! Mark explains that they had not understood the power which Jesus exercised when He fed the 5,000 because the disciple's hearts were hardened. It does not mean that they were bitter. The hardened heart means to be callous, unable to discern because of lack of spiritual growth. And they were not ready to comprehend Jesus walking on water.

MARK 6:53-56 JESUS HEALED THE SICK IN GENNESARET

This paragraph is a summary statement with no effort to detail the action. When Jesus arrived on the southeast side of the Sea of Galilee, the people recognized Him and brought all the sick and placed them in the marketplace. Do you remember when Jesus refused to allow the healed demoniac to come with Him? Jesus instructed him to tell the people of the area. Apparently the man had done a good job. In all probability, this was a direct result of his efforts. These people knew that Jesus could heal and they desperately wanted Him to heal their helpless loved ones. They pleaded with Jesus to allow the sick to just touch the fringe of His garment. They believed that if they could just do this, their loved ones would be healed. This is the second time we have encountered this idea in the Gospel of Mark. We need to remember that the fringe was a symbol of a person's power and position. We have difficulty understanding this idea because we have no visual reminders which indicate the importance of a person. The President of the United States, senators, governors and such, wear business suits like anyone else. We need to remember that the fringe was a symbol of a person's power.

Mark, in chapters five and six, focuses on the tremendous power of Jesus over evil and illness. In such times, one can expect intense opposition. All that Jesus was, He is in our experiences as well. When problems arise, Jesus is still able. When the impossible is apparent, Jesus will still do the miraculous. Whatever else the passage teaches, we can depend upon the power of Jesus to do the impossible.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 8

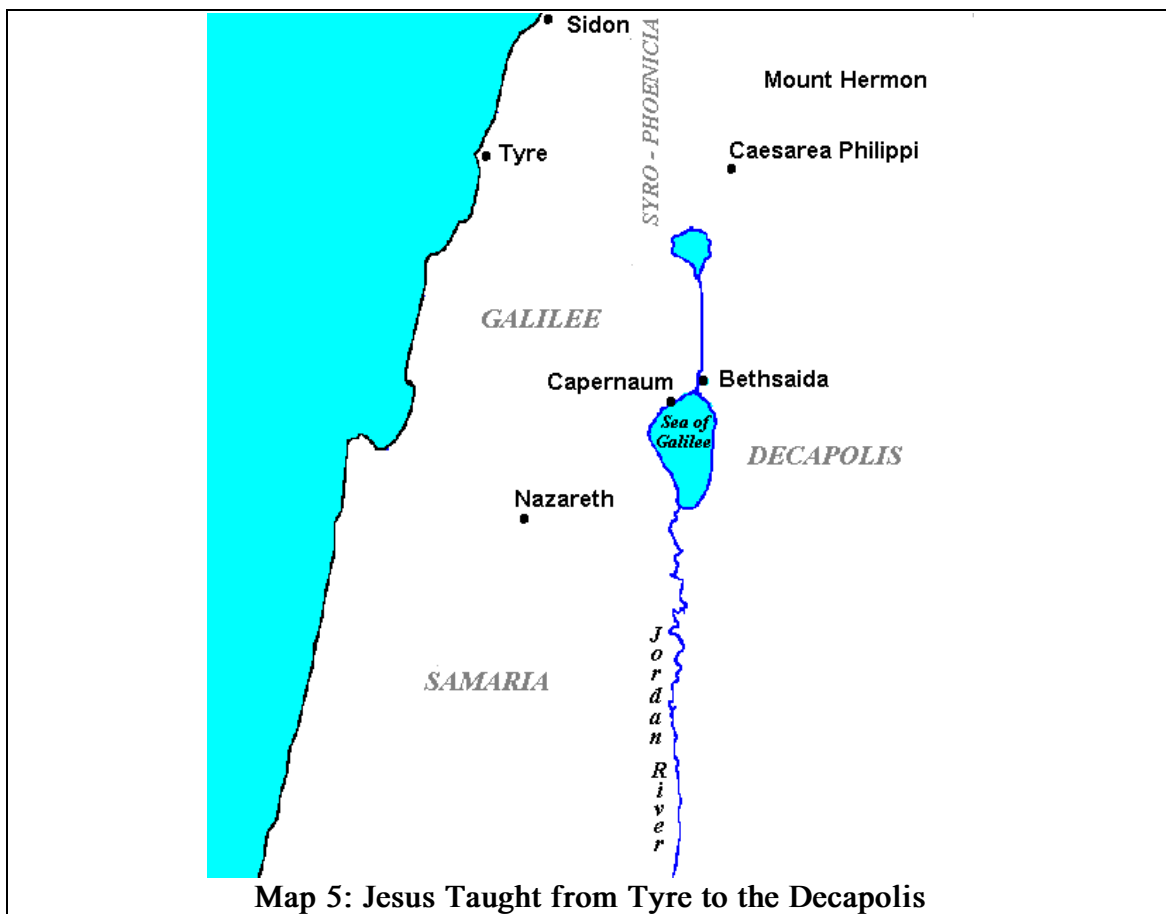
HEALING IN TYRE

MARK 7:1 - 37

1. There are three paragraphs in this segment of the Gospel of Mark. Read each paragraph carefully. Write a title of not more than seven words for each paragraph.

Mark 7:1-23	
Mark 7:24-30	
Mark 7:31-37	

2. In Mark 7:1-23, Jesus is engaged in a lengthy debate with the scribes (teachers of the law) and the pharisees. What was the subject of the debate? What was the position of the scribes? What was the position of Jesus? What do you see? What was the final result? What does this tell you?
3. In Mark 7:24-30, Jesus performed a miracle. Where did the woman live? What was the problem? Jesus' conversation with her tend to sound harsh and uncaring. Study the verbal exchanges between Jesus and the woman. What do you see? What was the final result? What does this tell you?
4. In Mark 7:31-37, Jesus performed a miracle. Trace Jesus' journey in this passage. What did you learn? Why did Jesus take the man away from the crowd? What is the significance of the "spittle" and "He touched the man's tongue" and "He placed His fingers in the man's ears"? Why did Mark need to translate Mark 7:34? What happened? How did the people react?
5. Reflect on the miracles of Jesus in chapter seven. In what way will your expectations be different because of this study and awareness?



LESSON 8: – MARK 7:1-37

HEALING IN TYRE

There are three paragraphs in Mark chapter seven. They are as follows:

Mark 7:1 - 23	Conflict - Ceremonial vs. Real Defilement
Mark 7:24 - 30	Syrophoenician Woman's Daughter Healed
Mark 7:31 - 37	Man, Deaf and Mute, Healed

In this chapter, there is a contrast which stands out. In the first paragraph, the pharisees challenged Jesus about His disciples' habits. In the balance of the chapter, however, there are two pictures of Jesus' power to heal the sick. This contrast highlights the greatness of Jesus' power and the harshness of the pharisee's challenge.

MARK 7:1-23 CONFLICT - CEREMONIAL VS. REAL DEFILEMENT

The pharisees had come from Jerusalem, some 75 miles away. They noticed that Jesus' disciples were eating without having observed the ceremonial washing required of all Jews who followed the "tradition of the elders." The "tradition of the elders" was a series of instructions to be observed by Jews who were serious about obeying the commands of the Old Testament. A strict Jew would rather go hungry than to eat without observing the rules of washing his hands. It is not surprising that the pharisees challenged Jesus because He was responsible for the disciples' actions. First, from Jesus' perspective, the pharisees asked the wrong question. They asked why His disciples did not live according to the "tradition of the elders". For Jesus, the question should properly be, "why don't your disciples live according to the teaching of the Scriptures?"

Jesus answered the challenge with three specific responses.

- **You are hypocrites. Jesus said,**

*Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:
"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."
Mark 7:6*

Jesus claimed that they said all the right things, but that it had no meaning in their lives. Pleasing God involves more than saying the right things. It requires that they love God so that their words and motives match.

- **You released yourselves from the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.**

In verses six and seven, Jesus quotes from the Old Testament to illustrate what He was saying to the pharisees. Jesus first quotes from Isaiah 29:13, when He said,

*"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.
They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men."
Mark 7:6, 7*

This was a serious charge, but in verses 9 through 13, Jesus documented the things He had been saying. He reminded them of the commandment, concerning honoring one's parents, which Moses gave in Exodus 20:12. Jesus also quoted the teaching of Exodus 21:17 where Moses said,

"Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death." Mark 7:10

Jesus then talked with them about another common teaching in Israel. This was the teaching of "Corban." The word "Corban" literally means "an offering". It is the name given to any sacred gift. The Jews had a tradition that the eldest son was responsible for his aged parents. However, if the son said that whatever of his belongings which were to have been for the care of his parents, were given as an offering to God, then the son had no responsibility to his parents. Jesus was showing the pharisees that some of their traditions were in direct contradiction to the teaching of their Scripture and the will of God. Jesus was not satisfied with this illustration, but asserted that there were many things like this.

- **Some of your traditions are misdirected.** In verses 14 through 23, Jesus takes aim at another of their traditions. There were a number of the Jewish traditions which had to do with what they could and could not eat, lest they be defiled. Jesus said,

"Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean'." Mark 7:16

Notice, in verse 19, there is a parenthesis where Mark points out that the significance of this statement of Jesus is that all food is really clean.

Jesus takes a stand contrary to all Jewish tradition when He said that it was what came out of a man that made him unclean. The heart, not the stomach, was the origin of uncleanness. Evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, none of these originated outside a person, but rather within the human heart. In this statement, Jesus took exception to a large portion of the ceremonial traditions which were observed and believed by His people.

Remember, this paragraph had to do with the question, why Jesus did not force His disciples to wash before they ate. Jesus essentially said that washing of hands before meals was not really the problem with people. The real problem was what developed in their hearts. That's what made them unclean.

MARK 7:24-30 SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN'S DAUGHTER HEALED

The woman, in this paragraph, was called a Syrophenician. These people came from an area near Syria. Matthew 15:22 refers to her as a woman of Canaan. She was certainly a Gentile. The interesting thing about this Canaanite woman is that she was in the area of Tyre. Tyre is located on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, north of Caesarea. This woman came from an area some 60 miles North of Tyre. Mark tells us, in verse 26, that she was a Greek. She represented a culture which was very different from the Jewish culture. She also represented a form of worship which was diametrically opposed to that of the Jews.

The central part of the paragraph deals with the fact that this Greek woman had a daughter who was possessed by demons. The woman pleaded with Jesus to release the girl from her difficulties. Notice Jesus' response to her.

"First let the children eat all they want...for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." Mark 7:27

The tone of the statement does not sound like Jesus. It sounds harsh and prejudiced; abrasive and distant. Jesus was testing her. Whenever one is evaluating the emotional expression of Jesus, one needs to consider the whole experience, not just the words in question. The balance of His conversation with this woman clearly indicates that Jesus is testing her with these words. Jesus was not trying to put her down.

The woman's response deserves careful scrutiny. She said,

"Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."
Mark 7:28

She accepted the fact that she was a Gentile and that the Jews thought of her in lesser terms. Nevertheless, she was convinced that Jesus could help her possessed daughter, and even a little concern on His part was enough to deliver her daughter.

Jesus' response is much more in character with what we expect Jesus to say to the needy, no matter what their nationality. He said,

"For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter."
Mark 6:29

Jesus was compassionate. He had the power to deliver the girl from the demon possession that devastated her life. The woman had a lot of faith. She took Jesus at His word and went home expecting to find her daughter freed of the demon. She found the little girl lying on the bed and the demon was gone. This was long-distance love. Jesus was so powerful that He didn't even have to be present to accomplish His task.

MARK 7:31-37 MAN, DEAF AND MUTE HEALED

This paragraph deals with Jesus' healing of the man who was deaf and unable to speak clearly. Jesus had been in Tyre. If one does not bother to look at the places on a map, it sounds as though Jesus just went to three cities. Look at the map on page 74 and you will see something else. Jesus traveled north from Tyre to Sidon and then turned and traveled southeast to the area of the Sea of Galilee. There is no conclusive reason for this trip of nearly 125 miles (100 miles as the crow flies). Notice what Mark tells us about the situation. When Jesus arrived in the Decapolis area, the people brought a man to Him and begged Him to lay His hands on him. The fact that he was brought by others may give us some information:

1. The man needed the help of others in order to travel. It does not mean that he was totally helpless, just that he could not function in society alone.
2. It may also give some indication of the great faith of those who brought the man to Jesus and begged that He just lay His hands on the man.

Mark gives us this information about the man:

- He was deaf - He could not hear. This meant that he needed someone to help him communicate with people.

JESUS CHRIST: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

- He spoke with great difficulty. The King James Version states that he had an impediment in his speech. The Greek text has a compound word which literally translates: "to talk with difficulty". We might say, "to stammer."
- Apparently the man either got his friends to bring him to Jesus because he wanted to be healed, or the friends believed Jesus could heal him and decided to bring their friend to Him.
- Neither of these conditions were life-threatening. He could go on living a reasonably productive life for many years with these conditions, but Jesus wanted the man to be whole.

There are a number of unexplained features to Jesus' actions in relation to this man. Notice what He did:

- Jesus took the man away from the crowd. This could have been because of His concern for the privacy and comfort of the man. A deaf person can become very nervous when expected to follow instructions he can not hear or understand. It could also have been because the crowds in this area were already becoming too large to handle. It may have been a combination of these things.
- Jesus put His finger into the man's ears. It is clear that Jesus needed neither the fingers in the ears nor the spittle on the tongue to heal the man. As in other places, i.e. John 9:6, Jesus used physical, symbolic means to help the recipient of the miracle to believe what the Master was about to do on his behalf. Some have said that people of that day felt that there was healing power in human saliva. We do not know the reasoning behind this belief.
- Jesus looked up to heaven. It appear that Jesus was indicating the source of His help. Jesus continually affirmed that it was the Father who worked through Him.
- With a deep sigh He said, "Be opened." The word "sigh" might better be translated "groan." The import of the word is that there is both great intensity and deep concern for the person. Jesus commanded the ears to be opened. He exercised power over the physical condition of the man's body.

Verse 35 is an exciting, explosive statement. Jesus dealt with every problem that was brought to Him. The man could not hear. Jesus opened his ears and he could hear. The man spoke with great difficulty and probably stammering. Jesus touched his lips and he was able to speak plainly. It no longer sounded as though he was tongue tied.

Jesus gave them a very difficult instruction: Do not tell anyone. Jesus said this after a number of His miracles. He knew what tragedy, humanly speaking, was ahead of Him. These people did not know this, but He could not let anything interfere with His ultimate purpose. This seemed to be more than they could handle. The more Jesus told them to keep it quiet, the more they told people about it. This should not be understood as a direct disobedience. It was probably an overwhelming amazement to them that the tragedy of years had been changed. In shock and joy they said, "He has done everything well", and in shocked excitement, "He even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak."

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 9

MARK 8:1 - 9:1

MIRACLES POINTING TO THE MESSIAH

1. There are six paragraphs in this segment of the Gospel of Mark. Read each paragraph carefully. On the table which follows, write a title of not more than seven words for each paragraph.

Mark 8:1 - 10	
Mark 8:11 - 13	
Mark 8:14 - 21	
Mark 8:22 - 26	
Mark 8:27 - 30	
Mark 8:31 - 9:1	

2. In Mark 8:1-10, the author tells of the feeding of the four thousand. How do we know that this is not the same event as the feeding of the five thousand recorded in Mark 6:30-44? What was the basis of the disciples' advice to Jesus? What is the significance of the seven baskets full of leftovers?
3. In Mark 8:11-13, the pharisees sought a sign. How would you describe Jesus' emotions at this time? Is the location of this encounter significant? How did Jesus respond?
4. Jesus warned His disciples, in Mark 8:14-21, concerning the pharisees. Mark tells us the disciples had forgotten to bring bread. What does this mean? Jesus used this occasion to warn them to watch out for the leaven of the pharisees and Herod. Jesus explains this. What did He say?
5. In Mark 8:21-26, Jesus performed another miracle. What did the "spitting" on the man's eyes accomplish that touching them or just praying over them could not accomplish?
6. In Mark 8:27-30, Jesus spent some time with His disciples. As they traveled toward Caesarea Philippi, a city of many idols, Jesus asked the disciples who people said He was. Study their answer. What did you find? Jesus changed His question to a personal one. What was the difference between Peter's answer and that of the other people?
7. In Mark 8:31-9:1, Jesus was teaching the disciples concerning His coming death. Compare and contrast Jesus' announcement and Peter's rebuke. What information do you discover?
8. As you reflect upon the miracles of this passage, what does this portion of Scripture have to say concerning your discipleship as you face the struggles of daily life?
9. Choose a verse, in this passage, that has particular meaning for you. Memorize the verse.

LESSON 9: – MARK 8:1-9:1
MIRACLES POINTING TO THE MESSIAH

INTRODUCTION

There are six paragraphs in Mark chapter eight. They are as follows:

Mark 8:1 - 10	Feeding the Four Thousand
Mark 8:11 - 13	The pharisees Seek a Sign
Mark 8:14 - 21	The Leaven of the pharisees
Mark 8:22 - 26	The Blind Man of Bethsaida Healed
Mark 8:27 - 30	Who Do Men Say that I Am?
Mark 8:31 - 9:1	Jesus Announces His Death and Resurrection

In Mark 6:30 ff., it was miraculous that Jesus had fed over 5,000 people. Because of the location, it seems fair to assume that these people had been mostly Jews. It is at least as great a miracle that now, in chapter 8, in this place, a Gentile area, 4,000 people gathered to hear Him. It is easier to understand when we remember that He had healed the demoniac in this area. It was here that the 2,000 pigs were drowned. This is at least Jesus' third trip to this area:

- The demoniac was healed on Jesus first trip.
- Jesus healed many others on His second trip.
- He fed the 4,000 on His third trip.

The first time, the people asked Jesus to leave. The second time they brought their sick for Him to heal. The third time they listened to His teaching uninterruptedly for three days! When Jesus healed the demoniac, He instructed the man to tell others in that area what had been done for him. Apparently the man had done a good job.

MARK 8:1-10 FEEDING THE FOUR THOUSAND

The situation in chapter 8:1-10 appears to be much the same as that in Mark 6:30-43. For this reason, some scholars believe that the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000 were the same event. We believe that these are two very different experiences in the life of Jesus. The feeding of the 5,000 took place in the very Jewish area on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. The feeding of the 4,000 took place on the Gentile, the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. In Mark 8:1, it is indicated that this is a different situation. Mark said, "During those days **another** large crowd gathered." This distinguishes this crowd from the one mentioned in chapter six. A little bit later in the chapter, Jesus will speak of both experiences as separate entities.

Jesus was teaching a large crowd of people who had nothing to eat. These people were in His care and He accepted responsibility for their hospitality. Notice that the basis of what Jesus did was compassion. In verse three, Jesus said,

"I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will col-

lapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."
Mark 8:2, 3

Jesus acted because of His compassion for these people. Jesus mentions that they had been with Him for three days. The words of the text sound as though they may have been without food for three days. This is possible, but not probable. It is more apt to be that they now have run out of food, and some have a long way to go home.

I believe the disciples also wanted to be helpful, but they were confronted with a problem. They did not know what to do about their concern. As they said,

"But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?" Mark 8:4

They were not reluctant to help hungry people. They saw no human way to provide for them.

Notice that Jesus did not argue the point with them. He simply began to work with them right where they were. He asked a simple question which they would not have thought to ask:

"How many loaves do you have?" Mark 8:5

They told Jesus that they had seven loaves. A loaf was a small loaf or cake made of flower and water and then baked. It was either round or oblong and about as thin as a man's thumb. They had seven of these loaves or cakes.

Jesus told the crowd to sit down. He took the loaves and gave thanks for them. Then He gave them to the disciples to give to the people. They had a few small fish. Jesus gave thanks for these and gave them to the disciples to distribute. This is less than one little fish for each disciple to distribute. Imagine the emotions of the disciples as they distributed the food to 4,000 Gentiles. Mark tells us that everyone ate and was satisfied. He also tells us that the disciples picked up seven baskets full of broken pieces. This means that the disciples had to become unclean by touching something that a Gentile had touched. The basket mentioned here is much larger than the one mentioned in Mark six. This is the same kind of basket used to let Paul down over the wall in Acts 9:25.

Jesus sent the 4,000 away and got into the boat to go to the region of Dalmanutha. The location of Dalmanutha is somewhat uncertain. It is probably on the west bank of the Sea of Galilee. It may well be in the area we call Magdala.

MARK 8:11-13 PHARISEES SEEK A SIGN

When Jesus reached the west side of the Sea of Galilee, the pharisees came to question Him. Mark indicates that they came to "test" or "tempt" Him. There is a difference between the meaning of the two words.

- A "test" is intended to build one up.
- A "temptation" is intended to tear one down.

The pharisees argued with Jesus with the intent of tripping Him up, rather than supporting Him. They requested a sign from heaven.

Jesus responded with intense disappointment - He sighed deeply as He said to them,

"Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it." Mark 8:12

It is not that they asked for a sign which bothered Jesus, but the kind of sign they wanted to see. They wanted to see something startling. Messianic pretenders promised to do astounding things, but never accomplished them. The pharisees wanted to see Jesus make such a promise and keep it.

Jesus apparently did not answer the pharisees. He left them, got into the boat and went back to the east side of the lake. The text does not explain why Jesus did this. It may well have been that He wanted to be alone with the disciples and knew that the pharisees would not go there if at all possible.

MARK 8:14-21 THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES

Mark reminds us that the disciples had forgotten to bring bread with them for the trip to the east side of the lake. Jesus used the opportunity to teach them an important lesson. He warned them,

"Be careful,...watch out for the yeast of the pharisees and that of Herod."
Mark 8:15

Yeast, or leaven, was the material used to make bread rise. Each of them knew that a small amount of yeast would permeate a whole lump of dough in a short period of time. Jesus used this parallel to help them understand the danger which the pharisees posed to their faith.

Notice that Jesus drew a parallel between the threat from the pharisees and that from Herod, the representative of pagan Rome. This gives one an impression of just how dangerous Jesus considered the thinking of the pharisees to be.

This position of Jesus confused the disciples. They mistakenly concluded that Jesus was talking about the physical dilemma they faced: they had no bread and they were in a Gentile area. It was not uncommon for the disciples to mistake Jesus' meaning to be physical when He was speaking of the spiritual.

Jesus realized they had missed what He was trying to teach them. He then spoke more clearly. He said,

"Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? When I broke the five loaves for the 5,000, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"
Mark 8:19

They knew what He was talking about and answered, "12." Jesus continued to teach by asking more questions,

"And when I broke the seven loaves for the 4,000, how many basketful of pieces did you pick up?" Mark 8:20

Again, they knew what He was talking about and answered, "seven." Now Jesus tied it all together by asking,

"Do you still not understand?" Mark 8:21

Jesus had demonstrated the power of God in His life when He fed the 5,000. The response of the pharisees, to this miracle, was to ask for a sign. This is a very human weakness. Now Jesus was warning His disciples about being so concerned about the visible, the tangible, that they forgot about the spiritual dimension which He had demonstrated repeatedly. The pharisees were concerned about the letter of the law. Jesus was concerned about obedience to God and caring for people.

MARK 8:22-26 BLIND MAN OF BETHSAIDA HEALED

Jesus and the disciples traveled to Bethsaida, which is about a five or six mile walk from the Capernaum area. Bethsaida is situated at the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. It is directly east of Capernaum. Apparently, the people knew who Jesus was because, when He arrived, they brought a blind man and begged Him to lay His hands on him. The people were convinced that if Jesus touched the man, he would regain his sight. This is faith.

As Jesus had done with the man from the Decapolis area, He took the blind man away from the crowd, outside the village. Jesus again used spittle as a healing agent. The text does not say so, but it appears that this was for the man's benefit, rather than for the necessity of healing. Jesus touched the man and asked if he could see anything.

The man now had the power of vision, but it was not complete for him. He said he could see people walking and it reminded him of trees walking.

Jesus put His hands on the man's eyes again and he received his sight fully and comprehended what he saw.

Jesus gave no explanation for what happened. He simply put His hands on the man's face again and he could see. The text does not tell us why Jesus did not just heal the man outright. It may have been because of the blind man's needs, but this can only be conjecture.

MARK 8:27-30 WHO DO MEN SAY THAT I AM?

Jesus and His disciples left Bethsaida, on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, and walked toward the villages surrounding Caesarea Philippi, a city located about 25 miles almost due north of Bethsaida. The trip was difficult because one is climbing into the mountains most of the way. It is a full day's walk. Jesus and the disciples had a lot of time to talk about many things. Mark tells us of one of their topics of conversation - the identity of Jesus.

The identity of Jesus was very important. If He was the Son of God, then they should worship and obey Him. If He was not the Son of God, then they risked being stoned by affirming His claim to deity. As they walked, Jesus asked His disciples what other people had concluded concerning His identity:

"Who do people say I am?" Mark 8:27

This was an appropriate question because people were talking about Him constantly. The disciples had heard these conversations, and responded to Jesus' question by saying,

"Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah; and still others say, one of the prophets." Mark 8:28

The consensus of those, who voiced an opinion was that Jesus was a great spiritual personality. No minor suggestions were made. It is not accidental that Jesus was associated with John the Baptist. John the Baptist had pointed out Jesus to the crowd while he was preaching. Jesus had said that John the Baptist was the Elijah, who was to come before Messiah would emerge.

As ever, Jesus was most personal. Having asked them to identify what others said about Him, Jesus now turned to the disciples and asked them what **they** thought about Him.

"But what about you? Whom do you say that I am." Mark 8:29

It was time for them to commit themselves. It is one thing to know what others think, but there comes a time when each one must commit oneself about the identity of Jesus.

As usual, Peter spoke before the others had time to think it through. Peter said,

"You are the Christ." Mark 8:29

This is a profound statement on Peter's part. It was a clear understanding of the nature of Jesus. It was, in the minds of the pharisees, an evil worthy of stoning. Nevertheless, Peter spoke for the rest of the disciples when he identified Jesus as the Christ, the Anointed one, the Messiah. The text does not say, but it appears that Peter was clearly aware of the immensity of the statement he was making. At the risk of his life, he said that Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus, by His silence, acknowledged that Peter was correct. In a move which must have surprised the disciples, Jesus warned that they should not tell anyone about Him. The whole thrust of their mission was to tell the good news about Jesus. Now Jesus is instructing them to tell no one who He is. The issue is that people must be told, but this is not the time.

MARK 8:31-9:1 JESUS ANNOUNCES DEATH, RESURRECTION

As they neared the villages, Jesus began to teach His disciples some things they did not want to learn. Mark tells us that Jesus told them that He would suffer many things. He would be rejected by the Elders, Chief Priests and teachers of the law. He taught them that He would be killed and three days later rise again. He spoke so plainly that the disciples understood clearly. Peter was offended by what Jesus taught. Peter did not want to hear anything about Jesus' suffering and dying. Some of the disciples may have wondered whether or not Jesus was going to be just like those who pretended to be the Messiah and eventually were killed by the Romans. They all had dreams of a Jewish kingdom, without Romans, but with the disciples in key positions. It is not surprising that Peter did not want to hear Jesus talk that way.

This is a general rebuke, but not the strongest one that can be used. It is the same kind of rebuke sometimes used by Jesus when He rebuked the evil spirits. It is fair to assume that Peter means for Jesus to change his mind about what He is teaching.

It is interesting that Jesus rebuked Peter also. It is the same word to describe Peter's rebuke of Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus spoke more forcefully when he said, to Peter,

"Out of my sight, Satan,...you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." Mark 8:33

Jesus is saying, you are dealing only with human logic; you see only from the human point of view. Human logic often fails to understand the divine plan. In effect, Jesus was saying, Peter, you misunderstand so completely that you are supporting the kinds of things Satan would support.

By this time a crowd had gathered. Jesus then taught both the disciples and the crowd as He described the meaning of discipleship. He said,

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the Gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or, what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."
Mark 8:34-38

Jesus, again, is giving a principle and an explanation. The principle is a description of the cost of being a disciple of Jesus. The requirements for discipleship are clear:

- Deny yourself - say "no" to the self - Denial of self does not mean to say you do not exist or have worth. It means the ability to say "no" to the desires of the human nature, putting the things of God first.
- Take up your own cross - Taking up my own cross means to accept a difficult, painful way of life in order to accomplish the will of God. It does not necessarily mean literally being nailed to wooden cross members.
- Follow Jesus in everything - The third requirement is a summary one. Be prepared to do all the things Jesus did. Be prepared to accept the kinds of responses which Jesus received from those He confronted with their failures. Be prepared to suffer the kinds of consequences Jesus accepted in order to do the will of God.

The explanation that Jesus offers is found in verses 35 to 37. He is saying that anyone who purposes only to save his life, will lose his life in the process. Obviously, Jesus is talking in spiritual, not physical terms. People who are willing to follow Jesus, who say "no" to themselves and take up their cross as a daily priority, will in the process save their lives. Gaining everything is only meaningful if one has maintained his/her soul in the process. To say it another way, Jesus was saying that nothing is more important than one's own soul.

Nearly two thousand years have passed, but the cost of discipleship has not changed. Whether we are thinking of one's place in the office, in the family or the community, the cost is always the same. Nothing short of standing ready to say "no" to human desires, taking up my cross each day and following Jesus as the guiding force in my life is sufficient to please God. Contrary to the teaching of some in our time, it is very costly to follow Jesus. However, it is worth far more than it costs. Ultimately we must all face the question, am I willing to pay that price?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 10

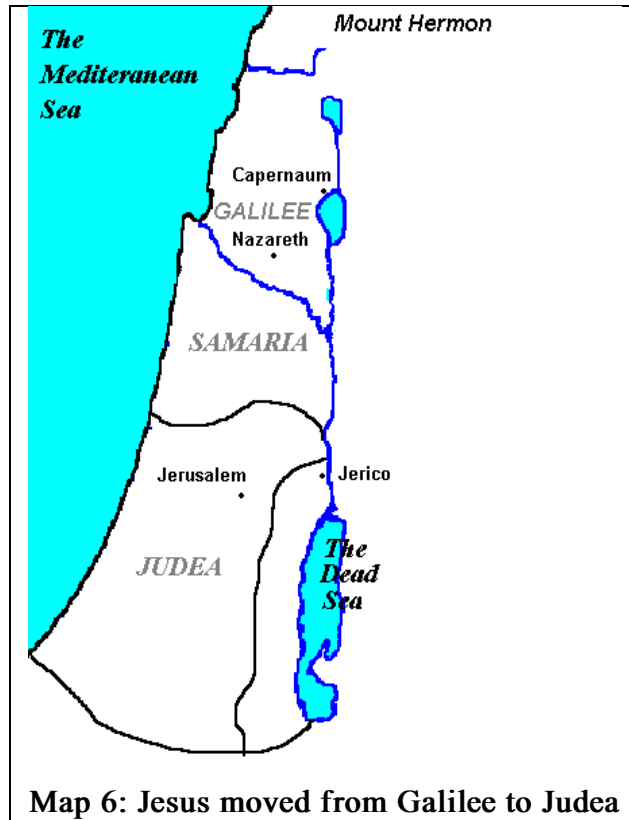
THE TRANSFIGURATION AND THE HEALING OF EPILEPTIC

MARK 9:2 - 50

1. Mark chapter nine contains six paragraphs. Read each paragraph very carefully. On the table which follows, write a summary of seven words or less for each paragraph.

Mark 9:2-8	
Mark 9:9-13	
Mark 9:14-29	
Mark 9:30-32	
Mark 9:33-37	
Mark 9:38-50	

2. Make a list of the events in Mark 9:2-8. What was Peter's response? Mark gives insight into Peter's response. What was that? We understand the voice in the cloud to be God. What did He say? Why did He say that?
3. In Mark 9:9-13, the disciples question Jesus about the role of Elijah. What was Jesus' reply? Imagine yourself in the place of one of the disciples. What would Jesus' words mean to you?
4. Jesus, in Mark 9:14-29, healed a boy who had an evil spirit. Mark describes several instances where religious leaders were busy arguing with people rather than meeting human need around them. Describe Jesus' attitude in verse 19. What is He saying? How did the evil spirit react to the sight of Jesus? What was Jesus' response? How did the man respond to Jesus? Study Jesus' reply in verse 23. What did He say? The father's response, in verse 24, sounds like a contradiction. Describe what he meant. What was the outcome? Reflect on Jesus' statement in verse 29. What did He mean?
5. In Mark 9:29-32, Jesus clearly taught His disciples concerning His impending death. List the facts Jesus told them. After studying the list, reflect on how they could not understand.
6. In Mark 9:33-37, Mark clearly identifies Jesus' omniscience (to know all things). List the principle of greatness which Jesus gives to the disciples. In verse 37 Jesus uses a child to illustrate a point. If you were one of the disciples to whom Jesus was directing this message, how would you feel?
7. In Mark 9:38-50, Jesus and His disciples hold different ideas about who is able to perform miracles. What did the disciples believe? What was Jesus' attitude? Jesus' warnings were extremely severe in this instance. Why were His words so severe?
8. Jesus' passion and resurrection are very important teachings of the Christian faith. In view of the message of this chapter, what effect will this study have on the way you live your Christian life?
9. Choose one verse from this chapter and commit it to memory.



LESSON 10: – MARK 9:2-50

THE TRANSFIGURATION AND THE HEALING OF EPILEPTIC

INTRODUCTION

There are six paragraphs in the ninth chapter of Mark's Gospel. They are as follows:

Mark 9:2-8	The Transfiguration
Mark 9:9-13	The Teaching of the True Elijah
Mark 9:14-29	The Healing of the Epileptic Boy
Mark 9:30-32	Jesus' Death Again Foretold
Mark 9:33-37	Dispute Over Rank of Disciples
Mark 9:38-50	One Casting Out Demons Rebuked

Chapter nine, starting with verse two, can be a bit disconcerting. Comfortable understandings were challenged and new understandings caused distress. In each of the experiences, Jesus was teaching the disciples something specific. As you study the chapter, ask yourself repeatedly, what is Jesus teaching the disciples in this instance?

MARK 9:2-8 THE TRANSFIGURATION

This paragraph is widely known as the "transfiguration", but many readers are not clear what the word "transfiguration" means. It is a compound word, "meta-morphae" meaning "to change form." It is the word from which we get our word metamorphosis. The precise process and appearance of this transfiguration, however, is unclear.

Mark does not identify the place of this unusual event. We must remember that the previous location, of Jesus and His disciples, was in the area of Caesarea Philippi. The great high mountain in that northern region is Mt. Hermon. It is quite appropriate to think of this as the location of the transfiguration. The peak of Mt. Hermon, as you may know, is snow-covered the year around. Nevertheless, it could well have happened on one of the ranges at a lower level.

The writing style, which up to now had been in broad, slashing strokes, takes on a delicacy, an intricacy, as the author attempts to describe the indescribable beauty of Jesus. Remember, Mark was not present on the mountain, but Peter was. The text does not say, but it is probable that Peter told Mark what he had seen. This miracle did not take place in hiding, but in the presence of three disciples whom Jesus had brought with Him. Mark gives no clue as to why Jesus chose to bring only three disciples rather than the 12. We do not know precisely what Jesus wore, but we have reason to believe that His outer garments were beige or brown in color. Suddenly, His clothing was a brilliant, blinding white. Mark adds a human touch when he said,

"Whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them." Mark 9:3

It should be pointed out that there is some symbolism in this description. White is the symbol of purity and deity. It is this impression that struck the disciples.

Mark tells us that Elijah and Moses were talking with Jesus. Immediately the question arises: Why Elijah and Moses? Why not Abraham and Ezekiel, or Isaiah and Daniel? First, we need to be reminded that this is toward the end of the public ministry of Jesus. In chapter ten, the story of the last week of Jesus' life begins. One must remember that there is special significance attached to both Elijah and Moses. Moses stands out in the Jewish mind as the Giver of the Law. Elijah, on the other hand, was the first and greatest of the prophets. If you look at Deuteronomy 34:5-8, you will notice that God buried Moses somewhere in the mountains east of the Jordan. Then look at II Kings 2:5-12. It is a description of the end of Elijah's life. In this transfiguration experience, God sent two men to be with Jesus. It is interesting to note that neither of these men died a natural death. It is as though the Giver of the Law and the greatest of the prophets of God met with Jesus to affirm the great task He was about to pursue as He moves toward the last week of His life. It would be wonderful to know just what Jesus, Moses and Elijah talked about. Mark only tells us that they talked together.

As usual, Peter is the one who spoke. Mark records that Peter called Jesus "Rabbi." The name "Rabbi" means "teacher". This is the only time Jesus is called "Rabbi" in this Gospel. That is appropriate because this is a time when Jesus is teaching His disciples at great depth about His coming death and resurrection. In order to understand Peter's statement, you need to read ahead one verse to the end of verse six. Mark adds a parenthetical statement which sets the stage for understanding the response. Mark said,

He did not know what to say, they were so frightened. Mark 9:6

The word for fear is a very intensive form. Mark is saying that the extent of their fear was so great that they were at a loss for words. They were extremely, utterly frightened. Under such circumstances, people are apt to say things they would not otherwise say. Sensing the need to say something, Peter said,

"It is good for us to be here." Mark 9:5

The word translated "good" describes something that is good in and of itself, not just something that is good because it turned out well. It does not mean that He is comfortable in the situation, but that he apparently feels it is a privilege to be present. Again, he may have been groping for something to say. Seemingly feeling a need to speak, Peter continued,

"Let us put up three shelters - one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah" Mark 9:5

The word "shelters" literally means "tabernacle" or "booth." In the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, it is used to describe the Old Testament place of worship. It is important to notice that Peter suggested that they build three tents. There were, however, six people on the mountain. This tells us that Peter's suggestion was not simply meant as a place to live. Peter identifies the three tents with the three prominent people present,

"... one for you (Jesus), one for Moses and one for Elijah." Mark 9:5

It may have been that Peter was suggesting that they build the tents as a place to honor each of the three men, or as a place where God might converse with each one in worship. The latter seems preferable. In the Old Testament, God spoke to Moses and Elijah person-

ally, and from the New Testament we know that Jesus and the Father conversed often. Ultimately, we can not be certain of the object of Peter's suggestion. We must remember, however, that Peter was speaking more out of fear than knowledge or wisdom.

God came on the scene in the midst of a cloud. This was a fitting means by which God appeared to His people. He had done this when He led Israel from Egypt back to the promised land. Notice what God said,

"This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" Mark 9:7

On this occasion, God is presumably speaking to the three disciples. God was saying: "Pay attention when He talks with you! It's more important than you imagine!" Put yourself in the place of the three disciples. They actually heard God speak. There could be no doubt in their minds that God took the time to speak specifically to **them**. It would be frightening, but wonderful.

You will remember a similar statement earlier in the book, God spoke to Jesus, saying,

"You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Mark 1:11

In both instances there is also an emphasis on the fact that God loved Jesus. Both statements stress the relationship between Jesus and the Father.

It was appropriate for God to shake them up by talking to them directly, since they had not been able to accept the things Jesus was trying to tell them about His death. Their own plans of the earthly kingdom which they hoped Jesus would establish, prevented their acceptance of Jesus' statements.

Mark says, seemingly in shock, that suddenly the three disciples and Jesus were all alone. Moses and Elijah were gone. Apparently, the cloud was gone also. They stood there alone with Jesus. What do you suppose went through the minds of these disciples?

MARK 9:9-13 TEACHING OF THE TRUE ELIJAH

Put yourself in the shoes of the three disciples as they started down the mountain. Their minds were filled with all kinds of questions. Jesus had instructed them to keep this to themselves until the resurrection. This is one of the few instances where the request for secrecy was observed, probably because they were so dumbfounded, so utterly lost as to the meaning of this supernatural experience. How could they explain it to the other disciples? How could they possibly believe a story like this? Put yourself in their situation. Would you have believed them?

Mark tells us, in verse ten, that they questioned among themselves what Jesus meant by "rising from the dead." Not too long ago the same three men had witnessed Jesus' raising of the dead daughter of Jairus. They couldn't fathom Jesus dying and being raised again. It was an impossible idea. Even if He died, who would raise Him? They were also confused about the teaching concerning Elijah in connection with the Messiah. They asked,

"Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"

Mark 9:11

The disciples were dealing with several questions. One had to do with the requirement that Elijah had to come first. Jesus assumed that Elijah does come first when He said,

"To be sure, Elijah does come first." Mark 9:12

Jesus then gave a reason for this, as He continued,

"...and restores all things." Mark 9:12

The purpose of Elijah, preceding the Messiah, was to restore all things. Some might interpret "restore all things" to mean that Elijah will make things the way they used to be; restore things to what they were before the series of captivities came upon Israel. Jesus is attempting to describe what He meant by "restore all things." It apparently meant to set the stage, when the time was right, spiritually, socially, economically, politically, so that the Messiah might come and be revealed to the people. Elijah had to be the herald who announced the Messiah's coming.

Jesus wanted to give them even more information. He said,

"Why then, is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected" Mark 9:12

Jesus is saying, if Elijah must come and restore all things, then why is it that the Son of Man has to suffer when Elijah has prepared the way for His coming? In fact, Jesus was carefully describing what he meant by "restore all things." He did not mean that everything would be perfect and peaceful. There was a ministry of restoration that Elijah must perform before Messiah comes. That ministry of restoration was to reveal how the coming Messiah would be rejected and what this rejection entailed. Jesus continued to teach them,

*"But I tell you, Elijah **HAS** come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him." Mark 9:13*

The disciples were still thinking of the original, Old Testament Elijah, while Jesus was thinking of John the Baptist, who completed the restoration of all things through his preaching and his introduction of the masses to the promised Messiah.

MARK 9:14-29 HEALING OF EPILEPTIC BOY

As Jesus and the three disciples returned to the place where the rest of the disciples were, they discovered that a crowd had gathered. Mark tells us that the teachers of the law were arguing with the disciples. The teachers of the law were the scribes. They were trained in writing the manuscripts and all that is involved in their copying. They were powerful people and held in high honor. They often had their own disciples, and knew the Old Testament better than most anyone else. They were considered well qualified to teach in the synagogues. They were called upon to use the law in connection with the Sanhedrin and to apply the law in the courts.

The appearance of Jesus took the pressure off nine disciples. The crowd was surrounding the scribes and disciples - they didn't want to miss the arguments. The minute Jesus arrived, the crowd left the scribes and ran to welcome Him. Notice the contrast. The picture of the scribes is one of argumentation. The picture of Jesus is that people were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet Him. This is a constant contrast throughout the Gospel records. In verse ten, Jesus asked,

"What are you arguing with them about?" Mark 9:10

The identification of "you" and "them" is unclear. "You" could refer to the disciples. In this case, Jesus would be saying to them, "What are you arguing with the scribes about?" On the other hand, "you" could refer to the scribes. In that case, Jesus would be saying to

them, "Why are you scribes arguing with my disciples?" A third possibility is that Jesus was talking to the crowd. In that case, Jesus would be saying to the crowd, "why are you arguing with the disciples," or "why are you arguing with the scribes?" The truth is that we are not absolutely sure. It appears to me that Jesus is questioning His disciples, asking what they are arguing about with the scribes.

A man in the crowd spoke up in terms of confession. He said,

"Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not." Mark 9:17, 18

The man called Jesus "teacher." This did not refer strictly to the teaching of Scripture. It is a different word than Peter used in 9:5. Peter called Jesus "Rabbi." The title "Rabbi" means "master." In the New Testament, this is a courtesy title. It describes one who gives direction to life; one who focuses the Scriptures for your life, rather than one who teaches a variety of academic information. In verse 5, the man, from the crowd, used the word "teacher" - didaskalos. This word means to give instruction and is used in verse 17. That is appropriate in this section. Jesus is in the midst of a time of teaching.

The man said that his son was controlled by a spirit who had taken away the boy's speech. Jesus was involved in a very fragile situation. The man wanted the boy healed. The nine disciples had not been able to bring healing, though Jesus had specifically given them power over evil spirits when they had been sent out, two by two. The scribes had come all the way from Jerusalem to check on what Jesus was doing. Nothing would have fit their purposes better than to trap Jesus through the inability of His disciples or of Himself. The boy's problem may have been a form of seizure, like epilepsy. Whatever the condition, it was beyond the ability of the disciples to cure.

Jesus' response was one of pain and struggle. It seems He is saying to the disciples,

"O unbelieving generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?" Mark 9:19

Though the text does not say so, it appears that Jesus now turned to the father and said,

"...bring the boy to me." Mark 9:19

This is the cry of frustration; a cry of anguish in the heart of Jesus. Note His frustration,

"How long shall I stay with You? How long shall I put up with you?" Mark 9:19

How long is it going to take you to understand? How patient do I have to be with you? It is as though this is a burden to Jesus. But Jesus would not let His anguish interfere with the needs of the helpless boy. He asked them to bring the boy to Him.

When they brought the boy to Jesus, the spirit immediately convulsed the boy to the ground. This is an example of a life out of control; a life in deep need.

Jesus asked just how long the boy had suffered with this ailment. The father's answer was painful. His son had been this way since early childhood, and he told Jesus some of the frightening things that had happened: he had on occasion been thrown into the fire and into the water. The father pleaded with Jesus to help, if He possibly could. He said,

"But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." Mark 9:22

It sounds like doubting. It may have been. It may also have been a lack of knowledge. Whichever it was, the man was beside himself, desperately wanting to find help.

Jesus' response was immediate and direct.

"If you can." Mark 9:22

It is as though Jesus was saying, "What do you mean, 'IF you can?' Do you believe I can or don't you?" Jesus was correcting a flaw in the man's thinking. It appears that the father was thinking that the outcome was dependent upon whether or not Jesus was capable. Jesus' capability was not the issue. Jesus was completely able. The real question was whether or not the man believed that Jesus could heal the boy. Jesus clearly states the issue,

"Everything is possible for him who believes." Mark 9:23

Jesus clearly redirected the responsibility. In the process, Jesus made known some wonderful truths. There are no boundaries of possibility for what may take place when a person believes.

The father was so human. His response was immediate and intense. He said,

"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief." Mark 9:24

There is a level of integrity here that is most unusual. Most people claim to believe, ultimately. The father was honest. He desperately wanted his son healed. He did believe that Jesus was able, but there was some portion of doubt after the unfortunate experience with the disciples. His cry is our cry, "I believe, help my unbelief."

Jesus noticed that a greater crowd was gathering. He did not want more publicity, therefore He rebuked the evil spirit and said,

"You deaf and dumb spirit... I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." Mark 9:25

Jesus called the spirit a "deaf and dumb spirit." It is not clear whether this described the kind of spirit, or if Jesus called it so because of what it did to the boy. Whatever the reason, it was under the double command of Jesus:

- Come out of the boy.
- Never enter him again.

This was important because a spirit would enter a body again, if at all possible.

The spirit did not verbally respond to Jesus' commands. The spirit cried out. The word "cry" is used to describe inarticulate cries of fear and pain. It is the same word used concerning the mob who cried out for Jesus to be crucified. The spirit also convulsed the boy. This is almost like one final shot at the helpless little one. Ultimately the spirit had to obey the strong command of Jesus and leave the boy's body.

The result was that the little boy looked so lifeless that the people said, "He is dead." This is not surprising. The presence and actions of an evil spirit take a toll on human life.

Jesus knew that the boy was not dead. He took him by the hand, lifted him up, and the boy stood.

When the disciples had gone indoors with Jesus, they were filled with questions. Put yourself in their sandals. You had tried to heal the boy and failed. Jesus came and healed the boy immediately. Why? Jesus responded gently, though He could have chided their unbelief. He simply taught them that this kind of problem is only dealt with by prayer. He may have been saying that they felt that the power was in themselves and neglected to ask God the Father to accomplish this through them. On the other hand, He may have been saying that there is a life of trust in God which is so intense that it is living prayer; a communion with God, moment by moment, that finds all its needs in His presence.

MARK 9:30-32 JESUS' DEATH AGAIN FORETOLD

Coming down out of the mountain area, they passed through Galilee. As Jesus approached the end of His ministry, He became increasingly concerned that no one know where they were. This was not fear, but a desire to make sure that He had the time to teach His disciples the things He had in mind before the time of His sacrifice. Jesus began to teach them, again, by saying,

"The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days, he will rise." But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. Mark 9:31, 32

Jesus had told the three disciples this just a short time ago. Now, He is telling it again to all of them. This is one of the strongest, most open statements about the crucifixion which Jesus had given up to this time. If one were truly listening, it would be hard to miss. This is coupled with the fact that it was not the first time that Jesus had specifically talked about His immanent death. We need to put ourselves into the place of the disciples. They certainly did not want to hear anything of this nature. Jesus' death was the most unthinkable idea. The possibility of it was totally, completely beyond their comprehension. It was like being told that a loved one is about to die. Mark evaluates what happened when Jesus said these things to them. First, they did not understand what He was saying. Secondly, they were afraid to ask Him about it. Sometimes we are afraid to ask questions for fear we will get the right answer.

MARK 9:33-37 DISPUTE OVER RANK OF DISCIPLES

Against the background of this frightening message which Jesus had given them, Mark tells us about a very human side of the disciples. On the road to Capernaum, they argued about who was the greatest among the Twelve.

When they had come into the house, probably the home of Peter, Jesus asked them what they had been arguing about on the way. Mark gives us a careful insight into the minds of the disciples. He tells us three things about their response to Jesus:

- They did not answer Jesus' question.
- Their guilt was over the way they had been arguing.
- Their silence was over the fact that they were arguing about something that would surely disappoint Jesus - who was the greatest among them.

In spite of the fact that they did not answer Jesus, He dealt with their problem. Remember, Jesus is approaching the end of His ministry and He will have very few opportunities to teach them about these things again.

The entire paragraph is dealing with the question of who is the greatest among the disciples? Jesus speaks to that question in three different ways.

First, He did not accuse them, He just began talking about the problem that caused their confrontation. He said,

"If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last and the servant of all."

Mark 9:35

At first, this did not make sense to them nor does it to us today. No one in our time ever becomes first in the business world by being the last, meaning the servant of everyone else. Look at the contrast between this paragraph and the previous one. Jesus was talking with them about giving His all on behalf of all mankind. Now they are arguing about which of them will have a place of importance. Jesus was preoccupied with **giving** His all. They were preoccupied with **taking** all.

Secondly, Jesus took a very little child and stood him in the midst of the disciples. Jesus put His arms around the little boy and used him as an illustration when He said,

"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

Mark 9:37

Thirdly, Jesus spoke of greatness in terms not previously understood in this way. He was saying greatness is expressed in the willingness to welcome a little child. In doing so, that person also welcomes Jesus. In welcoming Jesus, one welcomes the Father, the one who sent Jesus. Greatness is discovered in the presence of God and not in personal attainment. This was appropriate because the disciples were arguing among themselves about which of them was greatest. Jesus gave greatness a new definition.

MARK 9:38-50 ONE CASTING OUT DEMONS REBUKED

This paragraph deals with the identity of Jesus' servants. John, the disciple, spoke up and said that they had rebuked a man because he was casting out demons in Jesus' name and he was not one of the Twelve. The operating principle was obvious. You had to be a disciple of Jesus to do miracles. Everyone else would be an impostor.

Jesus took exception to their action and their idea. He gives some principles about disciples. The principles are these:

- One can not do miracles in His name and something bad at the same time.
- People who are not against Jesus, are for Him.
- Discipleship is not an exclusive group.
- Discipleship is open to anyone who is willing to carefully follow Jesus.
- Anyone giving a cup of water in Jesus' name will be rewarded, no matter who he may be.
- A disciple's conduct reflects how he relates to God.

Jesus shared a principle that they did not comprehend, nor do many comprehend it today. He said,

"For whoever is not against us is for us." Mark 9:40

This cut across the thinking of the strict religious leaders of Israel as it does religious leaders today. Jesus must have shocked them even more when He said,

"I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward." Mark 9:41

Notice how carefully Jesus spoke. This is open to anyone. That included the Gentiles. It includes any person who gives the simplest gift in the name of Jesus and because the person belongs to Jesus. That person can not possibly lose his reward. He/she will be rewarded.

9:42-50 is an outgrowth of the discussion about who is able to do work in Jesus' name. In these verses Jesus is teaching the disciples how dangerous it is to thwart the efforts of a zealous new convert. Jesus had just talked about the rewards of those who give even the simplest gifts in His name. Now He turns to discuss what happens when people do harm to one whom He loves. Jesus said,

"And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck." Mark 9:42

This was a graphic way to describe the severity of such an act.

In the Capernaum area there was plenty of black volcanic rock. These heavy stones were used to make the round stones with which the juice was pressed out of the grape. There is an abundance of these millstones in the Capernaum area even today.

Jesus was describing a drastic situation. It would be impossible for anyone to have such a stone tied around his neck and survive in the water. Jesus wants the disciples to realize just how dangerous it was to cause a young believer to sin.

Jesus used three other illustrations to emphasize the point.

*"If your **hand** causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out." Mark 9:43*

This statement is called a hyperbole. A hyperbole is an exaggeration for purposes of effect. It is not intended to be taken literally. Jesus uses the hyperbole, in this instance, to emphasize the fact that drastic action is an absolute necessity. Jesus was not, however, suggesting self mutilation.

Jesus also said,

*"And if your **foot** causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell." Mark 9:45, 46*

Clearly, this is a restatement of the above thought for purposes of emphasis. Imagine what life would be like for a person who had his foot amputated. It would be nearly impossible for that man to earn a living or to move from one place to another. This, too, is a hyperbole intended to stress the importance of allowing nothing to deter you from careful obedience to the commands of Jesus.

Again, Jesus said,

*"And if your **eye** causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into*

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

Mark 9:47, 48

Again, this is a hyperbole intended to stress the startling importance of entering God's kingdom. It is indeed more important than having two hands, two feet or two eyes.

The reference to "their worm does not die", in verse 48, is a picture that the people of Israel would understand very well. In the Hinnom Valley, on the southwest side of Jerusalem, was the garbage dump for the city. It was a place of foul odors. It smoldered continuously. The garbage in the area provided an incubation place for worms and maggots. The Greek word translated "hell", in the New Testament, is "Geenna" or as we say in English, "gehenna." This name comes from the name of the valley.

You may have noticed that verses 43 and 45 are missing from the text. This is because they are missing from most of the best Greek texts of the Gospel of Mark. First, take note that these two verses have exactly the same wording as verse 48. Second, notice that these verses quote from Isaiah 66:24. This repetition is also a way of stressing the terrible conditions to be expected when one disobeys the commands of God.

Jesus concludes this section with three difficult statements. In the first, Jesus said,

"Everyone will be salted with fire." Mark 9:49

This difficult statement is open to a whole gamut of interpretations. Consider the basic elements of the statement. Jesus is talking about salt and fire. Both of these ingredients were important in the process of purification. Leviticus 2:13 tells us that sacrifices were to be salted. Both salt and fire were useful for purification. They must always be considered in this light. Just as salt is an agent of purification for the sacrifice, so the believer will also be salted, purified, by fire.

Jesus also said,

"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again?"

Mark 9:50

Another quality of salt is that it can be used to improve the taste of food. In Mark 9:50, Jesus talked about salt losing its "saltiness." Salt never loses its saltiness. One of the things found in Egyptian pyramids was salt that was thousands of years old. It was as salty as on the day it was put into the pyramid. Indeed, salt, taken from a mine, has been in that form for thousands of years. Salt, unlike certain other substances, will always retain its salty character.

Jesus referred to something else. Many people went to the Dead Sea, to dig up soil around the edge of the water. This soil contained grains of salt. They would pick out the grains of salt and use it to clean, preserve and improve the taste of food. When all the grains of salt had been removed from this soil, it had lost its saltiness. They could only put it on the road. There would still be a degree of saltiness in the soil. If it was placed on a field, it would keep anything from growing. The New Testament refers to Christians as "the salt of the earth." Matthew 5:13. If we lose the ability to bring greater quality to life in this cruel world, then we have lost our value. There is little that we can contribute.

Finally, Jesus said,

"Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other." Mark 9:50

THE TRANSFIGURATION, HEALING OF EPILEPTIC

Verse 50 points to the domestic use of salt. It was useful as long as it could keep food from spoiling, or improve the flavor of the food. Jesus uses this picture to remind the disciples that to maintain that ability, to keep the best things in life from going bad and adding beauty to life around them, they must add flavor to life by their devotion to Jesus and their willingness to sacrifice in order to extend His kingdom.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 11

THE PERILS OF RICHES AND POWER

MARK 10:1 - 52

1. In Mark chapter ten, there are eight paragraphs. On the following table write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

Mark 10:1	
Mark 10:2-12	
Mark 10:13-16	
Mark 10:17-22	
Mark 10:23-31	
Mark 10:32-34	
Mark 10:35-45	
Mark 10:46-52	

- In Mark 10:1, Jesus leaves Galilee and moves south. On the map on page 88, trace Jesus' journey. What does this verse tell us?
- In Mark 10:2-12, Jesus is questioned about divorce. What did Jesus say about divorce? What does this mean in our culture?
- In Mark 10:13-16, Jesus and His disciples take opposite positions about the children. What was the disciples' attitude? What was Jesus' attitude? What did it mean when Jesus took the children in His arms?
- The rich young man comes to Jesus in Mark 10:17-22. Jesus engaged him in conversation concerning obedience to the law. What does this exchange teach us concerning the law? What does Jesus' statement, in verse 21, say about riches? What does the man's sadness, in verse 22, tell us about him?
- In Mark 10:23-31, Jesus talks about the effect of wealth upon faith. What does Jesus say about the wealthy and the Kingdom of God? How did the disciples respond to Jesus' teaching? Peter was quick to affirm his devotion to Jesus. What did Jesus say in response to Peter?
- Jesus once again announces His impending death in Mark 10:32-34. What facts did Jesus share with His disciples? What should they have gathered from Jesus' message?
- Mark 10:35-45 was a dark moment in the trek to Jerusalem. What did James and John really request? What was Jesus' response?
- In Mark 10:46-52, Jesus and His disciples came to Jericho. This is where Bartimaeus received his sight. Bartimaeus affirmed the identity of Jesus as he pleaded for help. What did Bartimaeus say? What does this say about him? In verse 52, Jesus said, "Your faith has healed you." What does this mean?
- As you review this passage, how does it give direction to the way we live our discipleship in our culture? In view of the preoccupation of our culture with riches and power, what does this say to you? What does it say to the church?
- Choose one verse from this passage which is particularly meaningful to you. Memorize the verse.

LESSON 11: – MARK 10:1-52
THE PERILS OF RICHES AND POWER

INTRODUCTION

There are eight paragraphs in Mark chapter ten. They are as follows:

Mark 10:1	Jesus Teaches a Multitude
Mark 10:2-12	The Pharisees Question Jesus About Divorce
Mark 10:13-16	Jesus Blesses the Children
Mark 10:17-22	The Rich Young Man
Mark 10:23-31	Jesus' Sorrow at Ruler's Trust in Riches
Mark 10:32-34	Jesus Tells Disciples of His Coming Death
Mark 10:35-45	James and John Ask for First Places
Mark 10:46-52	Healing of Blind Bartimaeus

MARK 10:1 JESUS TEACHES A MULTITUDE

This is the first mention, in the Gospel of Mark, of Jesus going into Judea. However it is not the first time He has gone there. He had gone there with His parents when He was twelve. He knew His way around Jerusalem, and the Gospels tell us that it was His custom to attend the feasts there. He had friends, with whom He stayed during the feasts, in nearby Bethany.

This segment begins the second part of the Gospel of Mark. Jesus is now moving toward Jerusalem and the cross for which He came into human life. The kind of crowds that had been following Him wherever He had gone in Galilee, were coming to Him here as well. Jesus taught them in Judea as He had in the northern parts. Oh, how I would like to know what He taught them.

MARK 10:2-12 PHARISEES QUESTION JESUS ABOUT DIVORCE

Mark tells us, in verse 2, that the question of the pharisees was an attempt to "test" Jesus. This word may be used in a good or bad sense. The context identifies which use is intended. In this instance there is little reason to think that it is in a good sense. The question was formulated in such a way, that no matter how Jesus answered, it would place Him in an awkward position.

The question simply was,

"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" Mark 10:2

If Jesus answered "yes", he would be in trouble with the strict Jewish leaders because they held to the Old Testament idea that divorce was unacceptable to God. If Jesus answered "no", He then would be in trouble with Herod Antipas, who ruled this area called Perea, who had divorced his wife, had taken his brother's wife as his own, had taken John the Baptist into custody and eventually killed him at the behest of his new wife.

Jesus answered the question with a question,

"What did Moses command you?" Mark 10:3

This was a careful move by Jesus. By asking this question, He removed the spotlight from His opinion and placed it upon the teaching of the Scripture.

The reply of the pharisees was correct,

"Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." Mark 10:4

Even the religious leaders were debating what this meant. Some said the law was for adultery only. Others said it was for almost anything.

Jesus did not debate their reply. He simply made a comment about it,

"It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law... But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." Mark 10:5-9

Jesus successfully identified the teaching of Scripture without getting into the trap the pharisees had set for Him. Mark does not tell us how the pharisees responded to the statement of Jesus.

As happened so often, the disciples did not understand what Jesus had taught. When they were by themselves, they, again, asked Him about it.

The teaching of the law was complex at best. At the least, Jesus' response to the pharisees makes it clear that He favored the interpretation which grew out of a strong view of the human family and would not dissolve it easily. It was God's intention that the marriage not be dissolved.

MARK 10:13-16 JESUS BLESSES THE CHILDREN

Two facts add substantially to the importance of this picture. First, Jesus is on His way to the cross. All this takes place while Jesus is consciously moving in the direction of Golgatha. Secondly, asking an important teacher of the day to touch or bless her child on the first birthday was very important to a Jewish mother.

The disciples' rebuke of the mothers is often looked upon as harsh and thoughtless. It is just as possible that the disciples were only trying to protect Jesus, for He had been exposed to increasing pressures as He came nearer and nearer to Jerusalem. Again, it is possible that the children were restless, noisy, running between adults, disturbing them, keeping them from concentrating on what Jesus was teaching.

Mark makes it clear that Jesus was "indignant" with the disciples, when this happened. "Indignant" is a compound word which means to grieve much. This is the word Luke used to describe the feelings of the rulers of the synagogue, when Jesus healed on the Sabbath. It bothered Jesus a great deal that the disciples were unable to understand the importance of the children in His eyes. Jesus grieved intensely because the disciples were unable to discern the value He placed upon children as well as adults.

Jesus said to the disciples,

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Mark 10:14, 15

Jesus acted contrarily to the actions of the disciples. He instructed them to let the little children come to Him. He did more. He warned them not to hinder the children. The reason which He gave was frightening. They should not hinder the little children, because the Kingdom of God belongs to those who place their trust in God as a child trusts adults. He was not saying that the Kingdom was the exclusive property of children. He was saying that Kingdom members will have the characteristics of children. He went so far as to say that unless a person receives the kingdom in the way a little child accepts life and people around him, that is with simple trust, true faith, expecting to be cared for, consoled, encouraged, that person will never enter the Kingdom of God.

The disciples tried to shield Jesus from the bothersome children, but Jesus picked them up and took the children in His arms. He **hugged** them! He touched them and loved them, as the mothers had wanted Him to do. He blessed **each** child. This had to be a very uncomfortable experience for the disciples, but very wonderful for the children and their mothers!

MARK 10:17-22 THE RICH YOUNG MAN

Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell the story of this young man. Only Luke calls him a "ruler". This young man intercepted Jesus as He was on His way toward Jerusalem. He fell on his knees. This is the position of supplication. It is also appropriate for a disciple, who would ask a serious question of his master.

The man's question was simple, but very important,

"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Mark 10:17

This word "teacher" is akin to the word "Rabbi" in the Old Testament. It is a person who instructs. It is not what one does for a very young child in terms of training them to walk or talk. It is instruction by which the child's mind is developed. The man's question is simply,

"What must I do...?" Mark 10:17

The young man wants to find a way to earn eternal life. He assumes that he can **do** something good that will earn eternal life for him. He identified his idea of how eternal life is obtained: you earn it.

It always seems a bit shocking that Jesus answered him the way He did. He seemed so abrupt. It looks as if Jesus had an excellent opportunity to teach this man and instead He sidesteps his question for a moment. Jesus did bring the young aristocrat up short, but I believe He did so for a good reason. On the basis of what Jesus said, the man was unwittingly calling Jesus "God". Jesus did not want it to be accidental. He wanted the man to realize what he had said and that it was true.

Therefore, when Jesus answered the young man's question, he took him to the Law because the young man was a Jew. He said,

"You know the commandments: do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother." Mark 10:18, 19

With one exception, this is a list of prohibitions. It is possible for a person to keep these in the strictest Jewish sense and still do nothing that would benefit others. For the Jew it was

enough just to keep the law. For Jesus, this was not enough. Jesus wanted him to do something for others with all his possessions because the young man's possessions were more important to him than God was.

The young ruler could look Jesus in the eye and claim that from the time of his bar-mitzvah he had kept these laws. We have no reason to doubt his claim, and Jesus did not challenge it.

Jesus looked at the young man with love, like a father teaching his son. Then He instructed the man to do something that the law did not command. Jesus said,

"One thing you lack,... go, sell everything you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." Mark 10:21

There are two major instructions in this statement. Jesus asked the man to rid himself of all his great wealth. Jesus was not saying that wealth is evil, nor that a disciple could not have wealth. Indeed, several did have wealth. Jesus was saying that he lacked a proper direction in his life. The first step in correcting this misdirection was to stop trusting in his wealth and the position it offered him.

The second instruction was to follow Jesus. The man's problem was misdirected allegiance. He was being told to stop trusting in his wealth and begin trusting in Jesus.

Verse 22 is one of the saddest statements in Scripture. Mark said it this way,

At this the man's face fell. He went away sad (depressed), because he had great wealth. Mark 10:22

The young ruler made a choice. He trusted in wealth rather than in God. He followed the benefits of position rather than Jesus Christ. He made a lamentable choice.

MARK 10:23-31 JESUS' SORROW AT RULER'S TRUST IN RICHES

This entire paragraph deals with the response to the tragic choice the rich young official made.

Jesus appears to be stunned by this choice. He looked around, perhaps groping for composure. He then summed up His pain in these words,

"How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God." Mark 10:23

He was saying that riches have a way of standing in one's way of entering the kingdom.

The disciples were amazed at these words. Their amazement was probably due to the fact that Jesus was constantly reaching out to the "whosoever" and then, suddenly, cuts out the whole realm of those who are rich. Obviously, they misunderstood what Jesus was saying.

Jesus tried to explain again to the disciples,

"Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Mark 10:24, 25

Notice, Jesus did not say it was **impossible**. This is not a denunciation of riches as evil. He was saying that it is most difficult, because riches can draw one's allegiance to themselves rather than to God.

Jesus uses an illustration which seems strange to some people. First, we should note that there are some textual problems with the verses of this paragraph. Scholars are not

altogether clear on the meaning of this paragraph, because it has to do with word pictures that were very clear to the people of His day, but are not to us. One way to translate this passage is to say, "It is easier to thread a needle with a rope than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God". In this case, He would have been talking about an impossible situation. On the other hand, one could translate these words as our text does, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." Let me explain: Beside the main gate in most every walled city, there was a very tiny, narrow gate called the "eye of the needle." When it was too dangerous for a city to open the huge gates, a traveler could unload his camel, remove the saddle, barely squeeze the animal through this tiny gate, retrieve his goods and enter into the city. This is talking about a very difficult, but possible situation. I tend to accept the latter statement rather than the former one.

Now the disciples were even more amazed than before. People tended to associate riches with righteousness and poverty with wickedness. The whole point of the arguments of Job's three friends was that because he was suffering, they were accurate to assume that he was wicked. It was part of the cultural thinking that rich men were good and poor men were evil. The idea came from the teaching that God blesses the righteous and punishes the wicked. Thus, when you see a person with abundance, you would know that they were righteous. To see the impoverished, is to know that they are in some way evil. If the rich can hardly be saved then it naturally follows that everyone else is in severe trouble. The disciples' question was perfectly normal when they said,

"Who then can be saved?" Mark 10:26

Jesus sensed the dilemma in which they found themselves. He did not chide them. He did not water it down. He simply said,

"With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God." Mark 10:27

Jesus had shocked the disciples by His teaching. They had heard Him say that even the very rich could just barely enter the Kingdom of God. This led them to believe that everyone else had no chance at all.

People tend to think in human terms, as did the disciples. In their thinking, they would have to deal with the impossible. Jesus saw the situation through divine eyes. He responded simply. With God everything is within the realm of possibility.

Peter was very sensitive to the preceding events. He had seen the rich young ruler, a good man, refuse to follow Jesus. He wanted Jesus to know just how completely the disciples had followed Him, how they had left everything behind to follow Him. Thus, he blurted out his evaluation,

"We have left everything to follow you." Mark 10:28

This was a description of total commitment, on Peter's part. He was good at this sort of thing.

Jesus was quick to reply to this outspoken claim. His response was in two parts:

1. A promise - If you give up anything for God in this life, you will receive a hundred times as much in this life. Jesus illustrated this by enumerating the kinds of things He meant: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields. If one must chose between

God and blood brothers and sisters, Jesus is saying that he/she will have a hundred fold more family members to take their place. Remember Jesus statement when they said that His mother and brothers were there to take Him home? He pointed to the believers and said,

"Behold my mother and my brothers." Matthew 12:49

Jesus also surprised them by adding - "and with them persecution." He is right up front about the probability of persecution they will encounter. The two go together.

He goes a step farther and adds that they will also receive eternal life in the age to come.

2. The word "but" indicates that a contrast follows. Jesus is dealing with Peter's statement about the loyalty of the disciples. Jesus is saying that those who see themselves in the most important places will be the least. Those who think of themselves as of no great consequence will have places of honor.

MARK 10:32-34 JESUS TELLS DISCIPLES OF HIS COMING DEATH

In each of the last three chapters, Jesus has warned His disciples that He would die. The setting was the trek from the east side of the Jordan to Jerusalem. The disciples and those following the group were surprised and frightened.

Jesus took His disciples aside, privately, and talked with them about what was going to happen. He gave precise, total information:

- The Son of Man will be betrayed, given over to the Chief Priests and teachers of the law.
- They will condemn Him to death.
- They will hand Him over to the Gentiles. This is as bad as it can get for a Jew.
- The Gentile's treatment of Jesus:
 - a. They will mock Him - as a picture of humiliation
 - b. They will spit on Him - this is beyond humiliation to degrading the total person.
 - c. They will flog Him - this was reserved for the guilty. The Romans would make a spectacle of Him; to make the onlookers think twice before they would follow in His footsteps.
 - d. They will kill Him - this was the punishment for disobeying the law.
- Three days later, He will rise.

Put yourself in the place of the disciples. Jesus has given the essential details of everything that is going to happen to Him. He has withheld nothing. But the disciples were only comfortable with Jesus being present, alive. Jesus is saying that everything will change completely. Certainly this left them stunned, unable to comprehend what He had said.

This is another instance where there is a heavy silence in the text. We do not know how they responded. It is not difficult to imagine how they must have felt. Jesus had taught them that He was the Messiah. Peter, on behalf of the others, had affirmed that Jesus is the Messiah. They were on their way to Jerusalem. Everyone knew that the Messiah would go to Jerusalem. The problem, however, was that Jesus was talking strangely.

Certainly, the disciples were hoping that Jesus would go to Jerusalem and proclaim Himself king. At the same time, Jesus was talking about dying. Imagine the confusion this would cause in the disciples' minds.

Notice that this conversation follows Peter's statement about the depth of the disciples' commitment to Jesus. Mark uses this conversation to vividly reveal the depth of Jesus' commitment to them and all mankind. The disciples did not want to hear about the crucifixion because they understood that this would mean permanent separation from Jesus. They did not want to hear about the resurrection because they did not understand anything about a person rising from the dead, though they had seen it happen to Jairus' daughter.

MARK 10:35-45 JAMES AND JOHN ASK FIRST PLACES

There are two parts to this paragraph:

- 35-40 The request of James and John
- 41-45 The reaction of the disciples

Notice the stark contrast between the very emotional description of coming events and the crass request of James and John. It reveals their total insensitivity to Jesus' predicted death. Look at their request. It reminds one of a child making a request of a parent:

"Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask." Mark 10:35

It is a childish attempt to get your own way. Jesus treated it seriously. He asked them to indicate what they wanted Him to do. Their reply was shocking.

*"Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."
Mark 10:37*

This is an audacious request, to say the least. They wanted to be the ones in control and they did not care how it affected others.

Jesus used a question to help them grasp the implications of their unfortunate petition.

"Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" Mark 10:38

The implication is that in order to take these places of honor they must also be willing to experience the accompanying struggles and hardships which He was about to encounter.

This information did not penetrate. The two disciples said, without deliberation, "We can." They apparently thought that this simply meant that they would take over the leadership of the group which Jesus had held up to this point. In their minds, it must have meant decisions like: where do we go next? Whom do we teach this week? How do we deal with this confrontation?

Jesus responded that they would drink the cup He was to drink - they would encounter the kinds of abuse toward which He was headed. They would also be baptized with His baptism - the persecution, the abuse and, ultimately, the death He experienced.

Jesus continued with the word, "but." This again indicates a contrast is coming. He then suggests that their request was beyond His realm of ministry. The granting of these positions was to be done by another, whom Jesus did not identify. One might assume that He was referring to the Father, but Jesus made it clear that their request was out of line. These places belonged to the persons for whom they had been prepared and Jesus did not

identify them. It had to be a severe blow for James and John because they had a deep need to know they would be the leaders. Surely, it was shocking to them, because they certainly believed Jesus would grant their request before they asked. After all, they were the chosen, the preferred ones of the 12, or so they thought. They did not think that their request was out of line, but Jesus made it clear that their thinking was wrong.

In verses 41 to 45, the rest of the disciples reacted with indignation to the request of James and John. Jesus sensed this and called the disciples together to settle the waters. His teaching was strong and decisive. He made several points.

- Gentile rulers lord it over their subjects - that is their understanding of the rulers' place.
- High officials exercise authority - domineer, lord it over their subjects. That is their understanding of what it ought to be. This struck a responsive note in the disciples' minds. They were aware of Jewish history. God had said that He did not want Israel to have a king, that kings would lord it over them, and that was precisely the sad experience of Israel. In this, Jesus identified their request with the thing God had not wanted to see happen to His people.
- The values of kingdom people differ from those of non-Christians. Non-Christians believe excelling indicates greatness. Jesus was teaching that servanthood identifies greatness.
- The desire for greatness is not wrong. One must remember, though, that the route to greatness is through being a servant to all others. One must also remember that Jesus used a different definition of greatness than people usually think about.
- The route to being of first importance in the Kingdom is to be the slave of every other believer. Jesus used Himself as an illustration of what He meant. The Son of Man did not come to assume pagan authority - lord it over them. The Son of Man came to serve; to give His life a ransom for many others. The kingdom operates under a different set of principles and guidelines. Greatness comes as a by-product of servanthood; of following the style of Jesus.

MARK 10:46-52 HEALING OF BLIND BARTIMAEUS

Jesus is moving ever closer to Jerusalem and His coming sacrifice. Now they are in Jericho. This is the place where God had repeatedly revealed His power in the Scriptures. A large crowd is following Him. As they pass through the area, a local, blind beggar, named Bartimaeus, cries out to Jesus. The name Bartimaeus means "bar"- son, "timaeus" - honorable. He was the son of the honorable one. It is reasonable to assume that Bartimaeus was a Jew.

He heard that Jesus was passing through the area. The blind beggar created a scene. He began to shout,

*"Son of David, have mercy on me! Son of David, have mercy on me."
Mark 10:47*

Over and over, louder and louder he cried. His description of Jesus is interesting. The phrase, "Son of David" appears 13 times in the New Testament. In 12 of these it refers to the Messiah. In all 12 it was spoken by people identifying Jesus. It was much more than

an identification of His tribal ancestry. This blind man clearly believed that Jesus was **the** Messiah.

The other people in the area were embarrassed with this disturbance. They tried in vain to get him to be quiet, but he was determined to get the attention of Jesus.

The response to the verbal abuse Bartimaeus took from the others was that he pleaded harder and louder. His strong outcry was an indication of the intensity of his desire and belief.

Some might think Jesus' question was strange. The simplicity and intensity of Jesus is often misunderstood. Jesus was simply taking the man seriously. "What do you want me to do for you?" was an honest question. It was Jesus' way of placing Himself completely at the disposal of the needy individual. The man did not think it strange. He answered the question just as carefully as Jesus asked it. Notice what the man said:

"Rabbi, I want to see." Mark 10:51

The man was specific. He didn't say he just wanted help. God had given him eyes and he wanted to be able to see. He wanted every blessing God had created for him to experience.

Jesus' response was interesting. Look at what He said,

"Go,... your faith has healed you." Mark 10:52

The faith of the man was a vital ingredient in the healing. It does not mean that Jesus' omnipotent power was insufficient for the task. It means that the faith of the man released that omnipotent power.

Immediately, the man was able to see and he used his new ability to praise God. The result in the city was the same. The people knew he had been blind. They praised God for what Jesus had done for this man of their town.

This passage, 9:2-10:52, is power-packed. We have observed the power and honor of Jesus in the transfiguration and the healing of the epileptic boy and Bartimaeus. By contrast, we have examined the total humanity of the disciples in their undue concern for rank, their clamoring for places of honor and exclusiveness when one not of their group cast out demons. We have studied Jesus' universal value of people as he took time for little children. We have cringed over Jesus' sorrow when the rich young ruler chose his position and possessions in preference to discipleship. Increasingly, Jesus has confronted each person with the imminence of His sacrificial death.

Think carefully about your life in the home and work place. In view of the things that are happening in your life and world, what is Jesus saying to you in this passage? What are you going to do about it?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 12
TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM
MARK 11:1 - 33

1. There are seven paragraphs in Mark, chapter 11. Read each paragraph carefully. On the table which follows, write a title of seven words or less for each paragraph.

Mark 11:1-10	
Mark 11:11	
Mark 11:12-14	
Mark 11:15-18	
Mark 11:19	
Mark 11:20-26	
Mark 11:27-32	

2. In Mark 11:1-10, Jesus made His courageous, triumphal entry into Jerusalem. On this Sabbath day, can you find any reason why this procession began at Bethphage? Does the fact that it was the Sabbath have any bearing on the meaning of this entry? The cheering crowds participate in a very symbolic celebration. What was it? In verses 9 and 10, the people quoted from the Old Testament. Check your Bible to see the origin of these words. Put yourself in the place of the Roman governor. What would you think when you heard these cries? Put yourself in the place of Jesus. What do you think He was thinking? Feeling? What do you think was going through the mind of the crowd as they cried "Hosanna!"?
3. In Mark 11:11, Jesus went into the temple late in the day. Why is this significant? Put yourself in Jesus' place as He looked through the temple courts. What would you be thinking?
4. The story of the fig tree is in two parts: Mark 11:12-14 and 11:20-26. Read these verses carefully. Look at what happened to the tree and then look at Jesus' teaching in the latter paragraph. What did you learn? What does Jesus teach concerning prayer in verses 22-25? What is the relationship between lack of forgiveness and answered prayer?
5. In Mark 11:15-18, Jesus cleansed the temple. Why was this necessary? What is the relationship between the triumphal entry and the cleansing of the temple? What was the basis of Jesus' actions? Study the response of the religious leaders to Jesus' cleansing of the temple. What did you learn?
6. In Mark 11:19, there is one short sentence. Jesus and His disciples went out of the city for the night, as was their custom. Meditate on this for a while. What did you learn?
7. In Mark 11:27-32, the Chief Priests, teachers of the law and Elders came to confront Jesus concerning the authority by which He did the forceful things He did. Their deception was not well concealed. They were the only ones who could give authority concerning the temple. Study Jesus' answer to their question. Did Jesus really answer their question? What effect did Jesus' question have on these leaders? Jesus answered their question by asking a question. Study their response. What did they say and why? Study Jesus' response. What did He say? How forceful were His words?
8. Review this passage. What direction can you find to help you live your discipleship in this culture?
9. Choose a verse that is most meaningful to you. Memorize the verse.

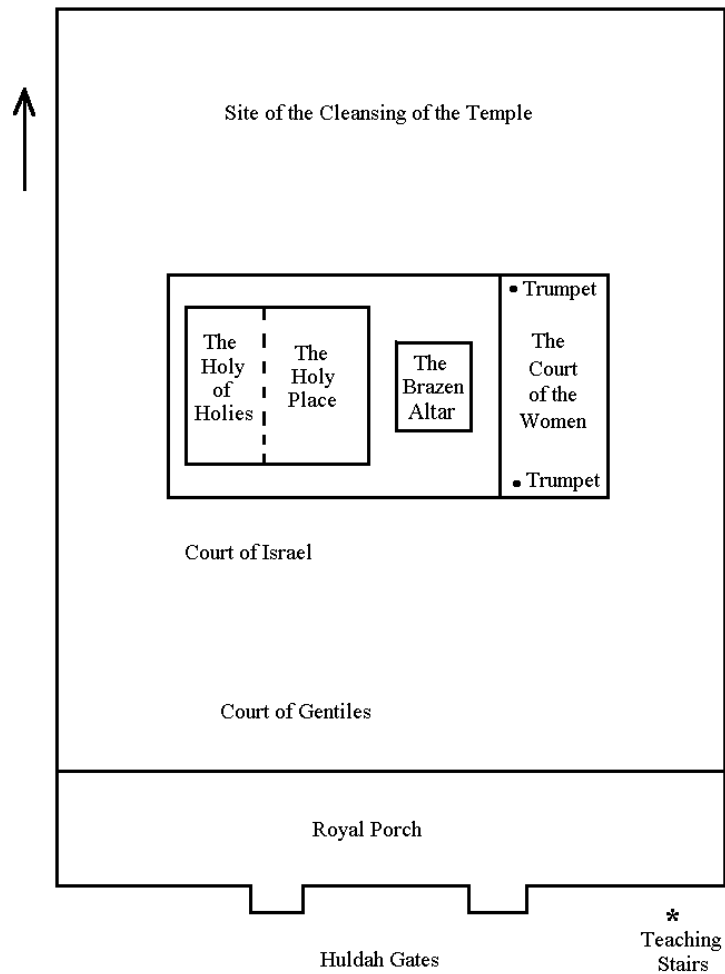


Diagram 1: The Temple as it was in Jesus' Day

LESSON 12 – MARK 11:1-33

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

INTRODUCTION

In chapter eleven of the Gospel of Mark, there are seven paragraphs. On the table below, there is a summary of the content of each paragraph.

Mark 11:1 - 10	The Triumphal Entry
Mark 11:11	The Procession to the Temple
Mark 11:12 - 14	The Fig Tree was Cursed
Mark 11:15 - 18	The Cleansing of the Temple
Mark 11:19	Jesus' routine - He Left the City Nightly
Mark 11:20 - 26	The Fig Tree Withered - Recipe for Answered Prayer
Mark 11:27 - 32	The Chief Priests Questions Jesus' Authority

MARK 11:1-10 THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

This is one of the best known experiences in the life of Jesus, but it lasted only a very short time. One can walk the distance from Bethphage to the temple mount in Jerusalem in less than an hour. It is only a Sabbath's day journey.

In order to appreciate the meaning behind this entry into Jerusalem, one must look into the Old Testament in order to grasp what was in the mind of the people who lined the way into the city.

When the Jews thought of their Messiah, they immediately thought of the prophetic announcement concerning Him in Zechariah. The prophecy says,

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Zechariah 9:9

It is clear that the people, who lined the road, were thinking in terms of the Messiah. It is most unlikely that they were thinking of Jesus' kind of Messiah.

Jesus gave instructions to the disciples about the colt they were to bring. It was a specific colt. It was tied in a specific place. The text states that it was being watched by people who would challenge them as they released the colt to bring it to Jesus. This tells us something of the precision of the thinking and planning of Jesus.

Jesus intentionally rode into Jerusalem from Bethphage, because this was the ultimate city limit; the farthest acceptable distance for a Sabbath's day journey. A careful study of the balance of the Gospel of Mark will reveal that this was the Sabbath, and on the Sabbath the Jews were allowed to walk a certain distance, but they could ride a somewhat greater distance on a donkey. It is not accidental that this takes place on the Sabbath. Riding from Bethphage was the best way to emphasize the nature of His kingship and the nature of His reign. He also wanted to identify the regular Sabbath day experiences with His entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. It was a way of identifying His kingdom with worship rather than military power. Had Jesus ridden from a greater distance, He would have been

in difficulty with the very strict Jews. The strictest Jews were very precise in keeping the distances they could walk or ride on the Sabbath. This is true even today.

There are several symbols attached to the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Jesus was riding on a donkey. This fulfilled the prophetic message of Zechariah 9:9, and the means of transportation suggested something of the purpose of the king's travel. If the king came on a horse, it would indicate his warlike intentions. If he came on a donkey, he would be coming in peace. Somehow, we have accepted the idea that a donkey is an animal of lesser value than a horse. To us it would be demeaning to ride one. This was not true in Palestine. The donkey was at least as important as the horse in terms of transportation, if not more so. In truth, horses were used more by the Romans than by Jews. In Deuteronomy 17:16, Israel was instructed not to multiply horses because the Jews tended to trust in horses for deliverance rather than trusting in God.

The placing of cloaks on the donkey and on the road which Jesus took was also symbolic. It identified the acceptance of the king by the common people. The placing of cloaks on the road was to prevent the king from getting dirty; to show greatest respect and subservience by those who did it. Even in the time of Queen Elizabeth it was the custom. Sir Walter Raleigh was supposed to have done this for her. The people would spread their cloaks on the road, especially if it was muddy, to keep her from getting her shoes dirty. Even then it was a royal announcement.

In Jesus' time, the people would spread palm branches over the road. These branches were the symbol of victory and prosperity. They were also the symbol of Jewish nationalism. First century Roman coins, in Israel, had a very interesting picture on the face of the coin. In the center was a palm tree, and on one side stood a very large Roman soldier, tall, erect. On the other side of the tree was a Hebrew woman, kneeling or bowing. This was the Roman impression of Jewish nationalism. The Roman officials were not oblivious to the gestures of the crowd as they spread their garments, waved palm branches and shouted "Hosanna."

The cry of "Hosanna" had a particular meaning. These people lived under the dominance of Rome. The crowd was escorting one, whom they thought of as king, into the capital city. The word "Hosanna" was a dramatic plea for God to "save now."

The Jews always had to practice caution because of the Romans. This included disguising references to their king and Messiah. They often did this by referring to Him as "the one who comes." This is precisely what they were doing when they cried out, quoting from the Scriptures, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Of course, this is a quotation from Psalm 118:25, 26. The reference to their father David was something used as a reference to their king and kingdom. David was the one who established the royal position in Israel. Their reference to it is a hope; a prayer for its return.

All of these references to the king and the kingdom took place right under the windows of the representative of Rome. In spite of the fact that Jesus did not ride into Jerusalem on a horse, the symbol of a conqueror, nor did He ride through the double portal, another symbol of challenging Roman rule, still the triumphal entry was a brazen endeavor, the boldest messianic step yet on the part of Jesus. It was time for Him to assert His royal destiny as never before. It was also a courageous act on the part of the people, who were taking a visible stand against Rome and for the kingdom of Israel.

MARK 11:11 JESUS ENDED THE PROCESSION TO THE TEMPLE

This paragraph is only one verse long, but it is most important and symbolic. When a king entered a capital city, he would go to the palace. Jesus entered the capital city and went to the temple. Jesus did not intend to rule by force and politics, but by the worship of the Father and the obedience to His will. This was the closest Jesus had come to saying "I **am** the Messiah."

When Jesus went to the temple, it was late. Therefore, He just looked around. When the text says that Jesus looked around at everything, it points to things to come. As was His custom, He and the disciples returned to the home of their friends in Bethany. He had ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey, but now He would retrace His route, apparently on foot.

What do you suppose went through the minds of the disciples on the return trip to Bethany? We should keep in mind that James and John had asked for honored positions in Jesus' kingdom. Do you suppose their hopes were rekindled? Also, Peter had tried to talk Jesus out of going to Jerusalem in the first place. Would he have been glad now, even excited about the prospect of the future kingdom? What would **you** have been thinking about?

MARK 11:12-14 THE FIG TREE CURSED

At the time of the feast, it was Jesus' custom to stay in Bethany and from there go into the city each day. Now as they began the two mile trip from Bethany to Jerusalem, Jesus was hungry and saw a fig tree with leaves. We must remember that this is the only destructive miracle ascribed to Jesus.

To say the least, this seems out of character for Jesus. He was always trying to help people, rather than to destroy. Jesus used His miraculous power to help others, not to deal with His disappointment.

Notice that the text of this story comes just before and after Jesus' cleansing of the temple. It is not despotic. Jesus is preparing the disciples for the decisions He must make concerning the temple. Just as the omnipotence of Jesus is demonstrated in the cursing of the fig tree, so the power of Jesus is confirmed as Jesus exercised His authority in cleansing the temple. The temple was made for increasing the worship of God, but it was being used for most anything else.

MARK 11:15-18 - THE CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

Jesus came to Jerusalem as a peaceful king. He had seen the abuse of the "temple area." It was clear to Him that this could not have been possible without the complicity of the Chief Priests and teachers of the law. Now He was going to exercise His authority. Notice the way Mark describes this dramatic event,

Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. Mark 11:15, 16

Merchants were selling their temple money (money with no image of a Roman or foreign ruler on it) and animals for sacrifice right in the courts of the temple. This was strictly forbidden. Read verse 15 again. It is as though Jesus had made the decision the night be-

fore and had waited until the people returned to execute His decision. Mark used the word "drive out". It literally means to "cast forth" and suggests the use of strong force. It could also be translated as "expel" or "thrust." Jesus threw these merchants out of the temple. It is interesting that Malachi prophesied that this would take place, in Malachi 3:1-3.

The people were even using the courts of the temple as a short cut to get from one side of town to the other without going around the huge temple complex. This rendered the temple no longer holy; no longer special.

Jesus quoted forcefully from the Scriptures to substantiate what He was doing. It was a stinging attack. He first quoted Isaiah, saying,

*Is it not written, My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?
Isaiah 56:7*

This is a picture of what God intended His house to be. Jesus went on, however, to describe what the people and the leaders have allowed it to become. Jesus then quoted from Jeremiah, saying,

But you have made it a den of robbers. Jeremiah 7:11

This was not an exaggeration. A dove purchased in the temple would cost 25 times what a dove on the outside would cost, but the temple inspectors would be sure to find something wrong with any dove which was not purchased in the temple, thus forcing the people to buy temple merchandise. Add to this the fact that this temple business was owned and controlled by the family of Annas, the high priest. Jesus denounced them for allowing the temple to become most everything God never intended it to be. It is clear that He was saying that this could not have happened without the express consent and complicity of the leaders of the religious community.

Jesus had discovered a thriving business inside the temple. Some scholars describe Jesus' emotional reaction to this tragedy as spontaneous, uncontrollable. The tragic conditions were terrible, but Jesus' response was not instantaneous. He had seen the conditions the night before, (11:11), and knew exactly what was going on in the temple. His reactions were measured, appropriate and timely, but firm.

It is not surprising that the Chief Priests reacted as they did. They did not argue with Him for two reasons:

- There was no argument to be made. What Jesus had said was true and everyone knew it.
- Jesus was becoming increasingly popular and the people would come to His defense.

There were two reasons why the Chief Priests decided to kill Jesus and sought an opportunity to do so:

- He exposed their error and lucrative scheme as unworthy of the high calling which they represented and were supposed to maintain.
- They were afraid of what the people would do if they opposed His actions or killed Him openly.

It is interesting that the Chief Priests, who were sworn to defend the law, would freely violate an important law in order to get rid of one who was making their lives exceedingly uncomfortable by His devotion to the law and the relationship to God it described.

MARK 11:19 JESUS' ROUTINE - HE LEFT THE CITY NIGHTLY

This paragraph of one sentence was simply a report of what Jesus customarily did. The wealthy and privileged were able to remain inside the city of Jerusalem during the feasts. They stayed in the homes of the wealthy. This was a privilege. It required a lot of money and prestige. The instructions of the Old Testament directed the citizens of Jerusalem to take the strangers into their homes. This would help some, but when two and one half million people crowd into a city of just over 50,000, this will not come close to meeting all the needs. It should also be remembered that there was also a designated place in the very southern point in the old city where the poorer pilgrims could come to stay in the city. But, there was not enough room for the huge crowd. Consequently, people were sleeping in the streets, outside the walls and wherever they could find room. Jesus apparently chose to stay the nights with His close friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus, who lived in Bethany, a short distance away where He and the disciples were always welcome.

MARK 11:20-26 THE FIG TREE - RECIPE FOR ANSWERED PRAYER

Often in the Bible an event becomes a teaching tool for a more important truth. This is the case with the withered tree. The story is in two parts. The curse of the fig tree takes place on the morning after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The discovery of the withering of the tree takes place on the second day after the triumphal entry.

As they walked from Bethany to Jerusalem, the disciples saw the fig tree which Jesus had cursed the day before. In this area, many fig trees grew and still grow today. It was not just that the tree was a bit withered. It was withered from the very roots on up.

As usual, Peter was the one who mentions the discovery. We do not know if he was the first to discover it, but it would not be surprising. His statement was one of shock.

"Rabbi, look! the fig tree you cursed has withered!" Mark 11:21

It is as though he can not believe that what Jesus had said the day before had really come true. Jesus took this response and turned it into something more important than whether or not a tree withered after He cursed it. Jesus was talking about implicit faith.

Jesus identifies four factors that are important in faith which results in answered prayer:

- One must have faith. Jesus said,

"Have faith in God." Mark 11:22

Jesus expounds this statement by saying,

"If anyone says to this mountain, 'Go throw yourself into the sea' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him." Mark 11:23

There is shock value in an extreme illustration. This does not suggest that Jesus did not mean what He said. He meant every word, but the shocking presentation grabs one's attention in an abrupt fashion. If we expect prayer to be answered, we need to believe that the omnipotent power of God is sufficient for whatever is necessary. "It will be done for him."

- When people pray, they must ask believing that they have what they request. This step has two parts, asking and believing. We can not assume that because God knows our needs, He will, therefore, provide. **Receiving is predicated upon asking.** "Believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." **Receiving is predicated upon believing;** upon being persuaded by overpowering evidence, confident that we have already received it. Without believing, there is no receiving.
- Answered prayer requires an appropriate lifestyle. We must examine our lives to see if there is a lack of forgiveness where others have done us wrong. Prayer will not be answered in an unforgiving atmosphere.
- Answered prayer requires forgiving the wrongs of others. The word "forgive" which Jesus used here, has strong Old Testament roots. It literally means "to send away." In the celebration of the sacrifice of Atonement, a goat was taken to the place where the people recited their sins. When the sins had been recited, the animal was driven out into the wilderness, never to return. Jesus was saying that we will be forgiven of our sins as we forgive others of their sins against us.

Remember Peter asked Jesus just how many times one should forgive?

"Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Matthew 18:21

Jesus answered him,

"I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven." Matthew 18:22

(note: The NIV text says "seventy-seven", but the best Greek text clearly says "seventy times seven.")

In some translations verse 26 is missing. All but one of the best Greek manuscripts omit the verse. One can not say conclusively, but evidence seems to lean in favor of omission.

MARK 11:27-32 CHIEF PRIESTS QUESTION JESUS' AUTHORITY

After Jesus had cleansed the temple and caused no small uproar in the religious life of Jerusalem, He was approached by the religious leaders of the city: the Chief Priests, teachers of the law and the Elders. Elders and rulers of the synagogue were virtually the same. The eldership dates at least to the time of Moses. They continued to be leaders in the Jewish community even to the time of Jesus. With every synagogue there was a government of elders. Some of the elders were members of the Sanhedrin. They came to Jesus while He was walking in the temple courts. They challenged His authority by saying,

"By what authority are you doing these things? ...and who gave you authority to do this?" Mark 11:28

TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

These leaders did not claim that what Jesus did was unnecessary or wrong. But they did challenge His authority to take the stand which He took, since He was not a leader of the temple and therefore had no authority, which they felt they had and He had taken away from them publicly. It was like saying, "Who do you think you are, doing a thing like this?"

Jesus answered their challenge by saying,

"I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John's baptism - was it from heaven, or from men? Tell me!" Mark 11:29, 30

Their challenge was intended to put Jesus on the defensive. In return, Jesus challenged them with a simple question. In so doing, He shifted the responsibility for an answer from Himself to them. Now they were on the defensive!

Verses 31 and 32 describe their dilemma. They were caught in a bind. They had to have a conference before they could answer. If they answered His question with, "From heaven," Jesus could put them under pressure by asking them why they do not believe in Him. On the other hand, if they said it was not from heaven, they were placing themselves in personal jeopardy because the populace thoroughly believed the teachings of John the Baptist about Jesus.

They finally answered His question by saying, "We don't know." No self respecting Jewish religious leader ever admitted this, if he could help it. But they were caught. It was either that or self-incrimination.

Jesus responded to their statement in simple but devastating terms. Jesus did not say, "I do not know." He said, "Neither will I tell you." In this brief statement, Jesus is saying that they had lied. He inferred that He was aware of the fact that they really did know, but would not admit it. They were cowards! Jesus' response to their initial question destroys the picture of the passive Jesus that so many hold.

Reflect upon chapter eleven. Jesus triumphantly enters the royal city for He is the king of the Jews. The greatness of Jesus' power is evidenced in the cursing of the fig tree. The greatness of Jesus' holiness is displayed as in power He cleansed the temple of its unworthy use. Yet, at night He left the bustling, royal city and sought refuge among friends, as the common people did. As you reflect upon these thoughts, look at your life. What does the power, authority, holiness and commonness of Jesus have to do with the way you do your work, deal with people and choose your values?

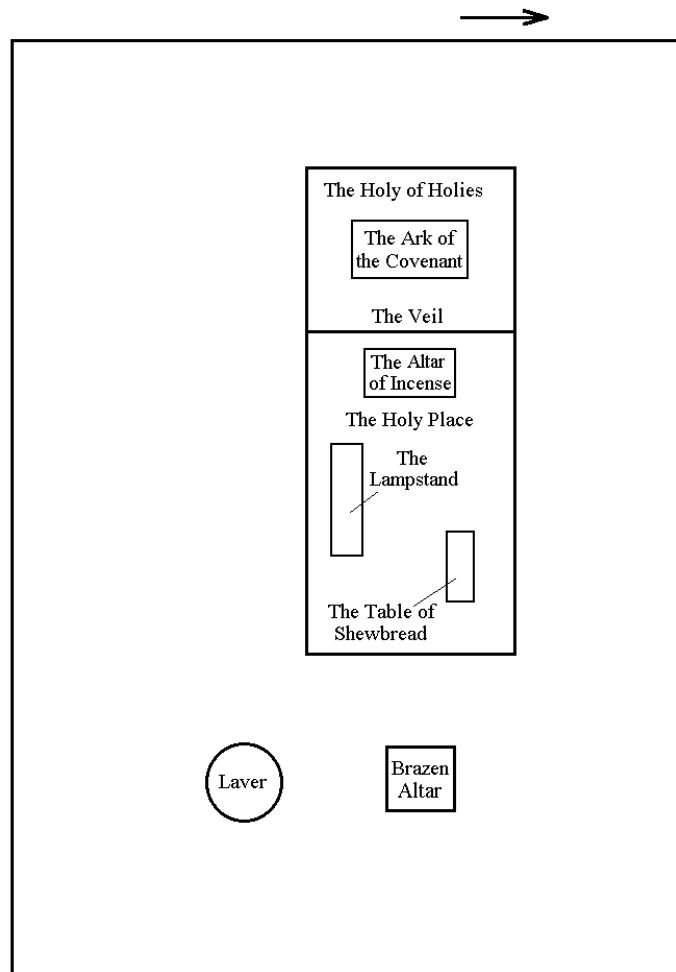


Diagram 2: The Inner Area of the Temple

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 13

RELIGIOUS ENEMIES ATTACK JESUS

MARK 12:1 - 44

1. There are seven paragraphs in this chapter. Read each paragraph carefully. On the following table, give each paragraph an appropriate title, in seven words or less.

Mark 12:1 - 12	
Mark 12:13 - 17	
Mark 12:18 - 27	
Mark 12:28 - 34	
Mark 12:35 - 37	
Mark 12:38 - 40	
Mark 12:41 - 44	

2. Now look at the list of titles. Remember Jesus is intentionally moving toward the cross. Indicate how you feel each paragraph contributes toward that goal.
3. Read Mark 12:1-12 carefully. Jesus is apparently speaking, in a parable, to the religious leaders. If you were one of these leaders and Jesus told you this parable, what would you think? How would you feel? What is Jesus saying to them?
4. In Mark 12:13-17, the religious leaders question Jesus about paying tribute. Why would tribute be an issue for them? What was their question? How did Jesus answer the question? What emotions would this answer naturally arouse?
5. In Mark 12:18-27, Jesus was questioned by the Sadducees about the resurrection. The Sadducees traced the idea of levirate marriage to Genesis 38. A levirate marriage is one in which the husband dies and his next oldest brother takes his brother's wife to raise up an heir to his dead brother. Why would this group question Jesus about the resurrection? If you were a Sadducee, how would you feel when you heard Jesus' answer? What was Jesus saying to them? What impact would this encounter have on those who listened?
6. In Mark 12:28-34, Jesus was questioned by a scribe concerning the first or greatest commandment. How did Jesus treat His challenger? Study Deuteronomy 6:4,5 and Leviticus 19:18. What help do they offer? Put yourself in the place of the scribe. How would you feel if Jesus spoke to you as He did to the scribe? Notice Jesus' final response, in 34. What do you think Jesus felt at this point?
7. Compare and contrast Mark 12:1-34 and Mark 12:35-37. To whom is Jesus speaking in each paragraph? What comparisons and contrasts can you find in the paragraphs? Why is it important for Jesus to point out the statement that David made in Psalm 110:1? At the close of verse 37, Mark adds an observation about the crowd. What does it tell you?
8. In Mark 12:38-40, Jesus is talking to the people about the scribes. If you were one of the scribes, how would you feel about what Jesus said? What could you charge Jesus with libel for saying?
9. In Mark 12:41-44, Jesus draws a sharp contrast between the poor widow and the rich. What does Jesus say about the rich? What does Jesus say about the poor widow? What principle can you find in this passage?

JESUS CHRIST: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

10. As you reflect on this passage, where have you found direction for your life in the cultural situation in which you live?
11. Choose one verse, from this passage, that has great meaning for you. Memorize the verse.

LESSON 13: – MARK 12:1-44

RELIGIOUS ENEMIES ATTACK JESUS

INTRODUCTION

There are seven paragraphs in Mark, chapter 12. On the table which follows there is a brief summary of each paragraph.

Mark 12:1 - 12	The Parable of the Husbandman
Mark 12:13 - 17	The Pharisees Question Jesus About Tribute
Mark 12:18 - 27	The Sadducees Question Jesus About Resurrection
Mark 12:28 - 34	The Scribes Question Jesus About First Commandment
Mark 12:35 - 37	Jesus Teaches Common People About Himself
Mark 12:38 - 40	Jesus Warns About the Scribes
Mark 12:41 - 44	The Widow's Mite

As you look at the title of each paragraph in this chapter, you will notice that there is a strong emphasis on conflict with religious leaders. More than half of the chapter deals with this issue. It will make an impact on our study.

MARK 12:1-12 THE PARABLE OF THE HUSBANDMAN

Having just been cross-examined by the Chief Priests, teachers of the law and the Elders, Jesus quickly turns to the teaching of a parable. This was a favorite tool of His whenever the opposition was present.

Jesus begins an owner made in First, he would vineyard. This the wild animals and the people meant that he had have a very tilla- the winepress so pressed and the a watchtower,



Picture 5: A Watchtower

by describing the preparation order to build a vineyard. put a wall around the whole was, of course, to keep out that would eat the grapes, who might steal the crop. It removed enough rocks to ble field. He dug a pit for that the grapes could be juice collected. He also built from which the workers

could overlook the whole vineyard at harvest time, thus guarding the harvest. In this process Jesus showed that the owner did everything possible to have an excellent vineyard. In the time of Jesus, a watchtower was an important part of any vineyard. The tower pictured here was made by matching the different stones. There is no mortar in the structure. The watchtower was also used as a place of shelter for the workers who served as watchmen, a place for storage of the fruit and an elevated position from which to keep an eye on the entire field.

As often happened, the people who owned the land did not want to do the work themselves, so they rented the land out to poor farmers. After arrangements were made, the farmer took care of the field and did all the work for a percentage of the harvest.

The owner had every right to collect his rent in the form of a portion of the harvest. He would send a trusted servant to collect his profit for him. Notice the progression in the severity of the treatment of the servants by the farmers. The first servant was beaten and sent away empty-handed. Another servant was hit in the head and treated shamefully. The next servant was killed. Many servants were sent. Some were beaten, some killed, but none were given the just portion of the harvest. The ultimate violence was visited on the owner's son when he was sent to collect what was rightfully his father's. The owner had erroneously counted on the respectability of the ones who had been so violent. The renters, on the other hand, now acted with obvious motive. They realized that the last one sent was the heir. They decided to kill the son so that they could have the entire harvest for themselves.

At this point, Jesus stopped the parable and began an application of its message. He turned to the Chief Priests, teachers of the law and the Elders, who had been challenging Him, and asked them two questions:

"What then will the owner of the vineyard do?" Mark 12:9

Jesus answered the question for them,

*"He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others."
Mark 12:9*

The answer Jesus gave to His own question was most reasonable, expected, but harsh. Anyone of His day would have agreed with that. The fact that it was so simple put great pressure on the people being questioned. Jesus asked a second, more involved question,

*"Haven't you read this Scripture, 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eye'"
Mark 12:10, 11*

This is a quotation from Psalm 118:22,23. It is interesting that Jesus chose this passage. Only three verses later, in Psalm 118:26, you will find the words which the crowd had been shouting in Mark 11:9. This is not accidental. Jesus did this on purpose and the religious leaders were just as aware of it as He was. It had been increasingly clear to these religious leaders that Jesus used the parable to point His finger at them. There is at least irony, if not sarcasm, in Jesus' words, when He said, "Haven't you read this Scripture." This is a forceful statement. Literally, Jesus said, "**Did you not even read** with certainty this Scripture?" The disbelief, in this statement, is cutting. He was speaking to people who constantly read the Scriptures. They were expected to know the Scriptures better than anyone else in the land. They were the authorities on interpreting Scripture. Jesus' words were very forceful, but the religious leaders were acting as though they had never read such words.

Verse 12 is latent with tension. Jesus had made a searing attack on the religious leaders. They had lost face in the presence and minds of the people. On the other hand, it was the time of the feast of Passover and the people from Galilee and Judea were coming into the city in increasing numbers. It was dangerous for these teachers to say or do too much against Jesus under these circumstances. Notice how Mark sums it up,

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

Though they left, it is not too surprising that they maintained their fury throughout the celebration of the Passover.

MARK 12:13-17 - THE PHARISEES QUESTION JESUS ABOUT TRIBUTE

We need to remember that the confrontation of Jesus by the religious hierarchy was an orchestrated effort. Notice how Mark says it,

*Later **they sent** some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. Mark 12:13*

The pharisees and the Herodians were otherwise bitter enemies, but in order to trap Jesus, they worked together. Pharisees rejected the idea of tribute to Caesar. Herodians thought it appropriate. Here, however, they came to talk with Jesus about it as though they agreed with each other.

The questioning began with a lengthy bit of hypocrisy. They called Him "teacher", but did not think of Him in these terms. They said,

"We know you are a man of integrity." Mark 12:14

Integrity was not a high priority of the pharisees. In Matthew 23:13, 15, 23, 27 and 29, Jesus found it necessary to refer to the pharisees as "hypocrites" because of the deception of their lives. Still, they spoke of integrity as though it was not only very important, but also a serious concern of theirs. This, obviously, was not the case.

"You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are..." Mark 12:14

They had tried to sway Him, thinking everyone had a price. They thought every person was sensitive to people in high places.

"But you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth." Mark 12:14

It was clearly an attempt at flattery. They hoped to keep Him off guard and from recognizing their attempted trap.

The question was masterfully put. No matter what Jesus answered, He would be alienated from some, and perhaps from everyone. The history of the issue was bitter and painful. Jews wanted to believe that anyone who paid tribute was not only a traitor, but blasphemous. Their question was,

"Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" Mark 12:14

If Jesus answered "yes", then the populace would abandon Him. If he said "no", they could report Him to Roman officials as one inciting revolution.

Jesus' answer was even more masterful than their question. He became increasingly more challenging, the closer the time came for the Passover feast. Mark tells us that Jesus knew just how hypocritical the pharisees and Herodians were. He said,

"Why are you trying to trap me?" Mark 12:15

He made it clear that He knew what they were doing. This was embarrassing for them, to say the least. Jesus proceeded to involve them in the answer He was giving to their own question. He asked for a denarius. This was a classic move. The denarius was one of the three forms of tribute that each person of adult age had to pay. Jesus points out something that they might well have overlooked. The pharisees were not in favor of paying tribute. In spite of this, they had the coin of tribute on their person. Jesus, on the other hand, did not have one.

Jesus then asked an insightful question. He said,

"Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" Mark 12:16

The coinage of the day had a portrait of Tiberias Caesar, for it was during his reign. His name was also on the coin and the inscription, "the high priest of the Roman nation", referring to Tiberias, of course.

The leaders admitted that the inscription was Caesar's. In their eyes, Jesus was trapped. He was in trouble, no matter which way He turned, or so they thought.

Jesus responded in the form of a principle when He said,

"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." Mark 12:17

In other words, Jesus was saying that there are some things that under God have been placed in the realm of the Caesars of this world. It is mandatory for the people who follow God to render these to Caesar. Without taking any allegiance away from them, Jesus is saying, there are some areas of life that are the exclusive allegiance to God and may not be shared with any other leader. By the same token, it in no way detracts from the necessary commitment to civil authority. Jesus not only gave a useful principle, He also removed Himself from the horns of a dilemma.

Mark tells us that the religious leaders were amazed at Jesus. The word he used means 'to gaze in wonder.' It is like being caught in wonderment by something/someone so great that you can not escape their fixed gaze. In today's vernacular, we would say "He floored them!"

MARK 12:18-27 -THE SADDUCEES QUESTION JESUS ABOUT RESURRECTION

Another group of religious leaders came on the scene. The Sadducees were a small, but powerful group. They were highly trained in the law and focused all their attention upon the Pentateuch. They rejected the 'writings' of the Rabbis and oral traditions of the law. They did not believe in the resurrection because they could find no reference to it in the Pentateuch.

They called Jesus "Teacher", which was an honor, but they did not intend it to be so. It appears they were trying to have fun at His expense. They described an absurd situation in an effort to malign any view except their own. The scenario they described was a reference to the Levirate law in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. As you read, it is clear that the concern of this law is twofold:

- Preserve the family.
- Protect the concerns of the widow and keep the property in the family.

Mark points out that Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection. Then they asked Jesus,

"At the resurrection, whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?" Mark 12:23

Their question was not serious. It may have been to trap Jesus. It may have been to poke fun at any view of a resurrection other than their own.

Again, Jesus confronts those who would question Him with ulterior motives. Jesus said,

"Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God?" Mark 12:24

Jesus is on the offensive. He makes a searing double accusation of ignorance:

- You do not know the Scriptures.
- You do not know the power of God.

This was a serious attack. These men were some of the best trained scholars concerning the Pentateuch. Jesus, in so many words, claimed they are ignorant of the law.

The teachers would be just as embarrassed to have Jesus accuse them of ignorance of the power of God as they would be at being accused of being ignorant of the Scriptures. The teachers thought of themselves as **experts** concerning God **and** the Scriptures.

Jesus then set forth the truth concerning the resurrection from the Scripture in several assertions.

- The dead will rise.
- The risen will neither marry nor be given in marriage.
- The risen shall be like the angels in heaven.

Notice the part of the Bible from which He draws His illustrations. He said,

"Have you not read in the book of Moses..." Mark 12:26

These people had read the Pentateuch more carefully than most any other Jew and the book of Moses was the Pentateuch which they supposedly knew so well! This was a strong statement to make.

Talking from Exodus 3:5,6, Jesus reminds the Sadducees that God said to Moses,

"I AM the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." Mark 12:26

All three of these men had died, but God did not say **I WAS** the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God said, **I AM** the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Jesus was saying that this is a portrayal of Jehovah as the God of the living. It was His way of saying there is verification of the resurrection in the Pentateuch.

Jesus' closing statement was a stinging response. He said,

"He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken." Mark 12:27

It is possible that the Sadducees were simply dumbfounded. They may have hid their embarrassment behind the convenient or timely interruption by the "Teacher of the Law". It is certain that they were stung by Jesus' remark. For whatever reason, Mark leaves the story abruptly. There is no hint of the callous retort that certainly came from their lips. There is no expression of their possible decision to make more careful plans to trap Him at some other time.

MARK 12:28-34 - SCRIBES QUESTION JESUS ABOUT FIRST COMMANDMENT

The first thing to notice about this paragraph is that it is an interruption of the previous encounter. The man who came was a "Teacher of the Law." He was expert in the interpretation of the **oral** law. The Sadducees, on the other hand, were committed to the **written law**, the Pentateuch alone.

The scribe noticed that Jesus had given the Sadducees a good answer. He asked Jesus a very important question,

Of all the commandments, which is the most important? Mark 12:28

The teachers of the law spent considerable time talking about which law was the greatest. They had catalogued a list of 613 laws. They enjoyed mentioning that 365 of these were negative laws - one for each day of the sun calendar. The remaining 248 were positive, one for each bone of the human body.

It is important to notice that this is the first time Jesus did not confront His challenger. Jesus differed with a host of them by admitting that one law was greater than the others. He was asked for one law and He gave them two. It is interesting that Jesus quoted these laws without comment. He first quoted from Deuteronomy 6:4,5. Then He quoted from Leviticus 19:18. Notice how Jesus quoted these laws,

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength." Mark 12:29, 30

Notice that Jesus made one change from the Old Testament statement. Jesus spoke the name of the Father which strict Jews thought of as unspeakable.

Without request, Jesus added a second law to the list.

He said,

"The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." Mark 12:31

This is a quotation from Leviticus 19:18. Again, the law is stated without comment. This is, in all probability, an intentionally strong hint against the teachers of the law. As Jesus said, there is no commandment greater than **these**.

The Teacher of the Law must have been surprised. He responded,

"Well said, Teacher... you are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him." Mark 12:32

The man was honest and direct. He went on to identify the consequences of what Jesus was talking about. He said,

"To love him with all your heart, and with all your understanding and with all your strength and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." Mark 12:33

This would shock many of the strict Jews of His day, but He spoke the truth.

Notice Jesus' response. Jesus noticed that the man's answer was wise. Jesus spoke words of pain and longing. He said,

"You are not far from the kingdom of God." Mark 12:34

The other side of the statement is that though the scribe is not far from the kingdom, he has not yet made it **into** the kingdom. It was such a strong encounter that from that time on, no one dared to ask any more questions or to challenge Jesus' person and ministry.

MARK 12:35-37 JESUS TEACHES COMMON PEOPLE ABOUT HIMSELF

As you begin the study of this paragraph, notice that there are contrasts. In the previous paragraph, the religious leaders were questioning Jesus. Now Jesus is asking questions. Jesus had been questioned by the teachers of the law; now He is asking questions about their positions. A diagram of the layout of the temple should help one to gain an understanding of where these things took place. This diagram can be found on page 113. The asterisk indicates the location of this conversation. Jesus is teaching the common people who gladly listened to Him. He asked,

"How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.' David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?" Mark 12:35-37

The teachers of the law were expert at splitting hairs about Scripture. Jesus, here, picked them up at their own specialty - details of Scripture. They did teach that the Messiah was the son of David. The Messiah does come from the lineage of David. Because Jesus knew the Scriptures so completely, He could remind them of the apparent contradiction. In the Hebrew text, Psalm 110:1 says,

***Jehovah** says to my **Lord** (Hebrew-Adonii)...*

These are two different names for God. David said Jehovah is saying to Messiah, "My Lord..."

Mark inserts a little humor into his account, when he said,

The large crowd listened to him with delight. Mark 12:37

What an observation - it must have been so obvious to Mark that he simply had to include it. The people were exuberant to see someone put the scribes in an awkward position. How it must have angered them! The scribes were authorities whom no one dared to challenge. Jesus not only challenged them, but by pointing out their inadequacies, He helped them understand that in fact David referred to the Messiah as Lord when the Messiah was actually part of David's lineage. This thought had escaped their notice previously.

MARK 12:38-40 JESUS WARNS ABOUT THE SCRIBES

Jesus warned the large crowd concerning the scribes, the teachers of the law. Mark does not tell us whether the teachers of the law were still standing there when Jesus issued this warning, though it appears that they were still present. Put yourself in their place while this was going on. How would you feel? Jesus lists four specific things which the scribes do, and which are offensive:

- **They like to walk around in flowing robes.** The flowing white robes and special fringes were a symbol of wealth and position. It was nearly impossible to move quickly or do work in such robes. Rich people, however, never worried about that. The scribes wanted to give the impression of great wealth and importance.
- **They liked to be greeted in the market places.** This was a sign of deference. People could pass other common people and not notice. The scribes wanted to be noticed; wanted to be addressed as "Rabbi." They wanted to be considered important in the minds of their neighbors.
- **They wanted to have the most important seats in the synagogues.** This again was a sign of honor and importance. When people gathered for worship, a special seat was reserved, in front of the Ark containing the scrolls, for the speaker and important guests. This place was in full view of everyone in the synagogue. scribes wanted to be thought of as that important.
- **They wanted the places of honor at banquets.** This was like reserving a special seat for the mayor and other honored guests. The scribes wanted to be honored in this way. They wanted to be special, honored guests wherever they went.

Jesus also warned the common people about the conduct of the scribes. These teachers of the law may have known more about the Scriptures than anyone else, but it did not have a changing effect upon their conduct:

- **They devoured widows' houses.** The scribes could not charge for their teaching, but were expected to have a trade to care for their economic needs. Unfortunately, these teachers of the law got the common people to believe that it was a special honor to care for their needs in elegant style. Though the scribes were to have a vocation to take care of their economic needs, they convinced people of means to provide them with luxurious homes, sumptuous appointments and a lavish table. The wealthy were lead to believe that they would be rewarded in heaven for their gifts. Jesus' words to the scribes were biting, albeit honest.
- **For a show they make lengthy prayers.** Prayer is intended to focus on God. Their prayers were intended to focus on the scribe who prayed. They wanted to impress people with their piety and deep devotion when the opposite was really true.

Jesus made a stunning remark concerning their future,

"Such men will be punished most severely." Mark 12:40

This is a devastating indictment. It uses strong language and promises stern judgment. This had to be the most shocking statement they had ever heard about themselves. Nobody had ever dared to speak to them in such tones before! It goes without saying, they would definitely remember that it was Jesus who had spoken to them in this way and before the people! What humiliation!

MARK 12:41-44 THE WIDOW'S MITE

Jesus was a people-watcher. He was sitting in the area between the Court of the Women and the Court of the Gentiles, from which He could see a gate called "the Beautiful Gate." In this area the offering boxes, called the 'sofar' or trumpets, were placed. There were thirteen of these containers which were shaped like an upturned trumpet. He noticed the contrast between the rich people, verse 41, and the poor widow, verse 42. The rich put in large amounts, but they had great wealth. The poor widow, however, put in only two small copper coins. These coins, the lepta, were the smallest coin of the realm. It takes 40 of these to make up a day's wage for a man. They are the only Jewish coins mentioned.

Jesus called the disciples to teach them. He said,

"I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything - all she had to live on." Mark 12:43, 44

People assume the size of a donation indicates the greatness of the gift. Jesus instructs to the contrary. The extent of the gift is indicated not by the size but by what it represents in terms of what one has. The extent of the gift is predicated on the motive of the giver. The widow was poor. She could have thrown in one coin and kept one for her livelihood. But she gave with abandon and Jesus honored this gift.

Jewish women wore a headpiece on which a number of coins were sewn. The size of the coins depended upon the wealth of their family. It was the mark of their marriage. This woman might well have taken the last of her marriage symbol to give to God. Whatever it was, it was all she had. This, Jesus said, was more than all the others had given.

Review this passage. Jesus describes His rejection in the story of the husbandman. The pharisees' question about tribute focuses on allegiance to God. The Sadducees' question about the resurrection highlights the fact that God is the God of the living. The scribes' question on the greatest commandment centers on loving God and one's neighbor. In talking with the common people, Jesus focused on the fact that He was the Lord over all kings. Jesus' warning about the scribes reminds us that one's actions are far more important than one's knowledge. The widow's mite stresses the fact that why and how one gives is more important than the amount. As you read these things, how do they apply to you; to your work ethics, your treatment of people, your values of possessions. What changes which need to be made in your life are identified by this portion of Scripture? What difference is this going to make in the way you live?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 14

JESUS TEACHES DISCIPLES ABOUT END TIMES

MARK 13:1 - 37

1. There are seven paragraphs in this chapter. Please read each paragraph carefully. On the table below, give each paragraph a title of seven words or less.

Mark 13:1, 2	
Mark 13:3 - 8	
Mark 13:9 - 13	
Mark 13:14 - 23	
Mark 13:24 - 27	
Mark 13:28 - 31	
Mark 13:32 - 37	

2. Read Mark 13:1, 2. It appears that the disciples were talking about one thing and Jesus responded to their statement by talking about something different. What can we say to this situation?
3. In Mark 13:3-8, Jesus is talking to them about what He had previously said. What had Jesus said?
4. List the things that Jesus said in Mark 13:9-13. Study this list and make some observations about the list. What encouragement does Jesus give?
5. List the illustrations Jesus used in Mark 13:14-23, which describe just how bad things will be when the end comes. What do you learn from this list?
6. Compare and contrast Mark 13:14-23 with Mark 13:24-27. What do you learn from this study?
7. In Mark 13:28-31, Jesus uses the fig tree to teach the disciples something about future events. What is it that He is teaching? What one thing is Jesus stressing?
8. In Mark 13:32-37, Jesus gives some background and instructions about the end times. What is the most important exhortation that Jesus gives in this passage?
9. In Mark 13:32-37, Jesus uses a common, everyday experience to illustrate a specific teaching. What is the picture which He draws for them? What message is He trying to teach through this picture?
10. Reflect upon Mark 13:1-37. In what way does it give direction to your daily life as a disciple of Jesus?
11. Choose one verse, from this passage, which is most meaningful to you. Memorize the verse.

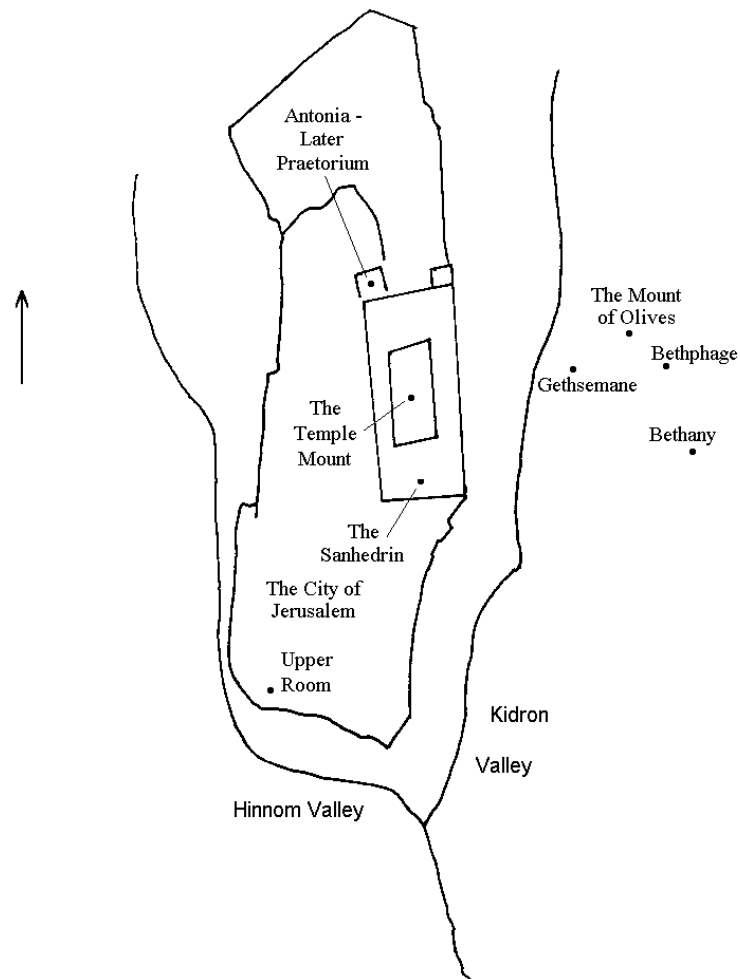


Diagram 3: Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives

LESSON 14: – MARK 13:1-37
JESUS TEACHES DISCIPLES ABOUT END TIMES

INTRODUCTION

In the thirteenth chapter of Mark, there are seven paragraphs. They are as follows:

Mark 13:1, 2	Jesus Predicted the Destruction of Jerusalem
Mark 13:3 - 8	The Inner Circle Questions Jesus - End Times
Mark 13:9 - 13	Jesus Described Disciples Future
Mark 13:14 - 23	The "Abomination of Desolation" Coming
Mark 13:24 - 27	The Coming of Messiah
Mark 13:28 - 31	The Fig Tree Teaches About End Times
Mark 13:32 - 37	Jesus Urges Watchfulness

MARK 13:1, 2 JESUS PREDICTS THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

Jesus and His disciples had spent the day in and around the temple. As was their custom, they were leaving the city to go to Bethany for the night. As they left the temple they could see the massive structures. Depending on where one stood, one might see the massive stones of the temple, the Roman fortress, the city wall, and especially the western wall of the temple mount. It is not clear which of these the disciples were viewing. Like a country boy in New York City, the disciples were aghast at the immensity of the buildings. Today the western wall of the temple mount is still standing. Each day, the very strictest of Jews go there to pray for the restoration of the temple and Jerusalem itself.

Jesus used this ideal opportunity to tell the disciples, in another way, that disaster is coming. Jesus said,

"Do you see these great buildings?... Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." Mark 13:2

This was difficult for them to comprehend. They were taught, and wanted to believe, that Jerusalem and the temple would stand forever. Jesus frankly states, it will not only be destroyed, but it will be so devastated that there will not be left one stone upon another. These were grim words. Without a doubt, the disciples did not fully comprehend.

MARK 13:3-8 THE INNER CIRCLE QUESTIONS JESUS - END TIMES

Leaving the city, Jesus and His disciples went east to the Mount of Olives, where they sat down and saw the temple from across the Kidron valley. Jesus and the disciples from the Capernaum area (Peter, Andrew, James and John) were talking. They were mulling over His teaching about the stones. They asked Jesus to give them more details about the doom He prophesied. Jesus' answer to these questions form the last major teaching time He spent with His disciples before He was crucified. Jesus answered their question by saying,

"Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. When you hear of wars, and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to

come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains." Mark 13:5-8

Read through this passage again and notice the specific things about which Jesus warned them:

- Believers will be deceived by fraudulent messianic claims.
- There will be wars and rumors of wars.
- There will be international distress - nation rise against nation.
- There will be natural disasters - earthquakes and famines.
- This will not be the end, but only the beginning of the end. He illustrates the teaching by comparing it to the onset of birth pangs prior to a woman giving birth to a child.

If you study this list, it is clear that it is not a sequence of events. The first one mentioned is still to be accomplished on a grand scale, but some others such as earthquakes and famines, are already in process. The stress is on "watchfulness", not just the sequence of events or their immediacy.

MARK 13:9-13 JESUS DESCRIBES DISCIPLES' FUTURE

Jesus used this opportunity to tell His disciples, in advance, of some of the hardships that **they** will face personally. The emphasis of the paragraph is not on the list of hardships, but on the warning with which the paragraph begins, "You must be on your guard."

There are eight conditions, as Jesus indicates, which will happen in their time. Six of the eight involve the use of emotional or physical violence against them because of their faith in Christ. In the midst of these, notice that there are two promises to encourage them.

- You will be handed over to local councils.
- You will be flogged in the synagogues.
- You will stand before governors and kings to witness to them about Jesus.
- You will be arrested and brought to trial.
- **(PROMISE)** Do not worry beforehand about what you will say. Say whatever is given to you. It is the Holy Spirit speaking, not you.
- You will not be alone in trial.
- Brother will betray brother.
- Father will betray his child.
- Child will rebel against parent - to put them to death.
- All men will hate you because of Jesus.
- **(PROMISE)** If you stand firm to the end, you will be saved.

Study this list again. Notice that He lists four tragic events and then a promise. He lists four more tragic events and then another promise. Jesus told them that frightening

things will come, but in the midst of them they will find help and encouragement. We know that this was through the Holy Spirit, who at this time had not as yet come, and the disciples probably had no idea just what Jesus meant by His promise of encouragement. A cursory study of church history indicates that in fact these things did happen to the disciples and those later called Christians. Tradition tells us that each of the disciples died a martyr's death. Peter was crucified upside down, John banished to the isle of Patmos and eventually forced to drink hemlock. Hebrews 11 tells the grim story of the faithful who gave up life rather than deny their Lord. The Christians in the Roman arena sang hymns as torches were lit around their feet to burn them to death, or as they faced the ravenous lions who were about to tear them to pieces. They did endure the hardship and their faith survived.

There is little doubt that the descriptions of this section may also be a picture of the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in 72 AD. These pictures also seem to describe events which are yet to occur.

MARK 13:14-23 THE "ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION" COMING

This paragraph is a bit difficult to comprehend because it involves an awareness of Jewish history and culture. The balance of the book explains Jewish customs and language as though the readers knew little about Jewish life. Jesus said,

"When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong..." Mark 13:14

Jews would understand this with no difficulty. They knew that it referred to a statement in three places in the prophecy of Daniel.

He will confirm a covenant with many for one seven. In the middle of the seven He will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him." Daniel 9:27

When the city of Jerusalem was conquered in 72 AD., the sacrifices were terminated by the Roman authorities. We also know that the Roman leader went into the Holy of Holies. As if this was not enough, we are told that there he sacrificed a pig to one of the Roman deities. This was not surprising for pigs were often used in pagan sacrifices. However, this rendered the entire temple unclean. It is doubtful if the temple could be cleansed of this abomination. The Romans destroyed the temple, but if they had not it appears that God would have destroyed it because it had been desecrated beyond use.

The second reference to the prophecy of Daniel is:

His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will setup the abomination that causes desolation. With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him. Daniel 11:31, 32

At the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, the daily sacrifices were terminated. The implications of this are that the people of Israel are without pardon so long as these sacrifices

are not being made. No atonement is available to them, so far as their understanding is concerned.

And the third reference to Daniel was:

From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end... Daniel 12:11, 12

In each of these three quotations, Daniel mentions the fact that the sacrifices were terminated. This was tremendously important to them. It was the source of their forgiveness. It was their only opportunity for atonement. It obviously deals with the cessation of offering sacrifices in the temple. We know that the Jews of today can not offer sacrifices because they do not have the ashes of the red heifer with which to cleanse the priests. Think of the consequences of this. No yearly atonement can be offered, therefore no atonement at all for the Jews. It also deals with someone being in a place, presumably the Holy of Holies, doing something he definitely should not do, such as offering pigs as sacrifices on the altar dedicated to God. This was shocking because Jews were considered unclean if they simply touched a pig. To have one sacrificed in their Holy of Holies, and probably on the Ark of the Covenant, was almost beyond their possible comprehension of degradation. It was absolutely the worst thing that could possibly be done to them.

In Mark 13:14, Jesus begins, "when you see this desolation standing where he does not belong", and then uses a clue statement - "let the reader understand". In some translations, this clue statement, "let the reader understand", appears to be an addition to the text or a parenthesis. To the best of our knowledge, it is just a normal part of the text of this sentence. The statement, "Let the reader understand," suggests that the writing of the Gospel of Mark may have been intended to be a letter. Jesus then identifies the intensity of the warning which He is giving by using several illustrations to show how frightening the time will be.

"Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." Mark 13:14

At the time of conquest, people in a walled city were only safe if they were strong enough to repel the attack. Otherwise, they would either be starved out or massacred when the enemy army breached the walls. Jesus told them, if you are in Judea, your only hope is to flee to the mountains. This was usually good advice. There were many caves in this area where they could find shelter. It was also a very easy place in which to hide. The mountains were very, very steep and treacherous and pursuers could easily be lost. An army would be reluctant to go into this area because of the probability of surprise attack. Soldiers fought best on flat areas where the footing was good. In these hills there was no good footing.

"Let no one on the roof of his house go down or enter the house to take anything out." Mark 13:15

There were two ways to exit from the roof of a house in Israel. You could go down inside the house. There was also an outside stairway. Jesus is saying, it is faster to go down the outside, so go that way. It is so bad that you should not bother to go down the inside steps, or after using the outside stairs, don't stop in the house to pick up something

you value. The emphasis is on urgency. Hurry! Get out! Don't bother to take anything with you.

"Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak." Mark 13:16

The cloak was a very important piece of clothing. It is the outer garment which a person used as a covering against the cold night air. Jesus is saying that it is safer to take a chance against the cold night air than to risk going back and getting involved with an army, and the need to hurry is so great that you couldn't take the time to get the cloak.

"How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!" Mark 13:17

Pregnant women and nursing mothers were at a severe disadvantage in times like these. They could not move about as quickly as they could when they were not in this condition. And nursing mothers would have to carry their infants with them. How fast could you run with a precious baby in your arms? Jesus is saying that it is particularly dangerous for these women because they were a most desirable target for a conquering army. To capture and abuse them was a way of humiliating their defeated foes.

"Pray that this will not take place in winter, because those will be days of distress unequaled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now and never to be equaled again." Mark 13:18, 19

Winter, in Palestine, is not just snow. This is the time of the year when it rains. It seldom rains at any other time. The rain also brings mud and slows the escape of people trying to avoid an army. It is cold in their winter, and sometimes they have snow in Jerusalem. It is very damp, and if they have fled with what they have on, it may be dangerous just from the cold and dampness.

*"If the Lord had not cut short these days, no one would survive."
Mark 13:20*

These times will be so bad that except for the fact that God will cut short the days, no one would survive. It will be **that bad!**

In this paragraph, Jesus also tells what will be going on while all this danger is present. During this time, there will be several people who will claim to be the Christ or a prophet. These deceivers will perform signs and miracles intended to deceive the elect. Jesus closes the paragraph by warning the disciples to be on their guard against such people. Jesus specifically states that this is advance information. It is what some would call "prophetic."

MARK 13:24-27 THE COMING OF MESSIAH

Jesus has broken coming events into two categories. The first He just described. The second He will describe in 13:24-27. After the events of 13:14-23, there will be natural disasters. The sun will be darkened, and thus the moon will have no light to reflect. The stars will fall and heavenly bodies will be shaken. This will be a shocking, visible condition which anyone will be able to monitor. Some of the former conditions existed at the time Jerusalem was destroyed. The conditions Jesus was talking about had not yet taken place and were descriptions of end time events.

But the problem with prophecies is that we human beings have such limited understanding. Our minds cannot comprehend their import. We want to know what is going to

happen; what comes first; where it will happen; when it will happen. We want to know what will follow. In other words, we want it spelled out in detail. We want someone to break it down into minute, specific, sequential details for us. But Jesus didn't oblige. It's like looking at a series of mountain tops. You see the tops, but you don't see the valleys in between. So we don't know how far it is from one mountain top to another, or what lies between the mountain tops. So it is with prophecy.

MARK 13:28-31 THE FIG TREE TEACHES ABOUT END TIMES

Jesus then said that after all this has happened, the time has come when people will see the "Son of Man" coming in clouds with great power and glory. Jesus also said that He would send His angels to gather His disciples from all parts of the earth. This will be a universal spectacle! You will be able to see Jesus coming no matter in which country you live and no matter whether it is day or night. That will be very scary! But the beauty of it is that His followers will be gathered by angels. Just think, one or more angels will come to get **you**. They will take you to meet Jesus. This is significant because it is a royal picture of Jesus. No one just goes into the presence of a king. One must be escorted into the presence of the king. Just think, the angels who have been in superior position to you all your life will escort you into the very presence of Jesus! **Wow!**

Jesus used pictures of disasters, such as earthquakes, famine, wars, fall of Jerusalem, etc., to show what would happen first. These things happened within the lifetime of some of those who heard Him, but Jesus has not returned as yet.

It is clear that Jesus is talking in figurative language. He refers to the Son of Man. This is a reference to the imagery found in Daniel,

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence... Daniel 7:13

Jesus then uses a visual illustration of a fig tree which they could easily understand. They had all seen one. It was one of the few trees in Palestine that was not an evergreen. Look at the process of the fig season. When twigs begin to get leaves, we know summer is near. That is a sign of the season. There are also signs in the spiritual areas of life. When you see these things happen, you know that it signifies that certain things are going to take place as certainly as the coming of fig leaves. We need to keep two ideas in perspective:

- Jesus prophesied that certain tragedies will come to pass, and they are still continuing and evidently haven't all come to pass as yet.
- Jesus prophesied that He would come again, and this is as certain as the earthquakes and the fall of Jerusalem, which came with devastating force in 72 AD.

There are many questions unanswered, but this is all that is revealed at this time.

MARK 13:32-37 JESUS URGES WATCHFULNESS

This is a paragraph of warning. Jesus clearly admits an area of information He does not know. No one knows the day nor the hour when the end of the age will come. The angels do not know; the Son does not know. Seriously, **only the Father knows**.

Jesus uses an illustration to help them understand. He tells a story about a traveling slave owner. The owner told the servant at the door to be watchful. They should keep

watch because they did not know when the owner would return. It could be in the evening or the middle of the night. It could be at day break or during the day time. They face the constant fear that the owner would return and find them not watching, or asleep. The issue was not whether or not he will come. The issue was whether or not he would find them waiting. The warning is universal, "Watch! Be ready at any time!" This is difficult. We want everything in its proper order and everything totally understood. Jesus warns that this will not be. We must be content to watch, not knowing all the details.

Now review the passage. It is difficult to focus on end times because of the uncertainty timewise, and that it may happen in our own lifetime.

Jesus predicted the impossible - the destruction of Jerusalem. In His day that was thought of as an utter impossibility! No one could or wanted to believe it. Surely the disciples must have thought it a strange if not unnecessary statement. It just couldn't happen, but it did!

It is painful to reflect on Jesus' prophetic statements - wars and rumors of wars, nations standing against nations, earthquakes and famine, persecution, betrayals and even death - because some of these predictions have happened, are happening and will happen in the future and we wonder if **we** are to become involved in these.

Jesus talked about the abomination of desolation. This actually happened at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 72 AD. Frankly, people focus so much on the end time events that they forget about the reason Jesus mentioned it. The important message in this passage is **Jesus' instruction to be watchful**.

No one can predict when end time events will culminate. One thing all can do is to **watch!**

Jesus is really saying that we should live each moment of each day so totally, completely, unreservedly for Him that should He come unexpectedly - and He will! - we would be ready; there would be **nothing** to keep us from following the angels into His presence. That is a tall order!

As you contemplate these difficult circumstances of present and future events, what does it mean in relation to your faith? How does it affect the way you make your choices and select your priorities? Just how can you obey the teaching of Jesus to be alert and watchful?

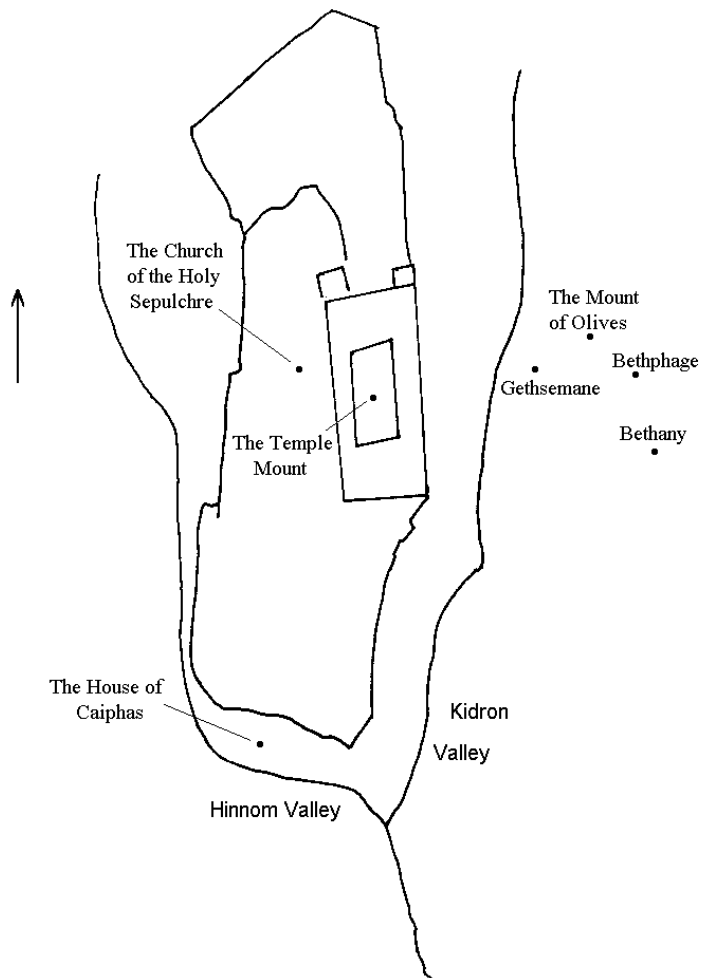


Diagram 4: Locations for Jesus' Arrest and Trial

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 15

BETRAYAL, DENIAL AND TRIAL OF JESUS

MARK 14:1 - 72

1. Mark chapter 14 has 13 paragraphs. Please read each paragraph carefully. On the table below write a title, of seven words or less, for each paragraph.

Mark 14:1, 2	
Mark 14:3 - 9	
Mark 14:10, 11	
Mark 14:12 - 16	
Mark 14:17 - 21	
Mark 14:22 - 25	
Mark 14:26	
Mark 14:27 - 31	
Mark 14:32 - 42	
Mark 14:43 - 50	
Mark 14:51, 52	
Mark 14:53 - 65	
Mark 14:66 - 72	

2. In Mark 14:1,2, the Chief Priests and scribes were searching for some way to kill Jesus. Put yourself in their situation. How would you feel? What would be your options?
3. Mark 14:3-9 tells the story of the anointing in Simon's house. What are the facts of the story? Some were disturbed by this woman's worship of Jesus. What was their basis of complaint? Study Jesus' response to this complaint. Put yourself in the position of the complainers. What did Jesus say? How would you feel? Put yourself into the place of the woman. How would you feel?
4. Notice the contrast between the woman, in Mark 14:3-9, and Judas, in Mark 14:10,11. Today we would call Judas' action a "contract." As you read Mark 14:10,11, what impression do you get of time? What does that tell you?
5. In Mark 14:12-16, Jesus sent two of His disciples to make preparation for them to celebrate the Passover. Read Jesus' instructions carefully. What unusual thing do you notice? What does it mean?
6. In Mark 14:17-21, Jesus used the Passover gathering to announce His betrayal. Reflect on these verses. Why did Jesus announce the betrayal, but partially conceal the one who betrayed Him? Put yourself in Judas' situation. What would you feel? Put yourself in the situation of any other disciple, what would you feel?
7. In Mark 14:22-25, Mark tells the story of the Last Supper. As usual, Mark gives only the essential details. What happened? Reflect on Jesus' explanation. What did He say? What did Jesus mean by His statement in verse 25?
8. Mark 14:26 is a transitional verse. Why was it significant that they sing a hymn? Look in the margin of your Bible for an indication of the hymn they sang. Look it up and read it. What does this tell you?
9. In Mark 14:27-31, Jesus announced, on the Mount of Olives, that all the disciples would fall away. In verse 27, Jesus said,

"You will all fall away because it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and all the sheep shall be scattered.'" Mark 14:27

JESUS CHRIST: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

What does Jesus mean by this? Notice the contrast between the words of Jesus and Peter in verses 30 and 31. Study what each one said. What did you learn?

10. In Mark 14:32-42, Mark tells of Jesus' experience in Gethsemane. How would you describe Jesus' emotions in this passage? Study Jesus' prayer. What observations can you make? Mark tells of Jesus finding His disciples asleep three times. What does this add to our understanding of this passage?
11. In Mark 14:43-50, Mark tells of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus. Put yourself in Judas' position. What did you learn? Put yourself in Jesus' situation. What did you discover about Jesus?
12. In Mark 14:51, 52, Mark tells his own story. No other Gospel writer tells this story. Why did Mark feel it was important for him to do so? What does it add to your understanding?
13. In Mark 14:53-65, Mark describes the trial of Jesus. In this passage, the religious leadership was party to some illegal actions. What does this say about them? Put yourself in Jesus' place as they accused Him falsely. How would you feel? Read the passage again. Notice the kinds of abuse which Jesus experienced. What can you learn from these?
14. In Mark 14:66-72, Mark tells of Peter's denial. What does the phrase, "before the rooster crows twice" mean? Put yourself in Peter's place. What would you discover from this experience? What did Peter experience when the rooster began to crow? What significance, if any, is there to the fact that it was a servant girl and a soldier who challenged Peter concerning his identity?
15. Review this description of the Last Supper, the arrest and trial of Jesus. What does this passage say that gives direction to your daily discipleship in our culture?
16. Select one verse from this passage and memorize it.

LESSON 15: – MARK 14:1-72

BETRAYAL, DENIAL AND TRIAL OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION

There are 13 paragraphs in the fourteenth chapter of Mark. A summary title of each paragraph appears on the table which follows:

Mark 14:1, 2	Passover - the Scribes Plot Jesus' Death
Mark 14:3 - 9	The Alabaster Box of Ointment
Mark 14:10, 11	Judas Bargains to Deliver Up Jesus
Mark 14:12 - 16	The Disciples Prepared for Passover
Mark 14:17 - 21	Jesus Announces Betrayal
Mark 14:22 - 25	The Last Supper
Mark 14:26	Sang Hymn; Went to Mount of Olives
Mark 14:27 - 31	Peter's Denial Foretold
Mark 14:32 - 42	Jesus at Gethsemane
Mark 14:43 - 50	The Betrayal
Mark 14:51, 52	John Mark Escapes
Mark 14:53 - 65	The Trial
Mark 14:66 - 72	Peter's Denial

This is a very long chapter. It is filled with several events of high drama; times when peoples faith was taxed to the breaking point. We must view it with this fact in mind.

MARK 14:1,2 PASSOVER - SCRIBES PLOT JESUS' DEATH

Mark begins the chapter by identifying where they were during this important time in their year. The three most important feasts in the Jewish calendar were Passover, Pentecost and The Feast of Tabernacles. It was required of every serious Jew, who lived within fifteen miles of Jerusalem, to observe these feasts **in the city**. Others who lived beyond the 15 mile radius were encouraged to attend, but were not required to do so. Jesus made a serious attempt to attend the feasts, for Bethany was His home away from home. Mark also mentions the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This was observed for seven days immediately following the Feast of Passover. It was a celebration of the goodness of God in protecting the first born of each Israeli home on that infamous night in Egypt, when the first born of every household, where there was no blood on the door post, was killed by the death angel as he passed through the land. Pharoah, you recall, allowed the Israelites to leave Egypt immediately thereafter and freed them from the dreaded slavery. For the Israelites, it was and still is a great celebration of joy.

As our story unfolds, somewhere between two and three million Jews crowded into the city for the seven day celebration of the mercy of God in delivering His people.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was a lesser feast and not mandatory as were the three previously mentioned. Mark points out that the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away.

Mark does a masterful job of laying the groundwork for this dramatic series of events. Jewish pilgrims from all over the world are crowding into the city. These are the people who feel strongest about the deliverance of God. They are the ones who would be just as happy to see God deal as severely with Rome as He did with Egypt.

The Chief Priests and scribes (teachers of the law) were searching for some way to arrest Jesus and kill Him. They were afraid to do this during the Passover because the people who had come were very devout and many of these people believed strongly that Jesus was the Messiah. Remember, He had healed hundreds; thousands had listened to His teaching. If they didn't all know Him, they surely had heard about His miraculous healings and startling teaching. Any attempt on Jesus' life would almost certainly cause a riot which would work against the designs of the Chief Priests. Mark is portraying a group of leaders whose motives were selfish, not religious.

MARK 14:3-9 THE ALABASTER BOX OF OINTMENT

Both Matthew 26:6-13 and John 12:1-8 tell the story of this anointing of Jesus, and Mark tells us that the event took place in the home of Simon the Leper. Matthew agrees with Mark, but John places the meal in the home of Lazarus. It may well be that this dinner was Simon's expression of gratitude for being healed of leprosy by Jesus. Mark does not give the name of the woman who came. He just says, "A woman came." John helps us out a bit when he said,

Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus feet and wiped his feet with her hair. John 12:3

John does not indicate which "Mary" this was. It is often assumed that this was Mary Magdalene.

Imagine the emotions of this situation. As Mary pours extremely valuable ointment on Jesus, she stands in the presence of Judas and other disciples who were angry about what they considered her waste of costly ointment. The disciples spoke indignantly to each other about how wasteful it was to use this costly perfume in such a way. John, in 12:4 of his Gospel, indicates that it was Judas who spoke so indignantly. Mark does indicate something of the emotions of the disciples when he said,

...And they rebuked her harshly. Mark 14:5

Certainly the woman could hear the indignance of their questions. She could not miss their harsh rebuke. It was so bad that Jesus had to intervene by saying,

"Leave her alone,... Why are you bothering her?..." Mark 14:6

Why would Judas react that way? We have to remember that he was the treasurer of the group. John suggests that it was because he was in the habit of taking money from the purse.

Mark tells us the perfume was, "pure nard." Nard was one of the most expensive ointment perfumes available. It was produced, mostly, in northern India and brought to Israel by caravan. The vessel, which contained this precious ointment, was made of alabaster, which in itself was very valuable. The vessel had a long neck, which had to be broken if and when the owner wanted to use the ointment.

The people of Israel did not embalm the bodies of their dead. That was an Egyptian custom. The Jewish people did prepare the bodies of their dead for burial quite differently. They would wash the body and dress it as it would have been dressed during the lifetime of the person. They would then anoint the body with precious ointment - about the consistency of lard. Nard was one of these ointments. They also used aromatic spices for this purpose. Following this procedure, the hands, feet and head were wrapped with pieces of cloth.

The vessel of Nard which Mary used was worth about a year's wages for a working man. It cost about 350 denarii and one denarius was a day's wages. The perfume was one of their most precious possessions. This is what sparked the confrontation. Mark is very gracious and says,

Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "why this waste of perfume..." Mark 14:4

John, on the other hand, makes it clear that it was Judas Iscariot who confronted her so harshly and suggests personal reasons for his concern. It represented a lot of money. We need to remember that it was a common thing for Jews to give gifts to the poor at the time of Passover. It would, therefore, not be surprising for Judas, or anyone else, to think of this custom when they saw such an extraordinarily large gift being given.

In verse five, Mark reports the extent of the disciples' anger. He said,

And they rebuked her harshly. Mark 14:5

The use of the word "they" suggests that Judas was apparently not alone in his disfavor over the use of nard to anoint Jesus. The word "harshly" literally expresses severe indignation. Can you think of any reason why the disciples wouldn't want Mary to do this? Were they embarrassed because it was a feminine gesture? Or because a woman did this? Or because they themselves didn't think of something like this first?

Whatever the reason, Jesus immediately came to the defense of Mary. He said,

"Leave her alone... Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial." Mark 14:6-8

In these words, Jesus gives the disciples their fourth announcement concerning His death. This is by far the most direct announcement that Jesus made to them. Put yourself in the disciples' shoes. They were very disturbed with Mary. Certainly they thought that their feelings were right. Suddenly Jesus defends her and challenges their attitude toward her. He even indicates that she had done a beautiful thing to Him. Jesus claimed that she had done what she could. Jesus even promised that she would be memorialized throughout history for her act.

Verses 10 and 11 form a severe contrast between what had been done by Mary and what Judas did following the event. Look at the contrast between the greedy disciples, the gift of Mary and the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. Wedged between the story of greedy people is the sacrificial gift Mary placed upon Jesus. This adds force to the statement John makes, in John 12:6 concerning Judas taking money from the purse.

MARK 14:10,11 JUDAS BARGAINS TO DELIVER UP JESUS

Verses 10 and 11 tell the sad story of a disciple who turned traitor to his teacher. Mark tells us that Judas went to make an offer to the Chief Priests. He sought out the very people who had tried to kill Jesus. Judas' purpose in going was to betray Jesus. There is no other way to look at this except as pre-meditation.

The Chief Priests were thrilled to hear the offer Judas made. They promised to pay him handsomely to carry out his plan. Mark tells us that Judas watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to the authorities. This means that Judas stayed close enough to Jesus to see what He was doing. It also means that this was not a last minute decision, but one that took some time to plan.

MARK 14:12-16 THE DISCIPLES PREPARED FOR PASSOVER

Mark gives us a carefully worded account. He sets the time as the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This was the same day on which the sacrificial lamb was slain. The disciples wondered just where Jesus was going to celebrate the Passover with them. He gave them specific instructions. It may well be that they had been in this upper room a number of times previously.

Jesus said to them,

"Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him." Mark 14:13

The strange thing about these instructions was the fact that the person carrying the jar of water was a **man**. They had probably never seen a man carry a jar of water in their lives. This was a task that only the women of the area would perform.

The disciples found the man and followed him home. They spoke to the owner of the house, and conveyed Jesus' message to him when they said,

"The teacher asks: 'Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'" Mark 14:14

This would have surprised no one. It was common for teachers to teach their disciples in the room above the house of a wealthy friend. This may well have been the case in this instance also.

Mark tells us that the disciples "prepared the Passover." This is a brief phrase representing a lot of work. They had to search the house for leaven. This was a ceremony, but also a real task. They had to take the lamb to the temple for inspection - it had to be without blemish. They then had to wait in line for the lamb to be sacrificed. They had to prepare several different kinds of food. These foods were symbolic:

- **Unleavened bread** - to remind them of their ancestors, eating hurriedly as they left Egypt.
- **Bitter herbs** - to remind them of the bitterness that slavery had brought into the lives of their forefathers.
- **Salt water** - to remind them of the many tears they shed in their tragic slavery experience.

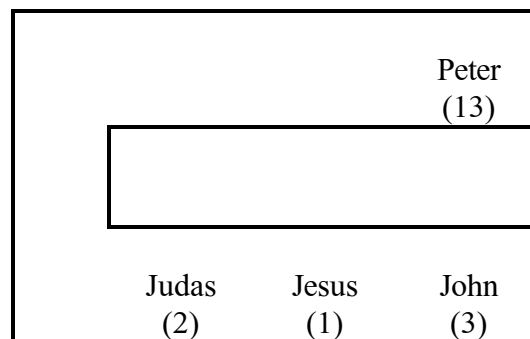
BETRAYAL, DENIAL AND TRIAL OF JESUS

- **Charosheth** - this very tasty mixture was a paste made of apples, pomegranates, nuts and dates. It was the texture of mortar to remind them of their days making bricks in Egypt.
- **The eggs** - These roasted eggs are a symbol of mourning. They are eaten in place of the second piece of meat as a symbol of sorrow over the destruction of the temple.
- **Cinnamon sticks** - these are to remind them of the straw which they had to find for themselves after Moses confronted Pharaoh.
- **Four cups of wine** - to remind them of the promises of God for deliverance.
- **Lamb** - to remind them of the lamb slain in order to put blood on the doorposts of their homes in Egypt and thus protect the first born son in every Jewish household from instant death.

MARK 14:17-21 JESUS ANNOUNCES BETRAYAL

Jesus and the rest of the disciples did not arrive for the celebration until after sundown, when the Feast was to take place.

Verse 18 speaks of them reclining at the table while eating. This is an arrangement quite different from ours. In the time of Jesus, the rich reclined while eating, the poor stood. This day was different from all others; on this day the Jews, even the poorest of the poor were permitted, expected to eat reclining. Everyone in the house, slaves included, was required to recline to eat because it was a way of symbolizing that in their God they were wealthy because He would abundantly care for their needs. The table is made in the shape of a "U".



You will notice that the host of the feast was to recline not at the head of the table, nor at the end, but where the numeral "one" is placed on the diagram. Jesus would have reclined there. The place of honor was to the left of the host, the place where the numeral "two" is placed. It appears that Judas reclined there. The next place of honor was where the numeral "three" is placed. It would appear that John reclined there. The place of least honor is where the numeral "13" is placed. This may well have been where Peter was reclining. There is reason to believe that Peter was not happy with this arrangement. Peter was one of the inner circle; he had spent the whole day preparing this feast; he was the spokesman for the group and now he was relegated to recline in the place of the least honored. How do you suppose Peter felt? Could you picture Peter pouting - at least?

The Passover was always a time of great joy and celebration. It must have been confusing for the disciples, that Jesus chose this time of joyful celebration to make a totally unexpected and unthinkable announcement. He said,

"I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me - one who is eating with me."
Mark 14:18

Very little could dampen the joyful celebration more than this announcement. The words of Jesus were heartrending words, especially for Him. Note that Jesus emphasized the fact that the person guilty of this was eating with Him. In this instance, it is not so much an emphasis on the location, but rather the fact that having eaten with Jesus, this person would double cross his best friend. This was unthinkable in that culture. The disciples' question, "surely not I..." confirms this fact.

Jesus' statement of betrayal was a shock to the disciples. They were appalled to hear that one of them would do such a thing. They were even more perplexed to think that Jesus might actually believe that each one of them could actually be capable of betraying Him. Their question was a telling one, "Surely not I?" Could it be possible that they began to question their own capabilities?

Jesus' answer was direct, but kind. He does not use the name of Judas. Jesus simply said,

"It is one of the twelve...One who dips bread into the bowl with me."
Mark 14:20

The writers of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke each tell this story. Jesus began by saying it was one of the 12. He then narrowed it down by saying it was the one who dips bread into the bowl with Him. Only persons in places one, two and three, dip into the same bowl. That meant it had to be either Judas or John. It was clear that it was not John. Both Judas and John dipped and ate from the same bowl with Jesus. It was only to Judas, however, that Jesus gave the sop designated for the honored guest. This was Jesus' reference in 14:20.

Jesus said, "the Son of Man would go just as it had been written of Him." This meant that Jesus' death was prophesied in the Old Testament.

Jesus concludes this statement with a message about Judas, when He said,

"But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." *Mark 14:21*

It appears that Judas did hear these words, but the text is not conclusive. Imagine yourself in Judas' place. Your inner guilt of betraying your friend and master is almost overwhelming. You wonder if the other disciples know about your plans; had they seen you go to the Chief Priests? The warning of Jesus is enough to make them all very tense. Jesus is again taking up the prophetic role. He took this time to describe just how terrible the end of Judas would really be. Why do you suppose Jesus had Judas sit on His left, in the seat of the honored guest, when surely He knew what Judas was going to do that very night? Could it be that Jesus, by His action, was saying, "Judas, I know you are going to betray me, but I want you to know that I love you as I love the other disciples?"

In Mark's brief account of the Last Supper, he does not indicate just when Judas left the celebration. John, in his Gospel is a bit more specific. John gives some detail about

the meal. In the midst of the meal, Jesus dipped a piece of bread into the bowl and handed it to Judas. This was an honor which a gracious host would offer his special guest. John tells us,

As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. John 13:30

This means that Judas was present when Jesus gave them the bread and said that it was His body. This was the gift of forgiveness. On the other hand, Judas was gone before Jesus gave the disciples the cup of the new covenant.

MARK 14:22-25 THE LAST SUPPER

We must remember that all of the food of the Passover meal was symbolic. The lamb bone, the mixture of apples, dates, pomegranates, and nuts, the unleavened bread, the salt water, the bitter herbs, the wine and the eggs, all were reminders to the people of Israel. They were reminders both of the terrible hardship their ancestors had endured and also of the great mercy and faithfulness of God in delivering their forefathers. Did you ever wonder why, out of all this food, Jesus chose bread and wine as the symbols of this festival of remembrance?

Mark tells us that Jesus stopped in the middle of the Passover meal. He took the unleavened bread and gave thanks; He broke the loaf and gave the loaf to His disciples. He also gave these instructions:

- Take the loaf.
- Eat it.

He then said something over which they must have pondered many times in the years ahead. He said,

"This is my body." Mark 14:21

What could Jesus possibly mean by that? Jews were strictly forbidden to eat human flesh. Remember, the context of this statement is a meal which, in its joy, is totally symbolic. The meaning of this statement is one over which Christians graciously differ. Some say Jesus meant literally, "this is my body". Others say Jesus meant this in a symbolic way, like the rest of the feast. Whichever one chooses, it is clear Jesus is saying that His body is involved in its brokenness.

Matthew and Mark both say that Jesus then took the cup. John adds that this part took place when supper was ended. Jesus gave thanks, gave the cup to the disciples and told them to all drink from the cup.

In verse 24, Jesus identified the symbol of the wine. He said,

*"This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many."
Mark 14:24*

The Greek text says:

*This is my blood of the **new** covenant... Mark 14:24*

Why bread and wine? These people had four ways to express forgiveness:

- **Share salt with the unforgiven** Salt was one of their most precious commodities.

- **Bring the unforgiven one into one's own house** - The modern custom of carrying the bride over the threshold of the home finds its origin here.
- **Eat with the unforgiven** The Old Testament and the New Testament give evidence of this practice.
- **Kiss the unforgiven** - It was their symbol of acceptance and trust.

Look at the story of Jacob and Laban. When Jacob took his family and left, Laban chased after them and when he caught up with them he insisted that they eat a meal together. It was not that he just had to have one more feast with the family. It was a way of saying, "let us not part enemies; let us forgive so that we do not meet again in battle."

In Egypt, Joseph of the Old Testament, and his brothers had a great deal of tension between them. They were afraid of what he would do to them. He had a meal prepared and they ate together. It was a way of saying, "I forgive you."

In the New Testament the custom also appears. Jesus told the story of the Prodigal Son. The father, wishing his son to understand that he was forgiven, did a number of symbolic acts. One of these was the preparation of the fatted calf and the participation in a feast with his son. It was a way for the father to let everyone know that he had forgiven his son. On the other hand, the elder brother refused both to come into the house and to eat with the prodigal because he could not honestly forgive his brother.

Look also at the time of the resurrection. Every time Jesus and the disciples met, they ate together. It was not because they were hungry, it was Jesus' way of symbolizing His forgiveness of their abandonment and denial of His presence.

Bread was the symbol of their staple food. As they received the bread, it was clear to them that it was an expression of forgiveness. It would become very meaningful to them in the next few weeks when Jesus ate with them repeatedly after the resurrection. It carries the same depth of meaning for us today.

Jesus said this was a new covenant. A "covenant" is an arrangement; an agreement. The old covenant was made on the basis of obedience to the law. Jesus is proclaiming a NEW covenant. This new agreement was based upon His blood. When two men entered into covenant, they would take a cup of wine; each man cut himself and dripped his own blood into the cup. The mixture was stirred and each drank until the cup was empty. They then were covenanted for life. Nothing short of death could release them from their agreement. Under any other circumstances, the consuming of blood was strictly forbidden. Now Jesus instructs His disciples by saying, "I want you to drink my blood, to enter into covenant with me." The old covenant was based on law; the new covenant is based upon love and mercy.

Jesus gives another indication of what was ahead for Him. He said,

"I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God." Mark 14:25

In these words Jesus was telling them that He would not celebrate another Sabbath observance before He would celebrate in the kingdom of God. The drinking of a cup of wine was an integral part of every celebration of the Sabbath. Look at the story of the Passover in each of the Gospel records and you will find that not one of them mentions that Jesus drank any wine after that evening.

MARK 14:26 SANG HYMN; WENT TO MOUNT OF OLIVES

It was the custom of the Jews to sing some of the Psalms during the Passover feast. At the conclusion of that symbolic meal, they would sing Psalm 136. This great Psalm, a hymn of the enduring love of God, was a brief history of the works of God on behalf of Israel. It concludes with the words,

Give thanks to the God of heaven, His love endures forever. Psalms 136:26

This gives us some impression of the atmosphere of great thanksgiving and joy which pervaded the feast. It was a throbbing sense of gratitude for what God had done. Because they believed God did not change, it became a pulsating expression of gratitude for God's faithfulness and mercy in their lives as well.

It was in this frame of mind that the disciples and Jesus crossed the Kidron valley to the Mount of Olives.

MARK 14:27-31 PETER'S DENIAL FORETOLD

The location of this conversation is uncertain. Following what was supposed to have been one of the great experiences of joy, Jesus makes a catastrophic announcement:

"You will all fall away... For it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.'" Mark 14:27

Jesus, being very familiar with the Old Testament, recognized the prophecy of His own death in the words of Zechariah 13:7.

Jesus continued,

"But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." Mark 14:28

If "strike the shepherd" does not tell them that Jesus will die, then "after I have risen" will surely give them an even stronger hint. Jesus tells His disciples, with ever increasing clarity, that He is going to die and rise from the dead.

Peter, as usual, the spokesman for the disciples, said,

"Even if all fall away, I will not." Mark 14:29

That is just like Peter. It does not appear that he is falsifying, but rather honestly expressing the devotion he feels to Jesus.

Jesus was not impressed, but must have been hurting deeply when He said,

"I tell you the truth... today - yes, tonight - before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times." Mark 14:30

Jesus is saying that this will happen before morning.

Peter was not to be reversed. As far as he could tell, he would hold true to Jesus. He said, with even greater fervor,

"Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." Mark 14:31

He probably meant it completely. All of us know, however, how quickly that changed.

The thing most often overlooked is the last part of this sentence. It reads,

And all the others said the same. Mark 14:31

They must have heard what Jesus predicted about Peter. If not, they most assuredly heard Peter's strong and vehement acclaim to **never** disown Jesus.

Peter did claim faithfulness and failed. The truth, however, is that this was done by all ten of the other disciples not just Peter, but we never hear a word about their failure at this point. The reason for this is uncertain, but it may be that we highlight Peter because he was the spokesman for the group; because he had so much to say about it, and, you remember, he is dictating this account to Mark! He remembered well what he had said.

MARK 14:32-42 JESUS AT GETHSEMANE

Gethsemane is the place where Jesus prayed. The name means "oil press." We believe that it was located on the Mount of Olives which is on the east side of Jerusalem. Jesus said to His disciples,

"Sit here while I pray." Mark 14:32

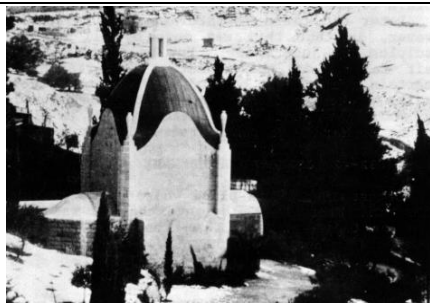
Did you ever think about this? Jesus prayed for more than an hour. The disciples just sat there. How would you have felt if you were just sitting, especially when three favored disciples were with Jesus and you were not? The text does not say, but it is reasonable to assume that the other eight disciples also slept. They were unable to comprehend the intensity of the things Jesus had said. They had no idea how crucial, how historic that night was!

Jesus took Peter, James and John and went farther. These were the disciples who were closest to Him. They had shared private moments with Him at the transfiguration and other places. But Jesus was increasingly disturbed. He said,

"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death....Stay here and keep watch." Mark 14:34

Jesus went a bit farther and fell on the ground and prayed that this hour might pass from Him. He prayed in these terms,

"Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." Mark 14:36



Picture 6: Dominus Flevit Church

It is not clear that Jesus had a cup in His hands. It is doubtful if He did. Whether He had a cup or not, the idea was clearly in His mind. They had a little flask in which they collected their tears. They spoke of the cup when they spoke of deep sorrow.

On the East side of Jerusalem, today, there is a church which has a representation of these tear cups on the four upper corners of the building. As you can see in the picture, these cups were of a very graceful design. The idea of a tear cup had to do with the idea of holding dear the people, the memories that caused great pain and sorrow.

Jesus prayed most intimately when He said, "Abba, Father." It is a term of personal endearment. Some have trouble with this prayer. Jesus had known He was going to die. Now when the time comes, Jesus acts as though He does not want to go through with it. If this had not happened, it would be more difficult to accept the idea of the total humanity of Jesus. Jesus' concluding sentence is even more telling. He said,

"Yet not what I will, but what you will." Mark 14:36

Jesus is torn. He has a deep human desire to continue to live. At the same time, He shrinks from the revolting idea of taking the sin of the whole world upon Himself.

With all His human feelings and responses, Jesus still clung to His commitment of obedience to the Father. These are words of great pain and determination as Jesus places Himself at the disposal of the Father.

Jesus, in this heavy frame of mind, returned to the disciples only to find them asleep. Imagine what this did to Him. He said to Peter,

"Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Mark 14:37, 38

There is surprise in the words of Jesus. "You mean you could not even watch one hour?" This is a natural response when you consider the intensity of the things occupying Jesus' mind. Jesus understood well. The three disciples had more desire than strength. I believe that if they had known what was going to happen to Jesus and when, they would have been wide awake! They probably would have prayed with greater fervor than they ever prayed before!

Again, Jesus went and prayed the same thing. There is no virtue in the number of times a prayer is repeated. Jesus was dealing with His honest feelings and desires.

Again Jesus returned and found them asleep. Mark was very insightful when he said,

They did not know what to say to him. Mark 14:40

There is no doubt of this. Jesus had already talked with them about this. It had not made sufficient impression on them to enable them to stay awake while He struggled. Unfortunately, they had no idea of the agony Jesus was enduring. They were too physically spent to be at all sensitive to Jesus' deep needs. It was late at night and they had consumed four glasses of wine.

On His third return, Jesus said,

"Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" Mark 14:41, 42

Notice the contrast. In this paragraph, Jesus is struggling with one of the most difficult decisions of His life. At the same time, the disciples were struggling unsuccessfully to stay awake. It could give Jesus the idea that they were not aware of or concerned about the desperate struggle in which He was involved. Finally it was a moot issue, for the soldiers had come to take Him away. But imagine the confusion and fear that overcame the disciples at this point!

MARK 14:43-50 THE BETRAYAL

Notice that verse 43 is an interruption. The soldiers from the temple came while Jesus was talking with His disciples. Mark tells us that Judas approached Jesus. Consider the contrast. Mark identifies Judas as one of the Twelve. He then tells us that this disciple had come with a crowd of men with swords and clubs. These are weapons which had no place in the presence of Jesus. Peter had brought a sword, but Jesus reprimanded him for that and told him to put it away. They had broken no law; they were guilty of no violence; they gave no indication of being violent men. Roman authorities were careful not to show undue force with Jews because of the repercussions this would create. Coming at night with swords and clubs was certainly undue force on their part. It is very clear that these weapons had been sent by the Chief Priests, Scribes and Elders, who were in conflict with Jesus and these were the tools of their warfare.

Verse 44 is a parenthesis. It is an explanation which Mark inserts to help us understand what was happening in this historic moment. Judas had arranged with the soldiers, in advance, that they should arrest the one whom he kissed.

This is one of the darkest passages in the entire New Testament. Judas betrayed Jesus in two specific ways:

- He called Jesus "Rabbi". Judas was anything but a disciple of Jesus at this time. There was nothing of what Jesus said or stood for which was affirmed by Judas at this moment. Still he called Jesus "Rabbi."
- Judas stooped to betray Jesus by a kiss. The kiss was their way to demonstrate trust. If you allow a person to come that close, you indicate that you do not fear any attempt on your life. This is still practiced by the people of the East. Mark tells us, by means of a compound word, that it was an intense kiss, much more than the usual kiss of salutation. By this means Judas betrayed Jesus to His doom and death, for Jesus was quickly arrested.

Verse 47 reveals careful diplomacy. Mark speaks of "One of those standing near." The name of the person is not given. John 18:10 clarifies the situation. John identifies Peter to be that man. It is interesting that Peter is carrying a weapon. Did he expect confrontation? At this point he must have planned to fight and possibly die for Jesus. It helps us to understand just how frightened he was. We must remember that Peter was not in favor of Jesus going to Jerusalem in the first place. He wanted Jesus to stay a safe distance away. It was clear to him that Jesus' enemies were congregated there. Many threats on His life had already been made. There is little doubt that Peter was not attempting to cut off the ear of Malchus, but probably his head. This shows us just how adept Peter was with a sword. Mark says that Malchus was the "Servant of the High Priest." This does not mean that he was a slave. In all probability he was a Roman soldier; a part of the contingent of hired Samaritan soldiers of fortune assigned to the service of the temple. Mark says nothing of the response of Jesus, but Luke tells us that Jesus healed the ear.

Jesus did respond to the large group of armed men who came to arrest Him. He said,

"Am I leading a rebellion,... that you have come with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled."
Mark 14:48, 49

Jesus' reference to the rebellion is just the atmosphere that the religious leaders were trying to create surrounding Jesus. Jesus uses their tool with which to confront them. There is also a hint of irony or sarcasm. He was saying, "I was teaching every day in the temple where you are garrisoned and you did not arrest me. Why do you come out here in the darkness to do it. Are you afraid to be seen? Do you need the darkness of night to cover your illegal act?"

Perhaps the most shocking statement in the paragraph is the last one. Mark tells us,

Then everyone deserted him and fled. Mark 14:50

We tend to place a lot of blame, for the abandonment of Jesus, on the shoulders of Peter. It is clear, however, that Mark is saying that Peter and all ten of the other disciples fled. This is exactly what Jesus had said would happen only a short time before during the Passover meal. We often blame Peter alone, as though he was the only one who deserted Jesus. In part, this is because Peter had so much more to say about his loyalty than the others did. Perhaps, because Peter was the spokesman for the group we expect more from him. We expect him to be strong, unafraid, courageous to the death of his own life in defense of Jesus. But what about the other ten? Remember verse 31,

And all the others said the same. Mark 14:31

MARK 14:51,52 JOHN MARK ESCAPES

It is appropriate to honor Mark for his candor. The other Gospel writers do not tell of the young man who fled. Historically, we have assumed that the young man was John Mark. He alone tells of a young man dressed in an unusual manner. Most men wore an undergarment and an outer garment. This young man wore only the outer garment. This outer garment, however, was made of linen. That is a way of saying it was very costly.

Not only did the 11 disciples flee, but even the bystanders, like Mark, fled for safety. Jesus was **totally** alone with His accusers.

MARK 14:53-65 THE TRIAL

Annas had been the High Priest, but he was deposed in 14 AD. by Valerius Gratus, the procurator of Judea. Many people still thought of him as the real high priest, though his son-in-law, Caiaphas, was legally installed in that position by the Romans. John 18:13 tells us that Jesus was taken to Annas first and then to the official palace of Caiaphas, the High Priest established by Rome. It was a planned event. At least a quorum, if not the whole Sanhedrin, was gathered.

Mark then flashes back to Peter, who was in the courtyard below. He was warming himself at a fire along with the soldiers. This is an excellent picture of ambivalence - He wanted to know what was happening to Jesus, but he did not want to be identified with Him.

Meanwhile, back in the upper chamber, the members of the Sanhedrin were frustrated. They were caught in an enterprise which was contrary to their whole purpose for existence: They were seeking for some thread of evidence that would allow them to kill a man and still not violate their law. The problem was that they could find none. They called several witnesses who testified against Jesus. The law required two or more witnesses. They had the right number, but their testimonies did not agree.

Finally someone stood up and gave witness against Jesus for an event that really did take place. The man testified,

"We heard him say I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man." Mark 14:58

This is not exactly what Jesus had said. And even now, they could not get the required two witnesses for this testimony.

It was clear that this line of attack was getting them nowhere. In frustration, the High Priest turned to Jesus,

"Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" Mark 14:60

Jesus could have answered that their testimony was a complete fabrication, but He said nothing. You will remember that because Jesus ate with tax collectors he could no longer give testimony in court, not even in His own defense. Again the High Priest questioned Him. This time the questioning was very direct,

"Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" Mark 14:61

For the first time, Jesus was directly confronted with His own identity. He would not deny Himself. His answer was direct, positive and biblical. He said,

"I am...And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." Mark 14:62

Jesus had given them exactly what they wanted to hear and needed in order to put Him to death. The problem was that the Sanhedrin saw this as a victory for them and in reality it was a victory for Jesus.

Caiaphas triumphantly tore his clothes. This was supposed to be a sign of intense remorse. It is what Job did when he heard the news about his children. The High Priest moved quickly,

"Why do we need any more witnesses?... You have heard the blasphemy, what do you think?" Mark 14:63, 64

Instead of having two witnesses who agreed, he now had dozens and perhaps 70. This would mean nothing in our legal system, but in theirs, two witnesses were required to establish the reliability of a statement. Seventy witnesses would remove all doubt. He was asking for a motion; a suggested sentence. It was unanimous that Jesus was worthy of death. This is not surprising because they thought it was blasphemy and the punishment for blasphemy was death.

Jesus was abused in several ways:

1. He was emotionally abused by the priests. They spat on Him. This was one of the highest insults one could place upon another.
2. Jesus was also physically abused by the priests. They were mocking Him. They blindfolded Him and hit Him with their fists. They would then demand that He prophesy as to who it was who had struck Him.
3. Jesus was physically abused by the palace guard. They took Him and beat Him. They took a rod, a large stick of thick diameter and struck Jesus on the back not more than 40 times. This was considered an act of mercy. These beatings were so

intense that 40 was thought to be sufficient to kill a person. Beatings were always counted and when the number of strokes reached 39, they stopped. Imagine the physical pain Jesus endured unjustly.

MARK 14:66-72 PETER'S DENIAL

This paragraph contains one of the most ironic scenes in the New Testament. Peter wanted to know what was happening to Jesus, but he did not want to be identified with Jesus. He was warming himself by a fire when a maid, a slave girl, accused him of having been "with that Nazarene." This is ironic because her testimony was invalid to accuse anyone. She was both a woman and a slave. On both counts she could not give witness. Nevertheless, she pointed the accusing finger at Peter. He responded by denying both that he knew what she was talking about and claimed not to understand what she was talking about. It left him uncomfortable. He moved to the entry-way a little farther from where Jesus was.

In verse 69, Mark indicates that this same slave girl accused Peter again. Matthew, however, says that it was a different slave. Peter's reply was the same as before. Put yourself in Peter's position. You had just deserted Jesus in a very crucial moment of His life and your guilt haunts you. At the same time you think that if they do this to Jesus, I'll be next! So your guilt is mingled, intensified with fear. You want to be loyal to Jesus, but things were getting very dangerous and out of hand. People are becoming convinced that you are indeed one of the disciples. Now the squeeze was really on. Finally one who stood by not only accused him of being a disciple, but also included the fact that he was a Galilean. His speech had given him away. He didn't have the "southern drawl" which the Judeans had, and Peter panicked! Mark described it this way,

He began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about." Mark 14:71

Peter was trying desperately to convince the people around the fire that he was telling the truth. There are several similar ways of making a strong statement in our culture as well.

Verse 72 is a painful statement,

*Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter **remembered** the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." and he broke down and wept. Mark 14:72*

Look carefully at these words. They suggest that Peter had forgotten that Jesus had said these things. However, the sound of the rooster snapped them back into his memory. Whatever else Peter was, he was contrite for what he had done. Think of it, this big, burly fisherman of the north, the spokesman of the disciples breaks down and cries! His shame of disowning Jesus overshadowed his humiliation of tears! He could not hold them back. If only he could take back the words he had said! No matter how sorry he was, there was no way he could go to Jesus now and ask to be forgiven!

There is a progression in this paragraph. The accusation came first from a slave girl, then from the same or another slave girl. The final accusation apparently came from a soldier, a man who was legally franchised in that culture. Look at the responses of Peter. They grow in intensity as well. They rose to such a pitch that he ultimately placed a curse

JESUS CHRIST: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

upon himself if he were not telling the truth. He gave his oath that he did not know the man Jesus. Peter was a desperate man at this point.

Reflect on these 13 paragraphs. In eight of the 13 paragraphs you are dealing with opposition, betrayal, denial and rejection of Jesus. Only the anointing of Jesus by Mary is affirming and adoring. In such an atmosphere, Jesus ate the meal of forgiveness and entered into lifelong covenant with men who, He knew, would soon reject and abandon Him. As you study these paragraphs, ask yourself in what ways you have joined with the disciples in pledging your allegiance to Jesus during worship only to abandon His cause and flee when struggles surfaced. How will you change this situation?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 16

TRIAL, DEATH AND BURIAL OF JESUS

MARK 15:1 - 47

1. Mark 15 contains seven paragraphs. Read each paragraph carefully. On the table below, write a title, of seven words or less, for each paragraph.

Mark 15:1 - 5	
Mark 15:6 - 15	
Mark 15:16 - 20	
Mark 15:21	
Mark 15:22 - 32	
Mark 15:33 - 41	
Mark 15:42 - 47	

2. In Mark 15:1-5, Mark describes Jesus' trial before Caiaphas. What is the significance of the fact that in Mark 14:55 ff., Jesus was taken before "the whole Sanhedrin" and in Mark 15:1 He was again taken before "the whole Sanhedrin"? Pilate asked Jesus one question, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Why would Jesus answer the question the way He did? What is the significance of Jesus' surprising silence? If you were Pilate, how would you feel about the conduct of the Chief Priests? About the conduct of Jesus?
3. Mark 15:6-15 is a contrast between Jesus and Barabbas. Write down what Mark tells about both men. Study the lists and record your findings. Pilate stoops to a discussion with the crowd rather than rendering a verdict. Study this discussion. What happened? Ultimately, what verdict did Pilate render about Jesus? Identify Pilate's motives as Mark describes them.
4. In Mark 15:16-20, Mark describes the mockery and abuse of Jesus by the temple guard. Why does Mark identify the Praetorium as the location of this abuse? What is the significance of each mockery which these soldiers made of Jesus?
5. In Mark 15:21, Mark tells the story of Simon of Cyrene. Mark gives a lot of information about Simon in one sentence. What is it? What is the significance of each piece of information?
6. Mark tells the story of the crucifixion in Mark 15:22-32. Why does he, in verse 22, take time to translate the name Golgotha. Identify the abuse of Jesus described by Mark in this brief paragraph. What is the significance of the inscription which Pilate ordered to be posted above the head of Jesus? What was Mark saying when he recorded the fact that Jesus was crucified along with two robbers. Mark carefully identifies the source of each mockery in verses 28-32. In each case, write down the source of the mockery and the nature of the mockery. Study the list and identify what you learned from it.
7. In Mark 15:33-41, Mark tells the story of Jesus' death. Again, notice, in verse 34, that Mark translates Jesus' prayer. What is the importance of this fact. Why would bystanders think He was calling on Elijah, when Jesus specifically said "My God"? In verses 38 and 39, there are two facts mentioned together. What are these facts? What is the significance of each one? What is added to the story by Mark's mention of the women in verses 40, 41?
8. In Mark 15:42-47, the writer gives some interesting details. Why did Mark explain, in verse 42, the meaning of "The preparation day." What does Mark tell about Joseph? Why is this information crucial to our understanding? What was the nature of Pilate's surprise? Is there any significance to the fact that Pilate gave the body of Jesus to Joseph of Arimathea? Mark, in this sketchy account, gives some detail about the tomb. What is the significance of this detail? At the end of the paragraph, Mark suddenly gives information involving two women. What does Mark say? Why is that important?

JESUS CHRIST: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

9. Reflect upon the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. What do you find that will enable you to draw closer to a life of obedient discipleship?
10. Choose a verse from this passage which has the greatest meaning for you. Memorize the verse.

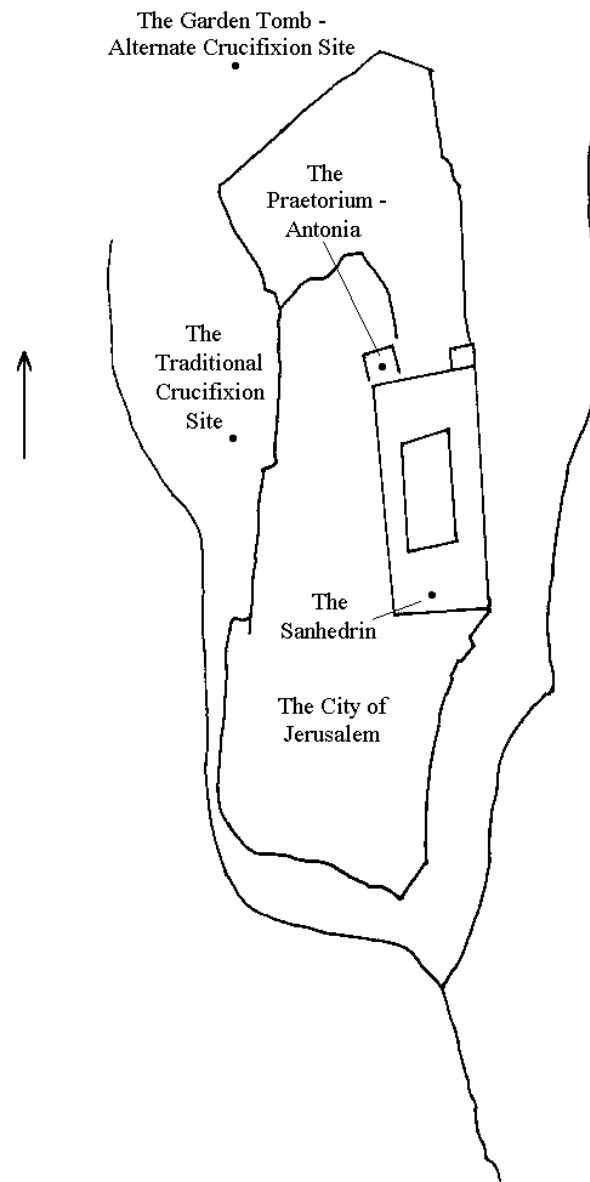


Diagram 5: The Locations of the Sanhedrin and the Praetorium

LESSON 16: – MARK 15:1-47

TRIAL, DEATH AND BURIAL OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION

There are seven paragraphs in Mark chapter 15. There is a brief summary of each paragraph on the table which follows.

Mark 15:1 - 5	Jesus Before Pilate
Mark 15:6 - 15	Pilate Released Barabbas
Mark 15:16 - 20	Soldiers Mock Jesus
Mark 15:21	Simon Compelled to Bear Jesus' Cross
Mark 15:22 - 32	The Crucifixion
Mark 15:33 - 41	The Death of Jesus
Mark 15:42 - 47	Joseph of Arimathaea Buried Jesus

This chapter deals with the death and burial of Jesus. As he has done throughout the book, Mark does not intend to give full detail. He merely gives small capsules of what took place. You will find further detail of these events in the other Gospel records.

MARK 15:1-5 JESUS BEFORE PILATE

At the end of chapter 14, Jesus stood before the former High Priest. Annas was officially deposed by the Roman government, but he held the real power in the priesthood. The priesthood was not a vocational choice. God chose the family, and the males who were born into that family were destined to be priests unto God. They had no other choice. For this reason, Annas was in the line of the priesthood and therefore the High Priest as far as the Jews were concerned. His son-in-law, Caiaphas, was not of the priestly lineage. He was, however, appointed High Priest by the Romans. Jesus was taken before Annas first, though he no longer held any official position or power. In 14:64, it is clear that a decision had already been made. However now in 15:1, early the next morning, an official, legal decision was to be made belatedly. Jesus was led away to be handed over to Pilate. It is appropriate to assume that they decided to present Jesus to Pilate as a traitor with the official charge that He cited insurrection by calling Himself the king of the Jews. (John 18 indicates that they first suggested a very general charge, assuming that Pilate would accept their word and carry out the judgment. Pilate was too careful a judge for this. It is assumed that they then brought the official charge, that of treason by proclaiming Himself king.) As was often the case, they foresaw that this would please Pilate, as he then would think them to be cooperating with him. It was also a way of getting Pilate to do what they were afraid to do themselves - put Jesus to death in dishonor.

Pilate displays his Roman training as he interrogated Jesus. He was direct and to the point,

"Are you the king of the Jews?" Mark 15:2

Pilate had conducted his interrogation in such a way that a simple "yes" or "no" answer would have sufficed. It would also have implicated or exonerated Jesus of the announced crime.

However Jesus' answer displayed His "Jewishness". His answer was as careful as Pilate's question was direct. He said,

"Yes, it is as you say." Mark 15:2

Jesus had answered the question, so He could not be charged with insolence. He responded in such a way that they could not say that He had said these things Himself, but that Pilate had said them. It was clear to all that this line of questioning was going nowhere.

The Chief Priests were known as the people who should be in favor of mercy and kindness. In this setting, however, they were behaving like executioners. This is a stance which was unworthy of their positions. We know that there were several charges, and that because of Pilate's shocked reaction, they were considered to be serious ones. We can only assume that the charges had to do with the arguments which the Chief Priests and pharisees had lost, throughout the past three years, as they had tried to trap Jesus. Luke adds some light to the issue. In Luke 23:2, he quotes the Chief Priests and teachers of the law as saying,

"We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king." Luke 23:2

Pilate was a man who could not bear the burden of silence. He challenged Jesus in shocked surprise,

"Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of?" Mark 15:4

It was a confrontation intended to jar Jesus into responding to the charges, so that he could get on with the decision. Jesus frustrated Pilate beyond comprehension and made no reply of any kind. We must remember that Jesus had associated with tax collectors and sinners. This forever barred Him from the opportunity to give testimony in court. Others may not have remembered this, but Jesus did. That penalty did not inhibit Jesus from eating with the tax collectors. On the other hand, He did not beg the issue when it came time to refrain from testifying, even in His own defense.

Pilate could not believe that Jesus wouldn't speak up in His own defense! Mark says it this way,

Pilate was amazed. Mark 15:5

This was the understatement of the year.

MARK 15:6-15 PILATE RELEASES BARABBAS

Each year there was a good will gesture on the part of Pilate, to endear himself to the Jews, which was usually necessary. At the time of the feast, he would release a Jewish prisoner of the people's choosing. This pleased the greatest possible number of Jews and served as insurance of quieting the crowds and averting any riots against the authorities of Rome during the feast, when so many thousands were visiting the city.

Barabbas was being held for two crimes: Insurrection against the Roman government and murder. It is possible that it was the murder of a Roman soldier. This made Barabbas very popular with the people, but not with the Roman authorities.

Mark tells us that it was the crowd that came and asked Pilate to release a prisoner as he had done in the past. They did not specify the name of the prisoner, nor does Mark tell us what prompted them to come. They had a request, but did the crowd think this up on their own? Or was this masterminded and orchestrated by the Chief Priests?

It appears that Pilate was again prepared to offer to release a prisoner at the time of Passover. He asked them if they wanted him to release to them the King of the Jews. Mark identifies the motive of Pilate. He was shrewd and therefore sensed that the Chief Priests were not motivated by deep concern for the religious life of the Jewish people, but because Jesus was so popular He was threatening their power base among the people. Pilate could also have seen the situation as a way to strengthen his own control over the people by undermining the power of these religious leaders.

Whatever the reason, the crowd did not get to give an honest response, they displayed a mob-mentality and followed blindly the suggestion by the Chief Priests who had stirred up the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas.

Pilate was not yet finished. He then asked the crowd what he should do with Jesus, "The one you call the King of the Jews?" Mark 15:12. At this point, Pilate abdicated his supreme power. He knew the law. He should have made a judgment concerning Jesus. Instead, he asked **the people** what he should do. From this point on, Pilate lost control and the people took over. They sensed the power that was suddenly theirs and yelled and screamed, "Crucify him!"

Remember Palm Sunday? It was the same crowd, no doubt, that cried, "Hosanna," or that "listened to him with delight..." Mark 12:37. What had happened? They were so fickle, had no mind of their own, without questioning they were doing exactly what the Chief Priests had wanted them to do.

Pilate, no longer in control of the situation, challenged the crowd,

"Why? What crime has he committed?" Mark 15:14

Their response was sharper than his. They did not respond with an argument. They responded with pressure. They yelled even louder - "Crucify Him!" Mark 15:14.

At the beginning of this meeting, the pressure had been on the Chief Priests. However, at first, they had miscalculated Pilate and had come unprepared for his questions. Now at the end of the trial, the pressure is no longer on them, but on Pilate himself. He capitulated and gave the people precisely what the Chief Priests wanted.

Had this entire trial been reviewed in Rome, Pilate would have lost his position. He clearly announced that Jesus was guilty of no crime, yet he delivered Jesus up to be flogged and to be crucified. This was a blatant miscarriage of justice, even by their standards. But the Chief Priests got what they wanted, and that was what mattered to them. They were not beyond accepting a miscarriage of justice if it suited their purposes!

MARK 15:16-20 SOLDIERS MOCK JESUS

The soldiers, mentioned in this paragraph, were Roman soldiers assigned to the temple, particularly for this time of the feast. The soldiers were basically conscripted Samaritans who had been hired to help keep control and order in Israel. Morale was always a problem

here. From historical records, we know that Roman soldiers played a game in which one of them was made king and then killed. It was the "Russian Roulette" of their day. So many soldiers lost their lives in this way that the game was outlawed. You will still find the symbol of this game carved into the stone floor of the Praetorium in Jerusalem today. Leaders did as much as they could to keep the morale of the soldiers high. One of the ways was to allow **them** to inflict the necessary punishment through flogging. Jesus was turned over to them for this purpose. Knowing that Jesus was accused of being the king of the Jews, and hating the Jews, as these Samaritans did, they made great sport of the flogging of Jesus. They enjoyed mocking Him, a Jew, in every possible way. They placed an old, worn out, purple robe on Him, pretending that this was His royal robe. They plaited a crown of thorns in the place of a jewel encrusted golden one, and placed it on His head. The thorns were common plants in Israel and much maligned among the people. They were a bit like the dandelion in the United States. The soldiers took the rod, with which they had beaten Him, and placed it in His hands. It was to be His royal scepter. These were all symbols of regal authority, and they laughed as they taunted Him. In truth, they were making as much fun of Israel as they were of Jesus.

MARK 15:21 SIMON COMPELLED TO BEAR JESUS' CROSS

This brief one sentence paragraph contains a lot of information, but even more pain. Simon came from Cyrene which was located in North Africa. There was a large colony of Jews in North Africa and Simon was probably one of these, and had come to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem. Mark mentions Simon's sons Alexander and Rufus as though the readers of this Gospel would know them well. It is highly possible that the Christians in Rome were well acquainted with these men. Several scholars believe the book of Mark was written to the church at Rome.

Why was Simon, the Cyrene, chosen to help carry Jesus' cross? Part of the law of occupation, under which Israel lived, was that a Roman officer could compel a person to carry burdens for him or anyone else for the distance of one mile. It may have been that the soldiers compelled Simon, under this law, to carry the cross piece of the cross which Jesus was too weak to carry. A cross was not completely assembled when taken to the place of execution. The shaft of the cross was erected and in many cases left there for future use. The cross member was carried to the place of execution by the person to be crucified upon it. Imagine how Simon felt. He had come all this distance to participate in the Feast of Passover and then is forced to carry the cross for one sentenced to die by crucifixion. This act could render him unclean and unprepared for the worship he had come so far to share. If Simon was a believer in Jesus, as he may have been, the pain would have been many times greater. Simon had come to Jerusalem to worship and praise God for His mercy and faithfulness. Now he was an unwilling participant in the crucifixion of the person whom he may have believed to have been the Messiah, the Son of God.

MARK 15:22-32 THE CRUCIFIXION

Notice, in verse 22, that Mark interprets the Hebrew word "Golgotha". This is another piece of information which helps us conclude that this Gospel was written to a Gentile readership which did not understand the Hebrew or Aramaic languages.

At the cross, it is not clear what kind of wine was offered to Jesus. We know that some women would offer condemned criminals a mixture of wines which dulled the sens-

es against the intense pain. It is also possible that the soldiers offered Jesus some of their wine to dull His senses. Whatever it was, Jesus refused it, choosing rather to face the almost unbearable pain with His senses intact. Remember, Jesus said He would not drink wine again until He would "drink it anew in the kingdom of God." 14:25. But the excruciating pain which Jesus endured is beyond description. Mark only says,

And they crucified Him. Mark 15:24

It is difficult to understand why Mark would summarize the crucifixion of Jesus in a four word sentence. It is so important; so much depends upon it. It may have been simply his style of giving only the barest of facts. It could also have been that Mark and Peter were embarrassed by their abandonment of Jesus in this crucial hour. Or, they were so hurt that the crucifixion was necessary as a witness to the whole world that Jesus had to suffer such spiritual agony to accomplish our redemption.

Perhaps Mark simply could not bring himself to write about the ordeal of Jesus to experience such a shameful, despicable, degrading death. He does not tell us that he witnessed the crucifixion, but it is clear that Peter was within view of the events on Golgatha. The pain of having denied Jesus, his best friend, his Rabbi, his Lord must have driven him to follow from afar! Was he hoping to have a chance to rescue Jesus? Or to talk with Him? To look into his eyes and beg for forgiveness?

Roman crucifixion, what a horrible experience! Artistic portrayals of the crucifixion are quite different from what actually took place. Most pictures of this event portray Jesus with his arms outstretched and nails through the palms of His hands. They also portray the feet standing in what appears to be a somewhat comfortable position on a ledge attached to the shaft of the cross. Reality was different from this picture. In all probability, Jesus had nails driven through the wrist, rather than the palm of His hand. This would be far more painful than a nail through the palm. No victim was crucified in a comfortable standing position. Some were crucified with their feet nailed to either side of the shaft of the cross; some with their feet at an angle, but all in an uncomfortable position which made it impossible for them to be erect and take deep breaths. Death on a cross came about not because of the pain of the nails, but because of suffocation. The weight of the body, pulling down, made it increasingly difficult for the person to breathe and eventually he expired.

The time of Jesus' crucifixion is a problem. Only Mark, in 15:25, tells us it began in the third hour. Matthew 27:45, Mark 15:33 and Luke 23:44 tell us that the sun grew dark at the sixth hour. John 19:14, on the other hand, tells us that at about the sixth hour Pilate handed Jesus over to the Jews to crucify Him. There are several possible solutions to this apparent problem. Some scholars believe that John was using the Roman method of identifying time. Roman time was marked from midnight whereas, Palestinian time was marked from sunrise. If this is the case, then John would be using the Roman time designations while Mark would be using the Palestinian time frame. We can not substantiate this possibility, however. Still other scholars remind us that the day time was divided up into four watches of three hours each. The first watch was sometimes called the third hour. This was comparable to our 9:00 A.M. The second watch was sometimes called the sixth hour and ended at noon our time. The third watch was sometimes called the ninth hour and ended at 3:00 P.M. our time. If time designation is what John had in mind, it is easy to understand why he would use it. At the time of Jesus, the sixth hour corresponded with

the time of the sacrifice, and John would want to identify Jesus' death as a sacrifice. This, too, could help us and add deeper meaning to the time account for us, but again, there is no substantiation for the idea. Still, other scholars believe that the time designations are confused because of a copyist's error. The Greek numeral for three and the numeral for six have only one short cross member difference. It would be easy for a copyist to mistake one for the other. There is, however, no evidence that this happened. I believe a couple of facts are important. First, the apostle John said,

*Now it was the Preparation of the Passover: it was **about** the sixth hour.*
John 19:14

Remember, these people did not wear watches and they had no mantel clock. They thought in terms of general time designations which would not be helpful for our lives. Secondly, both Mark and John have one thing in common. Their report of this incident is not focused on the time of the event, but on the fact that it took place. You could leave the time designation out of both accounts and the story would still be very complete.

If you had been in Jerusalem, where the sun at noon is high overhead and hot, don't you think you would have wondered about what was going on when suddenly it became dark and stayed that way for three solid hours? Certainly you would have known that something out of the ordinary was in progress.

Mark and Luke place the crucifixion of the criminals after Jesus'. The truth of the matter is that there are several details about which we do not have clarity. It is just as clear, however, that the crucial issue for each author is not who was crucified first, but the event. The focus of each writer is on the fact that Jesus went to the cross and died.

While Jesus was suffering and dying, the soldiers were busy gambling. There was a lot of time when soldiers had nothing to do. They tended to fill this time with gambling. It was customary for the soldiers in the detail assigned to a crucifixion, to gamble for the clothes and belongings of the prisoners they crucified. Naturally, then, they gambled for Jesus' clothes. Mark does not tell us, but John does, in his Gospel in 19:23,24, that the soldiers each took a piece of clothing until they came to the tunic. This was woven as a single piece. Rather than divide it among themselves, they cast lots to see who would get the complete garment. We know that this is a fulfillment of a prophecy.

They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."
Psalms 22:18

Above the head of Jesus a board was nailed to the cross. On this board, the inscription read,

THE KING OF THE JEWS. Mark 15:26

All through Jesus' ministry, people had been trying to call Him "Messiah" and "King". He always refused to allow them to do this. Now He had allowed this identification and it was the charge that cost Him His life. Perhaps we can now understand why He wouldn't let others call Him the Messiah earlier. It surely would have led to a premature death. Remember, again and again, Jesus said that He still had to teach His disciples so much and that His time had not yet come. But, the time had now come!

Two other criminals were to be crucified at that time and they were placed upon crosses on either side of Jesus. Jesus was associated with the criminals of His day, in His life

and in His death. None of the Gospel writers give any indication of how this affected the disciples and followers of Jesus who were in the area. It would appear that they struggled with mixed emotions. In their eyes it must have been demeaning to Jesus. No doubt they were haunted by a deep sense of guilt for abandoning Him. One would also expect that there was a sense of anger at what people were saying to and about Jesus. There would have to be some deep disappointment over the apparent demise of the kingdom Jesus had talked about. Their dreams were shattered; their future looked ominous, and only one word would describe their life: FEAR!

While the slow process of death was under way, people passed by. Crucifixions were conducted outside the walls of Jerusalem where many people passed. As people were coming and going, they could not help but see what was happening to people who disobeyed Roman law. This, of course, was the intent of the Romans. Jesus was crucified in this kind of situation. Mark mentions three specific groups who berated Jesus.

1. People who passed by. These were common people. They insulted Jesus. They shook their heads in ridicule. They mocked Him with their words,

"So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!" Mark 15:29

By now it was common news throughout the city that Jesus had said this, but the meaning had been misinterpreted. Just the same, the common people used it to mock Jesus.

2. Chief Priests and teachers of the law. Mark tells us that they mocked Jesus among themselves. That is, they spoke to each other, but in tones which Jesus could hear, and perhaps for the benefit of the people. They said,

"He saved others,... but he can't save himself! Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Mark 15:31

First of all, this is mockery. They did not mean it. They just wanted to make fun of Jesus. Their words put Jesus in a ridiculous situation. He saved others, but He can not save Himself. If He is the Christ, then let Him perform another miracle, like coming down from the cross. **Then** we **will** believe Him. They figured such an offer was very safe. There was a complex relationship involved here. The hecklers knew only what they were seeing. Jesus, on the other hand, knew that if He was to accomplish the will of the Father, He had to stay on the cross. On the other hand, there was a great desire to prove that He did have the ability to do the impossible. He could have come down; He would have been capable, but he **had** to stay on the cross to die as a sacrifice for us.

3. Those crucified with Him. The two criminals who were crucified with Him also railed at Him. They insulted Him along with the religious leaders. As usual, Mark is giving the broad picture. His view of the criminals is that they just insulted Jesus. Luke tells us, 23:39, that one of the criminals insulted Jesus and said to Him,

"Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" Luke 23:39

According to Luke, even the soldiers mocked Jesus. Everyone seemed to be insulting Jesus.

MARK 15:33-41 THE DEATH OF JESUS

The emphasis of Mark, in giving a time designation, is that the crucifixion covered a three hour period. The Gospel writers tell us that there was darkness in the land during those hours. In the third hour of this ordeal, Jesus cried out,

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani" Mark 15:34

As indicated before, Mark felt it necessary to translate these Hebrew words for his non-Jewish readers. We can only surmise that the tradition, which held that Mark was written to the Christians in Rome, was correct. Mark translated the words of Jesus,

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Mark 15:34

In the words of Jesus, there is a total sense of abandonment. Not just by His most trusted friends, the disciples, or possibly those in the crowd whom He had healed, but also by His Father. The agony of the cross was not just physical pain. It also included the awful experience of having the Father turn away from Him because of the sin which Jesus had taken upon Himself to atone. Think of it - God had to look away! That was by far the greater agony of Jesus.

Some, when they heard these words, thought that Jesus was calling for Elijah. There are two factors involved. First, every serious Jew knew that the Messiah was identified with Elijah. There was also the understanding that Elijah was the deliverer of the troubled. Elijah was somewhat viewed as the "Robinhood" of that era. It appears that this might well have been involved when the man went to get the wine. Secondly, there is the remote chance that some thought Jesus was calling on Elijah when He said "Eloi," which means "my God."

An unidentified man ran to get a sponge full of wine vinegar to give to Jesus. This wine was the common drink of the poorest people in the culture, and surely that was good enough for a criminal. Jesus often identified with the down-and-out. This man wanted to see if Elijah would come to take Jesus down from the cross. Even in His dying moments, Jesus was being mocked and ridiculed.

Mark tells us that the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom. One of the first thoughts that comes to mind is, how would he find this out? The common people in Jerusalem had no way of knowing that this had happened. Only the Priests could have known. They were the only ones who had access to this portion of the temple. This information could only be learned from a priest, who had seen the veil, or from someone who had heard a priest tell about it. One possible scenario was that a priest, who had seen this, had later become a Christian and made the information known to the church. Another possibility is that the Sanhedrin would have been informed of the situation. Joseph of Arimathea would have heard this and probably would have shared the information with one of the apostles. This would be intriguing, but frightening information, to say the least. People knew that anyone who entered the Holy of Holies would die immediately. They would be afraid to look upon the interior of the most holy place. The information, though it may have been unclear to them, is crystal clear to us. The veil shut off the immediate presence of God from unauthorized viewers. Now the entrance into the Holy of Holies was open to all. The veil was no longer necessary!

While Jesus was dying, the centurion in charge of this execution had been watching Him carefully. When the centurion saw how Jesus had died, he said,

"Surely this man was the Son of God!" Mark 15:39

He probably had come to this execution as a pagan emperor worshipper, but would leave the scene a believer in Jesus Christ. What an impact Jesus' death had on him! He became one of the first Roman converts.

The soldier's affirmation is phenomenal. I believe, however, that greater affirmation of who Jesus was came from the lips of Pilate. When he ordered the inscription "King of the Jews" nailed above Jesus' head, he was challenged by the Jewish religious leaders to have the sign read that Jesus said He was the king of the Jews. Pilate refused to change it. He reaffirmed his statement, "THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Mark gives a bit of information about the scene of the crucifixion. Up until now there seemed to be only enemies present. But Mark tells us about the presence of a large number of women, followers of Jesus, who were also there. He first lists the names of some who were prominent: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the less, and Salome. Salome was the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John. In a culture where women were not even counted, much less mentioned, Mark identifies these women by name. Think of it, they had walked from Galilee, where they used to look after Jesus' physical needs, to Jerusalem with Him and were now with Him again during His last hours. What devotion!

MARK 15:42-47 JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA BURIES JESUS

Another piece of evidence, for the Gentile recipients of this Gospel, is found in verse 42. Mark said it was the Day of Preparation. A Jewish reader would know exactly what this meant. Mark takes the time to explain that this was the day prior to Sabbath.

Joseph came from Arimathea, a small village about 15 or 20 miles north of Jerusalem. Mark tells us that Joseph was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin. We know from Luke that he did not vote with the majority of the Sanhedrin concerning the guilt of Jesus. Mark said that Joseph himself "was waiting for the kingdom of God." 15:43 This is a way of saying he was honestly seeking, like Nicodemus had, and when the chips were down he was man enough to be counted in the ranks of the believers. What a man **he** was!

Mark also tells us that Joseph boldly went to Pilate to request the body of Jesus. To ask for the body of Jesus was to identify oneself with Jesus. It was bold because it was a departure from the usual custom. Normally, only a family member could request the body of an executed prisoner, but Joseph did it. One had to have courage to request the body of a crucified criminal, for it was an admission that a member of the family was a convict. Did you ever wonder why Joseph asked for the body? Based on the fact that permission was so quickly given, could it be that Joseph of Arimathea was in some way personally related to Jesus? Could Joseph's request have identified him as a disciple, a member of the family of God? We will probably never know, but it is interesting to ponder. It would quickly produce social ostracism. And Pilate gave Joseph of Arimathea permission to bury Jesus. Why? It could be that Pilate just wanted to be done with this Jesus situation once and for all, and he didn't care who buried Him, just as long as He was buried. Or, he may have done it because Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin - the highest court of the Jews - and he didn't want to get involved with them again.

Pilate was surprised to learn that Jesus was already dead. Very often persons crucified were left dying for several days before they finally expired. This highlights the extent of the abuse inflicted on Jesus prior to the execution.

Mark gives the abbreviated version again. Joseph took down the body. It is doubtful that he took the body down alone. John, in 19:39, indicates that Nicodemus accompanied Joseph when the body of Jesus was taken down. John further indicates that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea wrapped the body of Jesus in strips of linen and as they wrapped the body, a mixture of about 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes was applied to the body. This very expensive mixture would not inhibit the decaying process, but would reduce the stench of decay. This meant that both Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were ceremonially unclean for the most important celebration of the Hebrew year. The question is could they go through the purification ceremony in time to take part in the Passover celebrations?

The text is sometimes misunderstood to mean that Jesus was embalmed. Egyptians practiced a very refined form of embalming, but the Jews did not. The Egyptian custom inhibited decomposition. The Jewish custom only attempted to cover up the accompanying odors of human decay.

They wrapped the body of Jesus. This may well have been done by both Nicodemus and Joseph. The truth is that we do not know.

There are two well known sites in Jerusalem where people believe Jesus was entombed. One is known as the "Garden Tomb." The second, and more highly accepted site by scholars, is under the church of the Holy Sepulcher. Both sites were cemeteries. Both had the kind of tombs Mark describes.

It was a new tomb - no body had been placed there before in preparation for the depositing of the bones beneath the stone bench on which the body was laid. In that culture, the person who died was placed in the family tomb. In their warm climate, the body soon decomposed and the bones were eventually put beneath the platform on which the body had previously been placed. The tomb was then available for the next person in the family who died.

This specific tomb was carved out of the rock. A huge stone was rolled against the door of the tomb. These stones were of two kinds:

- One was a very large, heavy disc of rock which rolled in a trough cut especially to hold this stone in front of the entrance. Once it was in place, it was impossible for one person to move.
- It could also be used to describe a huge, uncut stone which was placed against the entrance and just allowed to lean against it.

It is interesting to note that Mary Magdalene and Mary (Salome) both saw where Jesus was buried. Were they helping Joseph and Nicodemus or were they just watching from a distance? We have no way to be sure.

Reflecting upon the trial and crucifixion of Jesus can be a meaningful meditation for all of us. It is easy to upbraid Peter for denying Jesus, but truthfully, which of us has not participated in such a denial. Oh, we may not have spoken to a slave girl or a Roman soldier, and maybe we didn't call down curses on ourselves, but the denial was just as real. How could we deny the Lord? We could do it by lying, by silence, by taking no stand when an important issue is being discussed. It is the unwillingness to speak up when the corporation moves in the direction of dishonesty. What do you do when someone suggests that the deity of Jesus is not essential? What do you do when someone says or infers that the Biblical ethic is out-dated?

TRIAL, DEATH AND BURIAL OF JESUS

People passing or standing about the cross ridiculed Jesus, but His innocent death brought pardon for each of us who, in our own way, have denied and ridiculed the Master.

Isn't it strange, most every Christian knows that Peter denied his Lord? Only a very small number remember that Joseph of Arimathea risked **everything** and requested the body of Jesus so that he could give Him an appropriate burial. Nicodemus took the same risk when he helped with these arrangements.

It is risky today to take your stand for Christ where you live and work. It is most important that you make that decision now. Are you willing to take the risk of ultimately identifying your life with Jesus Christ no matter what may happen? No matter what the cost may be? Are you willing to share identification with Jesus Christ no matter what the consequences may be?

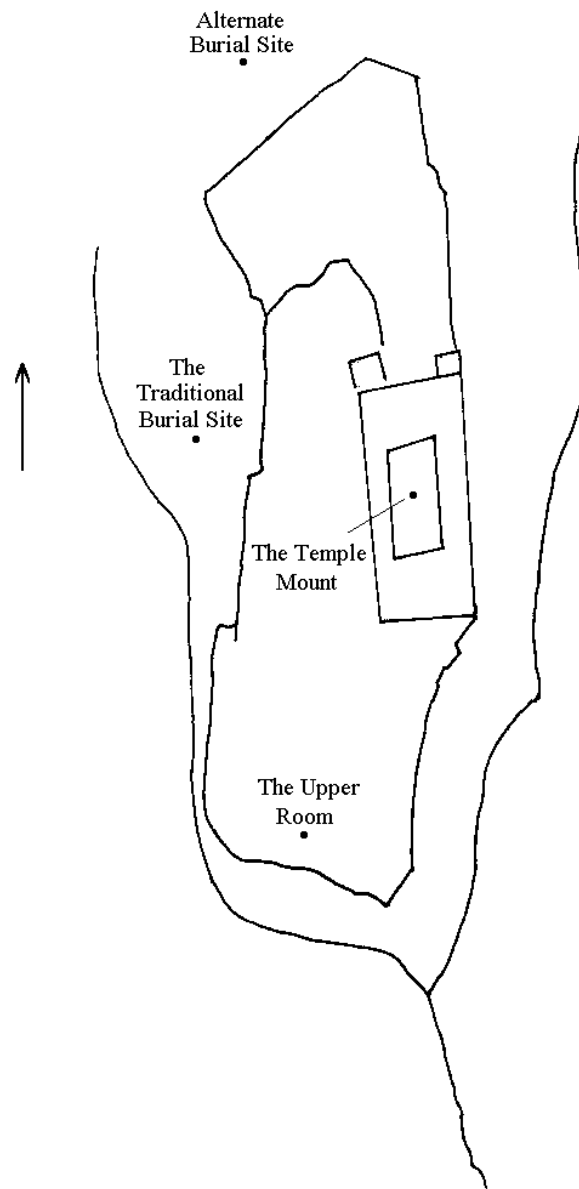


Diagram 6: The Location of the Tomb and the Upper Room

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 17

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

MARK 16:1 - 20

Some scholars believe that the Gospel of Mark ends with verse 20 of chapter 16, some with verse eight. That leaves us with important questions about the closing verses of this chapter. We will deal with this by studying all 20 verses. Then each student may decide for him/herself about where the book should end.

1. In the 20 verses, there are five paragraphs. Please read each paragraph carefully. On the table which follows, give each paragraph a title of seven words or less.

Mark 16:1 - 8	
Mark 16:9 - 11	
Mark 16:12, 13	
Mark 16:14 - 18	
Mark 16:19, 20	

2. In Mark 16:1-8, the author deals with the resurrection. The three women were coming to complete the preparation of the body of Jesus. Why was this necessary?

The women knew that there was a huge stone over the entrance of the tomb. In view of this awareness, what does verse three say about them? Put yourself in the place of the three women. How would you feel if you found the stone moved, the tomb empty and an angel sitting in the tomb?

In verse six, the angel carefully identifies Jesus. List the ways he identifies Him. Why was this necessary? The angel asked the three women to convey a message to the disciples. Study the message carefully. What do you find? Look carefully at verse eight. Describe the emotional condition of the three women.

3. In Mark 16:9-11, Jesus spoke to Mary Magdalene. Mark gives almost no detail. He stressed the fact that the disciples did not believe what Mary had told them. Why would they not believe her?
4. In Mark 16:12,13, Jesus appeared to two people. Apparently, they are the two followers of Jesus, who had been in the upper room, now going to Emmaus. Again, the stress was on the fact that the disciples did not believe. Note, in verses 9-11 they disbelieve the report of **one** witness. In verses 12,13 they disbelieve the report of **two** witnesses. What is the significance of Mark's approach?

5. In Mark 16:14-18, Jesus later revealed Himself to all 11 disciples. Put yourself in the place of one of the disciples. What would you feel when Jesus upbraided you, as He does in verse 14?

Having done this, Jesus exhorts the disciples in verses 15-18. What did Jesus urge them to do? Verses 7 and 18 make several promises. Study the list. What do you discover?

6. In Mark 16:19, 20 is a picture of the ascension. There is a contrast here. Verse 19 talks about the ascension of Jesus. Verse 20 talks about the disciples' attempt to carry out Jesus' command. Write down what Mark says about Jesus' ascension and what the disciples have to say. Study the list and record your observations from these lists.
7. Reflect upon what this passage has to say about the resurrection, the commissioning of the disciples and the ascension. What difference will this make in the way **you** live your life now?

JESUS CHRIST: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

8. Now, reflect on the content of verses nine and twenty. In your view, what would you identify as the conclusion of the book? What reasons do you have for this choice?
9. At the beginning of our study, we said that there is a single idea in the Gospel of Mark. What is that idea? What are the main things that Mark said about that idea?
10. Select a verse of Scripture, from this passage, which seems most important to you. Memorize this verse and recall it and all the other verses you have memorized from the Gospel of Mark often.

LESSON 17: – MARK 16:1-20

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION

There are five paragraphs in Mark chapter sixteen. There is a brief summary of each paragraph on the table which follows

Mark 16:1 - 8	The Resurrection
Mark 16:9 - 11	Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene
Mark 16:12, 13	Jesus Appeared on the Road to Emmaus
Mark 16:14 - 18	Jesus Appeared to the Eleven
Mark 16:19, 20	The Ascension

In many versions of the Bible, verses 1 through 8 are part of the text. Verses 9 through 20, however, are omitted, placed in brackets or italicized. These measures are an attempt to indicate that there is serious question about whether verses 9 through 20 are actually part of the original text. Two of the better documents omit the verses. On the other hand, four other major documents include the verses. No one can say, with certainty, whether or not these verses were part of the original text.

For our purposes here, we will cover all 20 verses. If you believe the text of the Gospel of Mark to end with verse eight, then you can stop your study at that point. If, however, you believe that the text of Mark includes all 20 verses, then continue through the study of the remaining verses of the chapter.

For purposes of clarity, let me state my own position. I believe that the chapter did **not** end with verse eight. The textual evidence for this is strong. For instance, if the Gospel ends with verse eight, then this is the only one which ends on a low note. All the others include either the resurrection or Jesus' commission following the resurrection. This is a very positive ending. Verse eight is an abrupt ending. It does not, in any way, bring to conclusion the theme of the suffering servant. Jesus taught that He was going to die. He also taught that He would rise again. If the conclusion ends with verse eight, only half of this message has come to pass. On the other hand, there are several problems with verses 9-20. Several of the words used in this portion do not appear in the balance of the book at all. These words are uniquely found in the writings of other New Testament writers, but not in Mark. There is a difference in style between 1:1-16:8 and 16:9-20. My personal belief is that the closing portion of this text has been lost somehow. If this is true, then it follows that someone has decided that 16:8 is an inappropriate ending and has attempted to add a fitting conclusion. I can not prove this, however.

MARK 16:1-8 THE RESURRECTION

We must recall that Joseph and Nicodemus placed the body of Jesus in the tomb, but there was not time to prepare the body for burial because of the approaching hour of the beginning of Sabbath.

In view of this, the three women, who had stayed to see that Jesus was placed in the tomb, returned to prepare the body for burial on the day after the Sabbath. The preparation

JESUS CHRIST: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

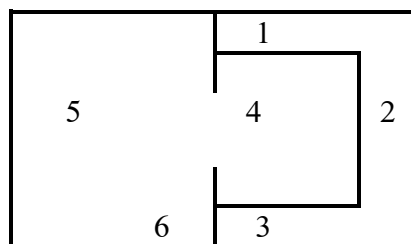
for burial was both ceremonial and necessary. It consisted of carefully washing the body. The body would then be coated with these spices and ointments. This would be followed by wrapping the body in linen cloth and smearing ointments and spices on the wrappings as they are wound around the body.

The women remembered that the tomb was sealed with a large stone, which they were not at all strong enough to budge, much less roll out of the way. That presented them with a big problem. Remember, death on the cross was the most cruel, public display of the utter contempt for anyone who challenged Roman authority. And Jesus had died under this cloud. Who would stoop to help these women? No one in their right mind would want to be identified with them in this cause. They must have wondered just what they would have to do to move the stone.

As they neared the place of interment, they noticed that this very large stone had already been rolled away. The text does not say, but it seems fair to assume that the guards also had been removed. At least they were not there or surely they would have prevented the women from entering the tomb. But the women were free to enter.

A tomb, in Jesus' day, was somewhat different from a grave of today. A floor plan might look something like this.

- | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. One Body | 4. Possible location of angel. |
| 2. One body | 5. Antechamber |
| 3. One body | 6. Entrance |



Jesus would have been placed in positions one, two or three. John 20:5 indicates that John stopped outside and looked into the tomb. He could see the strips of cloth with which Jesus had been wrapped. This could indicate that position one was the most likely place for Jesus' body. The antechamber, marked five, was a place where the family could come for meditation and reflection. It was also used as a place to prepare the body for burial. The possible position of the angel, number four, was the place where one could stand when removing the bones of a loved one, previously deceased, and storing them in a vault-like box below positions one, two and three.

We should be reminded that Mark does not try to give every detail of this event. He gives broad views rather than microscopic insights. This means that one must always ask what other vital information is available to help us gain a more complete understanding of events. More detailed information can be gained from the other Gospel records. Matthew 28:2 tells us that not only did an angel roll back the stone, but that there was an earthquake when he came from heaven and did it. John 20:1,2 tell us that the women saw that the stone had been removed and immediately ran to tell Simon Peter and the others.

In the Gospel of Mark we are told that the women, upon entering the tomb, saw a young man dressed in white, sitting on the right side. This frightened the women, to say

the least. Imagine - they were expecting to find Jesus' body lying there, and instead there was a young man casually sitting in His place and he started to talk! Who wouldn't be scared! We assume that this man in white apparel was an angel.

Seeing their alarm, the man urged them not to be frightened. He quickly gave them specific information about Jesus, when he said,

"You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." Mark 16:6, 7

Though it is simply stated by the angel, the resurrection is the greatest miracle the world has ever known. Jesus died and He lives again. It had to be true because who else would have known what Jesus had told His disciples? But who would believe it?

The three women, utterly bewildered, scared to death and trembling physically, were alarmed and fled. This was worse than a nightmare and they couldn't get away from there fast enough. Their fear was beyond description, and they simply could not talk to anyone about their horrendous experience. Who would have believed them anyway? Nothing like this had ever happened before. Surely the women would have been told that they had lost their sanity and that this whole crucifixion experience was simply too much for them to handle mentally and emotionally; that they were overwrought, too emotional!

On this note, the two very best manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark conclude. They give no report of what happened after this experience. There was no mention of the fact that Jesus appeared to people after the resurrection. According to these documents, the picture of Jesus, as suffering servant, is complete when He can not be found in the tomb. Think about this now. Why would Mark quit writing here? Jesus is not in the tomb, but where is He? Doesn't this leave you with many unanswered questions and a feeling of being left with too many loose ends?

MARK 16:9-11 - JESUS APPEARED TO MARY MAGDELENE

Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene. Mark helps by identifying Mary, because there were several women by that name. She is the one out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons. As usual, Mark gives no detail, just the fact that Jesus appeared to her first. She was a woman, and women were not taken seriously in that day. They could not give testimony in court. She was a woman with a questionable background, at best. Think about this for a moment. Why do you suppose she was chosen to be the first to receive this great honor? It appears that God did what He often did. He chose the unlikely person for His purposes. It is no more surprising that Mary was chosen to first receive the news of the resurrection than it was for the shepherds to first hear the message concerning the birth of Jesus.

Mary went immediately to share this news with the disciples. **She** believed instantly; **they** did not! Mark tells us that the disciples were so busy mourning and weeping that they did not take her announcement seriously.

They were convinced that Jesus was dead; their dream had ended. Think of Mary's frustration. Not only had she had a totally unsettling experience, but not even her best friends, Jesus' disciples, believed her. They simply brushed her off. Do you suppose they didn't believe her because she had never been part of the "inner circle of three", had not

had Jesus' confidence as they had? Surely Jesus or God the Father would have chosen one of them instead of her.

MARK 16:12, 13 JESUS APPEARED ON ROAD TO EMMAUS

Mark begins this paragraph by saying,

Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. Mark 16:12

Few, if any, would doubt that this is an abbreviated form of the story of the two disciples walking to Emmaus. Mark uses the phrase, "different form", 16:12. We are not certain just what that means. We know, from Luke 24:31, that the two men did not immediately recognize Jesus. Indeed, they did not recognize Him until they had arrived at Emmaus and He was breaking bread with them. It may mean that He had a different appearance. It is not possible to be more specific than this.

Again, the important part of this paragraph is the response of the disciples when this was reported to them. These two men had been a part of the group which had gathered in the upper room. When they reported the encounter with Jesus to the rest, it was not believed. Mark puts it sharply,

But they did not believe them either. Mark 16:13

Jewish law required that there be two or three witnesses in order for a matter to be affirmed. When two gave testimony to a fact, it was to be believed. It was not uncommon for men to discount the testimony of a **woman**. In this instance, the disciples have the witness of two disciples, probably **men**. The astonishment, that Mark reveals, is that they refused the testimony of a woman **and** the witness of two disciples of Jesus.

The resurrection was not easy to believe. For many, it is still difficult to believe today. On the other hand, Jesus had promised specifically that in three days He would rise. Despite Jesus' teaching, the disciples were fervent in their disbelief. At that point they must have forgotten **everything** He had ever taught them, because they were so wrapped up in self-pity!

MARK 16:14-18 JESUS APPEARED TO THE ELEVEN

This is the third post resurrection appearance and all three are given in capsule form of the actual events. If you study the accounts of Matthew, Luke and John, you will find much more information.

Not until the disciples had discounted the resurrection of Jesus twice did He appear to the eleven disciples in person. It is not surprising that He appeared while they were eating. Notice the progression in the revelation concerning the resurrection. First, God revealed the information through the witness of **one** woman. Then, God revealed the resurrection through the report of **two** men. Finally, Jesus appeared in person to all eleven disciples. God wanted to break the news to them in degrees and gave them several opportunities to believe.

When Jesus did reveal Himself to the disciples, the first thing He did was to rebuke them for their "lack of faith and stubborn refusal to believe..." 16:14. The Greek text says it in a different way, "He rebuked their unbelief and hardheartedness."

Certainly, this was an intense disappointment to Jesus. Don't you think He reminded them of His promises? How that must have jarred their memory. Nevertheless, He did not dwell on it. He used this opportunity to admonish the disciples concerning their future ministry and uses their determined unbelief to hit home the most essential aspect of salvation: faith. Mark quotes Jesus by saying,

"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." Mark 16:15, 16

This commission is not unique to Mark's Gospel. A stronger version of this command is found in Matthew 28. **Unbelief** got the disciples into difficulty with Jesus. It is not surprising that Jesus stressed that **belief** is the basic requirement for salvation.

Verses 17 and 18 are more difficult to understand. They do not represent information which was taught elsewhere in the Gospel records. The Gospel records do mention driving out demons by the disciples. Nowhere else in the Gospels is there a mention of speaking in other tongues. The other three Gospel records do not speak of picking up snakes with one's hands. No other Gospel record mentions drinking deadly poison without being hurt. These three signs, recorded in Mark 16:17,18, sound a great deal like some experiences recorded in the book of Acts, but we have no record of Jesus doing these things Himself or making any such promises. On the other hand, Jesus did lay His hands on the sick and they were made well. However, Jesus also said that they would do "even greater things". This promise of greater things may be a statement that could include drinking poison without harm, handling snakes without being bitten and speaking in other tongues. This does not mean that it is impossible for Jesus to have made the promises recorded in Mark 16:17,18. We just don't have a record of them elsewhere.

MARK 16:19, 20 THE ASCENSION

Verses 19 and 20 attempt to do two things:

- Report the ascension
- Bring the Gospel record to conclusion

In keeping with his usual style, Mark gives only the barest essential information when he records an event as significant and unusual as the ascension. He tells us that,

- Jesus was taken up - infers that the taking up came from outside of Himself.
- The destination was heaven.
- He sat at the right hand of God.

The place, at the right hand, was a symbol of great privilege and power. It is a royal court scene. The second most powerful person in the kingdom sat to the king's right. The third most powerful person sat to the king's left.

Verse 20 gives an insight into what the disciples did after Jesus ascended. With all their mistakes and lack of faith, but having seen Jesus for themselves, they **then** did what Jesus asked them to do. Mark said it this way,

Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.
Mark 16:20

It took a lot of convincing, but this is a triumphant ending for the Gospel record.

Earlier, we referred to the problem of the ending of this Gospel. One must consider the apparent appropriateness of the conclusion of the Gospel record with verses 9-20 added. Go back to chapter 1:1, where Mark indicates his purpose for writing this account. He said,

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

It does not appear to be appropriate to conclude such a Gospel with three women running away in fear. On the other hand, the conclusion of verse 20 is certainly triumphant.

One of the problems with this ending is that about one third of the words in verses 9 - 20 are either foreign to the rest of the Gospel of Mark or are used exclusively by other authors. The internal evidence in these verses leaves one with several questions, i.e. the content, such as the promises concerning poison and holding snakes and the words foreign to the rest of the book. The truth of the matter is that we honestly do not know how the Gospel of Mark did conclude. It is possible that a portion of the original document was lost and someone tried to reproduce an appropriate ending. It behooves all of us to be most generous with the opinions of others on this matter, for we honestly do not know how the original Gospel ended.

At the beginning of this study, a promise was made concerning whether or not the initial statement in the Gospel of Mark establishes the author's design for the whole book. Let's review it.

More is said about Jesus' actions than about His teaching. He spent long days healing, teaching, explaining. He walked from one end of the land to the other. He included Samaritans and Gentiles as well as Jews; even women and children; the rich and poor. He owned no home, no bank account, worked for no glory of His own. He gave His very life, because it was required by the God who had sent Him on this mission. The servanthood of Jesus reaches its apex in the crucifixion and resurrection. The implications are deep. His servanthood is couched in the fact that He lived to fulfill the purposes of another. He, too, was a bond-servant, a servant-by-choice. This is the emphasis when Mark quotes Jesus' intense prayer,

"Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."
Mark 14:36

The servanthood of Jesus was seen when He tied the towel around His waist and washed the feet of the disciples. It is what Jesus was doing when He healed the sick even though it jeopardized His life. Jesus was expressing His servanthood when He **stayed** on the cross, though His power would have enabled Him to come down and save His life. His life, lived for the purpose of others, was a life of servanthood.

You may remember that we promised to review the way Jesus announced His coming crucifixion. This is an attempt to honor that promise. If one looks carefully, one will find Jesus repeatedly giving information concerning His coming crucifixion. Here is a list of some of His more obvious references to the crucifixion, as found in the Gospel of Mark:

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

2:20 - When the bridegroom is taken from them, they will fast.

8:31 - He must suffer many things, be rejected, be killed and after three days, rise.

9:31 - He will be betrayed, killed and after three days He will rise.

10:33 - He will be betrayed to the Chief Priests, condemned to death, handed over to the Gentiles, mocked, spit upon and after three days He will rise.

12:1-11 - The parable of the talents - kill the servants, kill the son.

14:3-9; 22-28 - Mary poured perfume on Jesus' body to prepare for His burial. He broke bread - His body; He gave the cup - His blood of the New Covenant.

These are obvious references to the crucifixion. There are many others which are more subtle. Look at this list of references. It begins in vague, non-specific references to something that is going to happen. Notice that as the list proceeds through the book, it becomes increasingly more explicit.

In this passage we have studied the resurrection of Jesus. We have observed the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, to the two on the road to Emmaus and the appearance to the Eleven. We have considered the ascension of Jesus and His commission of His disciples to go into all the world to preach the Gospel. Frankly, what difference will this make in the way you clean your house or work at your desk? What are you determined to do about this picture of who Jesus is and what He does?

CONCLUSION

At the outset, Mark wrote,

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

The Greek word for "beginning", means more than to start something. It carries the idea of identifying something of worth. It was sometimes used to express the idea of being first. One form of it is used to identify a ruler, whom they considered to be the most important. Only later did it take on the idea of the origin or cause of something. The author talked about how it all got started. More importantly, it appears that Mark, by his terse, intense presentation has highlighted some of the most compelling truths of the Good News as they relate to the Servanthood of Jesus.

The theological issues which divide people today, such as the primacy of Scripture, the existence of the miraculous in Scripture, the transforming personal experience of Jesus Christ in one's life, etc., did not appear to be issues for Christians in the time of the Apostles. Their primary concern was to proclaim Jesus Christ as the risen Savior and Lord.

The Gospel of Mark appeals to people of our day because of its clear, concise statements, without encumbering detail. Mark stresses the fact that Jesus is Savior, Messiah, the Son of God, and that He came to live a powerfully sacrificial life; to die amid shameful circumstances; to rise with glory, and to ascend in honor.

In the midst of this beautiful presentation, I believe something of the character of Peter drifts to the surface. Peter grew up amid plenty. He experienced the respect that wealth provided. In the upper room, Peter made clear his feelings about being seated in the servant's place for the Passover Feast. Nevertheless, **after** the resurrection, as his life was changed, He was enabled, by the Holy Spirit, to share in the preparation of the clearest picture of the Servanthood of Jesus, the Gospel of Mark. This I believe is testimony to the changing power of Jesus. It is with joy and exhilaration that Peter could help begin this Gospel with the words, "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Mark 1:1.

The author spoke of Jesus as "the Son of God." Mark presents three different witnesses, in four different places in the book, each speaks of Jesus as "the Son of God." Notice the list Mark presents:

- In Mark 1:11 - **God the Father** - At the baptism of Jesus, a voice from heaven said, " You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."
- In Mark 3:11 - **The unclean spirits** - Mark reports: "Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God."
- In Mark 9:7 - **God the Father** - At the Transfiguration, God said, "This is my Son, whom I love, Listen to him!"
- In Mark 15:39 - **The Centurion** - This Roman official, committed to the service and worship of the Emperor, their god, said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

Could Mark have found a more diverse group of witnesses to the fact that Jesus was the Son of God? I doubt it.

JESUS CHRIST: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

In the scope of the book, why is this truth so important? Mark established, by four witnesses, that Jesus is "the Son of God." Mark then proceeded to demonstrate by word and deed that the "Son of God," the Agent of creation, the Sacrifice for the redemption of mankind, was a humble servant.

OTHER BOOKS WRITTEN BY DR. COOPER:

Inductive Bible Studies

GLIMPSES OF GOD - I - An inductive study of Genesis, chapters 1 - 25. The author leads the reader through an inductive study of the text.

GLIMPSES OF GOD - II - *An inductive study of Genesis, chapters 26 - 50. The author leads the reader through an inductive study of the last half of the book.*

THERE WAS NO KING IN ISRAEL - An inductive study of the book of Judges. The author leads the reader through an inductive study of this Old Testament book. Particular attention is paid to the message about God in this book.

STANDING ALONE, BUT NEVER LONELY - An inductive study of the books of Ruth and Esther. Careful attention is given to the cultural and spiritual aspects of these books that are often overlooked. The questions to lead you through your own study of the book are printed in the book.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION - A - An inductive Study of I Samuel chapters 1 - 15.

THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION - B - An inductive Study of I Samuel chapters 16 - 31.

JESUS CHRIST: THE SUFFERING SERVANT - An inductive Bible study of the Gospel of Mark. It is a careful attempt to lead the reader through an inductive Study of this Gospel record. This is available in two forms: bound book and loose-leaf notebook.

A PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE - An inductive study of the Gospel of Luke.

BEING IN CHRIST - An inductive study of the Ephesian epistle.

REJOICE IN THE LORD - An inductive study of the Philippian epistle.

WHEN FAITH CONFRONTS CULTURE - An inductive study of Colossians and Philemon.

Books

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS - This 180 page book points out how God has revealed Himself through His names in the Scriptures. In each instance, this work seeks to identify the involvement of the context in the use of each name.

DID YOU KNOW THIS?! - This 200 page book looks carefully at 56 Biblical passages to show the impact that Jewish culture and Biblical languages have upon the meaning of Scriptural passages.

FASHIONED BY CULTURE - This 200 page book is a study of the impact of culture upon Scripture. It is a sequel to 'Did You Know This?!'

DIGGING DEEPER - This 80 page book shows you how to study the Greek New Testament without knowing the Greek language. (Three ring binder format.)

DISCOVERING THE MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE - This 250 page book is a step-by-step guide on how to do inductive Bible Study.

IMITATORS OF GOD - This 300 page book is a topical study of 17 different qualities of spiritual growth.

JESUS CHRIST: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE - This 200 page book is a topical study of 13 different qualities of spiritual growth.

Logos Ministries is a non-profit religious corporation in the state of Colorado. It exists to encourage the use of Inductive Bible Study and provide copies of Dr. Cooper's writings to students in the former Eastern block, third world countries and prisons.

Visit Logos Ministries on the World Wide Web at: <http://billcooperlogos.org>