



# Mark

An OCF Bible Study

## Mark 1:1-20

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Mark is widely considered to be the earliest of the Gospels. Mark “was not a disciple of Jesus during Jesus’ ministry or even an eyewitness of Jesus’ ministry. He accompanied the Apostle Peter and listened to his preaching. He based his Gospel on the eyewitness account and spoken ministry of Peter.”<sup>1</sup> Some think of Mark as “The Gospel according to Peter.”

**Who was Mark?** He was a traveling companion of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 12:25, 13:5) but he deserted them (Acts 13:13) and did not continue with them in the work. Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them on their second missionary journey, but Paul did not think it wise to take him because he had deserted them. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company (Acts 15:36-40). Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left to revisit the churches he had earlier established in Asia on his first missionary journey. The result of the disagreement between two godly men—two missionary teams!

**Who were the recipients of the Gospel of Mark?** The Church at Rome—Roman Gentile converts. Since this Gospel was written for Gentiles—people unfamiliar with Judaism—Old Testament quotes are rare.

**Then why does Mark begin his gospel with a quotation from the Old Testament as he describes the arrival of Jesus (vv. 2-3)?** An understanding of Jesus’ ministry requires an understanding of prophecy concerning the Messiah. Mark is setting the stage. He is sending the message that, “This story of Jesus is not something new that we invented. You haven’t heard about it before, but 700 years ago the prophet Isaiah foretold the coming of the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3) as did Malachi 400 years ago (Malachi 3:1).” These prophecies are the only time Mark quotes from the Old Testament.

**In addition to prophesying about the arrival of Jesus, who is the messenger that Isaiah (and Malachi) prophesied about in Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1?** John the Baptist. Like Jesus, John’s appearance is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. John the Baptist is considered to be the last of the Old Testament prophets. This passage Mark quotes, *In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God (Isaiah 40:3)* has in mind building up a great road for the arrival of a king. The idea is to fill in the holes and knock down the hills that are in the way. John was God’s bulldozer to build that highway.

**What was John’s ministry all about (vv 4-5)?** A call to repentance. John’s baptism was a baptism characterized by confession and repentance. For a Jew in John’s day to submit to a baptism of repentance was a true act of humility. It’s essentially saying, “I confess that I am just as far away from God as a Gentile is and I need to get right with Him.”

**How would you describe or define repentance?** Some people think that repentance is mostly about feelings, especially as in *feeling sorry* for your sin. It’s wonderful to feel sorry or remorseful about your sin, but true repentance isn’t just about *feeling sorry* for your sin. The Greek word *metanoia*, translated “repentance,” literally means a change of outlook, to reconsider. It’s about turning away from sin, not merely feeling sorrow in your heart. Think of repentance as taking sides with God against yourself.

**Why was there such a large Jewish following of John (v. 5)?** This was foremost a real work of the Holy Spirit. God had been “silent” for 400 years after the Old Testament prophet Malachi. But the Jews knew Messiah was coming sometime. The Jewish community was familiar with Malachi 4:5, *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes*. They knew Elijah never died. John looks like Elijah. He is ministering in the same geographical area as Elijah. There is great anticipation, excitement and conviction. If indeed Elijah is here in the person of John the Baptist, Jesus can’t be far behind! John offered them hope! This is a time of revival.

**What was John the Baptist’s overriding message (v. 7)?** “This is not about me.” John preached Jesus. John pointed the people to Jesus, not to himself. John’s main message wasn’t, “You’re a sinner; you need to repent.” John’s main message was, “The Messiah is coming. Get your hearts ready for His arrival.” **John clearly understood his singular purpose in God’s grand scheme. Have you discovered any of God’s purposes for your life?**

**Why was this sinless Jesus baptized? He certainly didn't need to repent (v. 9).** Jesus was baptized in keeping with one primary aspect of His mission on earth: to identify with sinful mankind. Jesus started the identification process when he became flesh and dwelt among us. He was identified with sinners in His baptism. He also ate the same things, went to our places, wept with us, was hungry and tired, walked with us, suffered with us, underwent the same temptations. He became one of us. Baptism is one important step in the overall mission of Jesus to identify with fallen and sinful mankind, a mission that would only finally be fulfilled at the Cross.

**What was God the Father conveying to Jesus by His comments (v. 11)?** He is preparing Jesus for vv. 12-13. Jesus is being sent into the desert to be tempted by Satan knowing He has His Father's approval and blessing. It's like the Father is saying, "You're my son...I love you...I'm proud of you. I have a job for you and I know you will do it well. I'll see you back here in 40 days." What an encouraging and confirming sendoff that must have been.

**Why did the Holy Spirit prompt Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan (v. 12)?** One primary aspect of Jesus' mission on earth was to identify with sinful mankind. Here He is identified with sinners in their temptations. Hebrews 4:15 reminds us, *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.* Hebrews 2:18 says, *For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.* He's been there, done that. Jesus knows what we're going through. In His humanity, the wilderness experience was not an easy ordeal for Jesus. **Have you ever been on the receiving end of a "wilderness" experience for God's purposes?**

**What was a predominant focus of Jesus' ministry (v. 14)?** Proclaiming the good news (gospel) of the kingdom of God. He taught the people. He wanted people to know that the kingdom was near - as close as your hand. "And I'm here to reveal it to you" is the essence of His message. It wasn't as distant or as dreamy as they had imagined. Jesus was a preacher who sometimes did great miracles, not a miracle worker who sometimes preached. (v. 38)

**What do we know about these first disciples? What kind of men were they?** They were Jewish men without theological credentials or status in the world, who hadn't made the "religious cut" on the road to becoming a rabbi. Jesus met them in the workplace, as they labored like any common man.

**What was Jesus' invitation to them (v. 17)?** Follow Me. Jesus shows by His invitation what Christianity is all about – following Him. At its root, Christianity is not about theological systems, rules, or even helping people – it is about following Jesus where and when he leads. Someone once said, "The purpose of my life is not to please God – the purpose of my life is to follow a person."

**And if they follow Him, what did Jesus say He would do next?** He would make them fishers of men. Note that He doesn't say I will make you great theologians, Bible scholars, pastors, etc.

**How did the men respond to Jesus call (vv. 18-20)?** With a sense of urgency without questioning. They dropped everything they were doing. They didn't say, "We'll pray about it first and get back to you."

**Application:** Is there anything Jesus might be calling you to drop, get rid of, or immediately leave in order to follow Him more faithfully? Is there anything getting in the way of your relationship with Jesus – Internet, video games, a relationship, hobbies, sports?

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## Mark 1:21-45

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There are two unique perspectives about the Gospel of Mark:

1. While John emphasized the deity of Jesus, Mark's main purpose was to underscore the Son of God's full, true humanity, who suffered unlike any other person ever. Mark's gospel emphasizes Jesus as God's Servant.
2. Mark emphasized what Jesus did versus what He said. Mark is an action-oriented gospel, painting a picture of Jesus on the go. Each one of the four events in this passage occurs in a different location. One of this gospel's key words is "immediately," occurring more than 40 times.

**What did Jesus do on the Sabbath (v. 21)?** He entered the synagogue and taught. Typically, the synagogue had no pastors/rabbis/set teachers assigned. As a matter of custom, visiting teachers would be invited by the local Jewish leaders to speak to the gathered synagogue worshippers, usually on the Scripture reading for that day. Jesus was given the opportunity to teach the people.

**How did the crowd react to His teaching (v. 22)?** They were amazed at his teaching. The Greek word here is *exeplessonto*, meaning astounded or overwhelmed. They had never before heard anyone teach quite like this.

**What was the difference between Jesus' teaching and that of the scribes/teachers of the law?** Jesus taught with boldness, something the scribes of Jesus' day rarely did. They would simply quote and then interpret a variety of rabbis. Jesus taught with authority because He really had authority. Jesus proclaimed revelation directly from God rather than just interpreting others.

**Why did Jesus tell the demon-possessed man to be quiet (v. 25, also v. 34 and 3:12)? After all, the demon was just telling the truth about who Jesus was.** Jesus was determined to maintain control of when, how, and to whom He revealed His identity. It was a timing issue to reveal to the world just who He was. A timing issue on a three year journey to the cross. If the Jews realized exactly who Jesus was, then the wave of popularity that Jesus had experienced the day before could have possibly crested and carried Him into a political leadership role that might have washed out the Cross.

At the same time, the Romans could have suspected that he was organizing a rebellion to depose the ruling leaders which in turn could have led to the premature arrest of Jesus. Jesus doesn't want His identity announced prematurely – and certainly not by Satan or his agents.

**What was the result of the exorcism miracle Jesus performs (vv. 27-28)?** The crowd was amazed. People all over that part of Galilee heard about Jesus. Word spread like wildfire.

**What is the crowd's view of Jesus at this point? What is their impression of Him (vv. 29-34)?** The crowd sees Him as a miracle worker. They're bringing their sick to be healed. There is no curiosity about His Messiahship. They still don't "get it" which is really not that surprising. In Jesus' day, the Jews were looking for a messiah who would throw off the Roman oppression and set up His kingdom on Earth. Jesus doesn't fit their Messianic expectations.

**After preaching and healing in one town, and before heading for another, what did Jesus do (v. 35)?** Got up early, got alone with God, and prayed. Spent some time in solitude.

He was the Son of God. If anyone didn't need to pray, it was Jesus. Why did He pray? First, Jesus prayed as an example to his followers. He never did anything independent of His Father. Jesus was totally submissive to Him, doing everything to honor and glorify the Father. Second, when Jesus became man, He took on both divine and human natures: became 100% God and 100% man. From His human nature, He needed communion with the Father. He was consciously dependent on His Father for strength and direction for what lay ahead of Him. This passage is in keeping with Mark's emphasis on the true humanity of Jesus.

**Is there a message or application for us?** If the Son of God needed to be alone with the Father, how much more do we? Like Jesus modeled, we must carve out of our busy lives a place of solitude to pray/listen/meditate.

**What does the encounter between Jesus and the disciples tell us about the disciples' attitude (vv. 36-38)?**

Simon and his companions were clueless; they did not understand that Jesus needed to spend time in prayer. They considered His healing ministry to be the highest priority. Their words were an indication of their annoyance as if to say, "There is a great need and opportunity here to heal. Quit wasting your time praying."

**When will the disciples finally "get it"? When will the light bulb start to come on?** At Pentecost when the Holy Spirit will come upon them (Acts 2).

**Jesus viewed His miracles as only a small part of His larger mission which was what (v. 38) ?** Preach/teach, proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

**How would you describe the mental condition of the leper (v. 40)?** He was desperate. The leper had no doubt about Jesus' power. This shows great faith and great awareness. *If you will, you can make me clean* expresses the leper's confidence in Jesus.

One of the many examples of the human side of Jesus that Mark describes is this: *Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean."* (Mark 1:41). We are often moved with compassion when we meet sick people, but lepers usually did not arouse compassion. Their whole appearance was too repulsive, and they usually made people feel disgust instead of compassion. But Jesus felt compassion toward the man.

**Why did Jesus tell the leper to go show himself to the priests and perform the cleansing ritual (v. 44)?** Jesus did this to honor the existing law of God but also to serve as a testimony to the priests that an incurable disease had been cured.

Since lepers were never healed, these priests had never conducted this ceremony. They had to look it up in Leviticus, the instruction manual for this ceremony, because they didn't know how to do it. When they carried it out for the first time, it would be a strong witness to them that the Messiah was among them, which is exactly what miracles are designed to do – point to/glorify God.

**What were the results of the leper's disobedience (v. 45)?** His disobedience to Jesus' word frustrated Jesus' work rather than advanced it. Jesus needed to minister to people, but the leper's action forced Him to now spend more time in uninhabited, solitary places. Jesus could no longer openly enter a town. By his disobedience, the leper did not ruin God's plan, but he did make things more complicated. And yet the Galileans still kept seeking out Jesus (v. 45).

"We should learn some important spiritual lessons from this chapter. To begin with, if the Son of God came as a servant as Mark presents him, then being a servant is the highest of all callings. We are never more like the Lord Jesus than when we are serving others."<sup>1</sup> Jesus served them by doing what He could for them. In His case He could heal. **Who can I serve today and how?**

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Mark, 2015 Edition (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 40

## Mark 2

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**How would you describe the friends carrying the paralytic on the mat (vv. 2-5)?** True friends. Committed. How easy it would have been for them to say, "Well, there is no sense trying to get to Jesus today. Maybe we can come back tomorrow." They were desperate just like the leper and had no doubt about Jesus' power.

We can imagine how the friends on the roof must have felt. They went to a lot of trouble to see their friend healed of his paralysis and now the teacher only wants to forgive his sins! Standing on the roof we might imagine them shouting, "No, he's paralyzed! We wanted him to walk, not to be forgiven!" Jesus knew what the man's real and greatest need was. We all need God's forgiveness more than anything.

**Jesus saw their faith. It was evident/visible. Can the same be said of us, that others can see our faith (v. 5)?**

**What might be some evidences of our faith that we can display? How might others see our faith?** By seeing clear evidence of the Fruit of Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). By our language. By the way we sincerely and genuinely care for others. As believers, we should be known for the things we do, more so than the things we don't do.

**What was the concern of the teachers of the law (vv. 6-7)?** Only God himself had the authority to forgive sins. By forgiving the man's sins, Jesus was claiming to have divine authority which angered these religious leaders.

**What was the point Jesus was making with His illustration (vv. 8-11)?** It was easier to forgive the man's sins than to heal the man, because forgiveness is invisible – no one could verify at that moment if the man was forgiven before God or not. However, it could be instantly verified whether or not the man could walk. Jesus did the "harder" miracle to prove that He was able to do the "easier" miracle.

**How did the people respond to the miracle (v. 12)?** They praised God, which is exactly what is supposed to happen. Miracles are designed ultimately to glorify God. However, from the reaction of the observers, most of them apparently marveled at the physical miracle (even "glorifying God")—but did not worship Jesus as God.<sup>1</sup>

**Jesus singled out Levi. What was Levi's profession (v. 14)?** He was a tax collector. **What do we know about tax collectors?** They were Jews who worked for the enemy – their Roman oppressors – and had the force of Roman soldiers behind them to make the people pay their taxes. They were the most visible Jewish collaborators with Rome. Tax collectors were despised as traitors. The Jewish people rightly considered them extortioners because they could keep whatever they over-collected.

**What is Levi's Greek name? Matthew Who was Matthew?** One of the twelve apostles.

**Jesus said "follow me" to Levi. What did Levi stand to lose by following Jesus (v. 14)?** "Levi gave up a lucrative business for good when he chose to follow Jesus....[responding] immediately to Jesus' gracious, authoritative invitation to follow Him."<sup>2</sup> For Peter, James, and John, if this "following Jesus" thing didn't pan out, they could easily go back to the fishing business. But it would be nearly impossible for Levi to return to tax collecting. Many others were competing for the greatly sought after career of quick wealth even though they would be shunned by their fellow Jews. **Have you willingly given up anything to follow Jesus?**

**What was the significance of having dinner at Levi's house (v. 15)?** "Eating a meal together meant something in Jesus' world that it does not mean today in the West. Hospitality was a sacred duty in the ancient Near East. When someone invited someone else to eat with him, he was extending a pledge of loyalty and protection to that person. To accept an invitation to dinner implied a willingness to become a close friend of the host."<sup>3</sup>

**Why do you think tax collectors and sinners were so attracted to Jesus?** Because of His unconditional acceptance of them. He didn't pass judgment on them. He accepted them right where they were.

**Application:** We should do the same with our non-Christian friends. Recognizing they have a natural bent to sin, we shouldn't be surprised or offended when they do so.

**What was Jesus' point when He said that those who are well have no need of a physician (v. 17)?** Jesus was the physician of the soul, and it makes sense for Him to be with those "sick" with sin. Jesus was saying that He was able to offer what these sinners knew they needed: spiritual healing.

**What was the concern of the religious establishment (v. 18)?** Jesus' disciples weren't doing things the way they're supposed to be done — "according to *our* tradition." The Pharisees were well known for fasting twice weekly (Luke 18:12). Fasting is a legitimate form of worship, but they had distorted it, turning it into a ritualistic tradition that they legalistically imposed upon the people.

**How did Jesus respond (vv. 19-20)?** Jesus' message is bold and clear: "I'm not like the Pharisees or John the Baptist. I am the Messiah, the bridegroom to the people of God. Wherever I am, it is appropriate to have the joy we associate with weddings." When He was physically gone, it would be more appropriate to fast — but not now.

**Jesus introduced two parables to announce the new era which was incompatible with the old one.**

- **What did the old garment and old wineskins represent?** Old Covenant, old system, old way of doing things.
- **What do the patch of unshrunk cloth and the new wine represent?** New Covenant, new worship format, new way of God relating to his people.

Jesus' point was made clear by these examples. You can't fit His new life into the old forms. Jesus came to introduce something new, not to patch up something old. Judaism had become "old" and obsolete and Jesus was going to set up a "new" form of God's kingdom on earth.

**Why were the Pharisees concerned about the disciples' picking of the heads of grain (v. 23)?** There was nothing wrong with what the disciples did. Though Jesus disciples did something that the Mosaic Law permitted when they plucked the ears of wheat or barley (Deuteronomy 23:25).... by doing it on a Sabbath day, they violated a traditional Pharisaic interpretation of the law. The Pharisees taught that to do what the disciples did in plucking the heads of grain constituted reaping, threshing, and winnowing, and that was forbidden work on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10)."<sup>4</sup>

**What did Jesus say about the Sabbath (vv. 27-28)?** "The Pharisees made the Sabbath a straitjacket that inhibited the Jews.... Jesus pointed out that God gave the Sabbath as a good gift 'for man.' He designed it to free His people from ceaseless labor and to give them rest."<sup>5</sup>

**What was the second principle Jesus declared?** That He is the Lord of the Sabbath. If He, the Lord of the Sabbath, was not offended by His disciples' actions, then these sideline critics should not have been either.

**It's easy to pick on the Pharisees. However, someone once said that if we examine ourselves closely and honestly, there is a little bit of Pharisee in all of us. Can you find any evidence of Pharisee-like traits in your life? In your heart?**

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2015 Edition* (published by Sonic Light: [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), p. 45

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 46

<sup>3</sup>Ibid

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p. 50

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 51

## Mark 3

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**Why were the Pharisees watching Jesus closely (v. 2)?** In order to “accuse Him.” To see if He would heal the man on the Sabbath, which would constitute working, which is prohibited on the Sabbath. Instead of honestly evaluating His claims and trying to figure out if He’s the real deal, most of them looked for an opportunity to discredit Him. Furthermore, instead of simply leaving Jesus alone and dismissing Him as a lunatic, they took steps to kill Him.

**How did the Pharisees respond to Jesus’ question, *Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?* (v. 4)?** Silence. They were stumped. They had no answer. Jesus’ question changed the perspective of Sabbath observance from that which was legal to that which was morally correct.

**What distressed Jesus the most about these Pharisees (v. 5)?** This is one of the few places where Jesus is described as having anger, and He is angry at the hardness of their hearts. Their misplaced concern was with the messenger. They had virtually no interest in the message.

The Pharisees didn’t understand the heart of God. They thought a relationship with God was all about performance. The more rules = the longer the checklist = the more opportunities to earn God’s favor. They were religious and Jesus condemned them for it: *For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (Psalm 51:16-17).* This was an Old Testament truism. They should have understood that, above all, God was after their hearts.

The Herodians were not a religious party; they were a group of Jews who were sympathetic to King Herod and they supported his Roman authority over the Israelites. The Pharisees and the Herodians previously had nothing in common. Now they have a common enemy—Jesus.

**Why did the crowds come to Jesus near the Sea of Galilee from distant places (v. 7)?** They heard all He was doing (but not what He was saying). They came more because of His miraculous works than because of His message.

They were eager to receive the physical benefits of His ministry which Jesus graciously bestowed on them with no thought of getting something in return.<sup>1</sup> **What does that reveal about His nature?** He is gracious and generous.

**To what main purpose did Jesus call his apostles (v. 13)?** To be with Him. The first job of the apostles was simply to be with Jesus, to learn from being around Him, to develop a relationship with Him, enjoy Him, get to know Him. Then, in a secondary sense, He chose them that He might send them out to minister/preach and drive out demons.

Application: Christianity is all about hanging out with Jesus, getting to know Him, developing a relationship with Him, enjoying Him. Christianity is all about following a Man, not a system of rules.

**Why did Jesus give these apostles the authority to cast out demons (v. 15)?** When the apostles performed miracles, it proved that they were sent and empowered by God. The miracles authenticated who they were, as well as their message.

**Why did Jesus choose Judas when He knew he would be a traitor?** To fulfill prophecy (Psalm 41:9, Zechariah 11:12-13).

A man once asked a theologian, “Why did Jesus choose Judas Iscariot to be his disciple?” The teacher replied, “I don’t know, but I have an even harder question: “Why did Jesus choose me?” **Why did Jesus choose you?** We are products of His sovereign grace.

Among the apostles, we know something about Peter, James, John, and Judas. But of the other eight, we pretty much only know their names. **What can we draw from that? What’s the message there?** The accomplishments



of the other eight are known only by God and the people whose lives they touched. They wrote no books of the Bible. They ministered in anonymity and obscurity. Only God was glorified by their lives. Like the inscription on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier —“Known only to God”—their fame is reserved for heaven where their names are written on the twelve foundations of God’s heavenly city (Revelation 21:14).

**Why would members of Jesus’ own family, those that know Him best, think that Jesus was out of His mind (v. 21)?** He went from being a carpenter to a miracle worker, from a son to a person of notoriety. He spoke in strange terms (parables), and yet people were flocking to Him. If his own family thought this about Him, it helps to understand the skepticism of others. We might have expected that Jesus’ family would have special privileges before Him but apparently they did not (v. 31-35).

**Who is Beelzebub (v. 22)?** Satan

**What did this official delegation of the teachers of the law accuse Jesus of (v. 22)?** They claimed that Satan possessed Jesus and gave Him power to cast out demons. They were attributing Jesus’ work to Satan. They viewed Jesus as being allied with Satan.

**How did Jesus reply to the charge against Him (vv. 23-27)?** With parables (Matthew 12:29; Luke 11:21-22). That is, He used comparisons. He pointed out that it was illogical for Him to cast out Satan’s agents if He Himself was one of Satan’s agents. Satan would then be working against Himself.<sup>2</sup> There would be a civil war going on. If Jesus was possessed by Satan, He should be on Satan’s side, allied with the other demons. They should be working together to control people, not to free them as Jesus was doing by casting out the demons that were possessing them. Their argument makes no sense. They are grasping at straws looking for ways to discredit Jesus.

Jesus ends this confrontation with an interesting statement. All sin is forgivable except one. **What is the unforgivable sin?** Blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. **What is meant by blaspheming against the Holy Spirit?** An attitude of defiant hostility toward God that rejects the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit’s job is to draw us to God, convict and convince us of the truth and love of God. The unforgivable sin is to say “no” to the invitation of the Holy Spirit to walk with Jesus.

By simply looking at the context, it becomes apparent that blasphemy of the Holy Spirit equates with saying that Jesus did His miracles by the power of the devil. The scribes were committing the unpardonable sin, because they attributed the power of Jesus’ exorcisms to Satan rather than to the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven—not because it is a sin “too big” for God to forgive, but because it is an attitude of heart that cares nothing for God’s forgiveness that is available through Jesus.

**Who is an example of someone who blasphemed the Holy Spirit??** Judas Iscariot. He walked with Jesus for three years and yet rejected/betrayed Him.

**What point is Jesus making in His comments about family (vv. 33-35)?** Jesus was not saying anything against family relationships. He was making the point that natural family relationships are not as important as the spiritual relationships that come from being a member of Jesus’ spiritual family. This would have shocked the hearers because of the emphasis they placed on natural family relationships. The family blood that flows through our veins is not nearly as important as the blood that was shed for us on Calvary.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 54

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 60

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp. 61A

## Mark 4

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**Jesus is speaking in parables. What is a parable?** An earthly story with a spiritual meaning.

Parables were a common form of teaching in Judaism. Jesus didn't invent them. He wasn't the first to use them. The religious teachers of Jesus' day used parables extensively, so Jesus' hearers were familiar with this rhetorical style.

**Why did Jesus talk in parables?** He was addressing two groups of people—those who have ears to hear and those who don't (v. 9). The use of parables would allow Him to identify true seekers. The spiritual condition of the people would be revealed by the way they responded.

**The disciples and other believers asked Him to explain the meaning of the parable (v. 10).** The unbelievers and skeptics just turned away and left. This action had the impact of concealing the truth from the unbelievers. They didn't hang around long enough to hear the end of the story. Jesus is not withholding the truth from some; by virtue of the unbelievers' response, the truth is hidden. They are responsible for not receiving the truth.

One other reason He used parables was so His enemies could find no direct statements to use against Him. When He said to the paralytic who was lowered on the mat, *Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven (Matthew 9:2)*, they accused Him of blasphemy. On the other hand, talking in parables about soils, lamp on a stand, mustard seed, etc., doesn't provide any ammunition. It disarms the enemy.

### **The parable of the Sower (vv. 2-20)**

- What does the seed represent?** The Word (truth) of God.
- Who is the farmer/sower?** Anyone sowing the seed (including us as believers).
- What do the soils represent?** The heart of the listener/recipient.

**There are four different kinds of soils. What happens to the seed when it falls on the different soils?**

Soil #1—Hard soil found along pathways. The birds ate the seed lying on it. **Spiritual meaning?** Unprepared soil (hard heart). Not cultivated. Symbolizes a spiritual battle that Satan wins easily. Low hanging fruit for Satan.

Soil #2—Rocky places. Soil is shallow, unable to establish roots. **Spiritual meaning?** These hearers receive the Word of God with a flash of enthusiasm that quickly burns out. They give up quickly when trouble and persecution strike and it becomes difficult to follow Jesus.

Soil #3—Among thorns and weeds, which crowd out the plants. **Spiritual meaning?** For these listeners everything else soon begins to crowd out/overtake the word of God: the things of this world, the worries of life, activities, wealth, etc.

Soil #4—Good soil: cultivated, prepared to receive seed. **Spiritual meaning?** Some people are like the good ground—they accept the word and bear fruit. Fruit bearing is a mark of good soil, a right heart, a true believer.

The seed is going to respond in a variety of ways depending on the condition of the soil. The Word of God is going to have a variety of impacts depending on the condition of the heart of the recipient. This parable should most likely be called The Parable of the Soils.

**What do we do with this nice story? Any practical meaning to us? What kind of soil do I represent?**

**As believers, in the parable we identified ourselves as the sower. In that capacity, what is our role/responsibility?** Our job is exclusively to sow the seed—proclaim the good news, tell everybody about Jesus Christ. Don't focus on the soil. Don't worry about where the seed falls. The condition of the soil is not the responsibility of the sower. God's job is to prepare the soil. Once we have sown the seed, our job is done and God takes over. He is responsible to cause the seed to germinate and grow.

**Parable of the lamp. What does the lamp represent (v. 21)?** The Word of God /truth. **What is the spiritual meaning of this earthly story?** Jesus just lit the disciples' lamp by explaining the parable of sower. He gave them knowledge of the truth. Now He is telling them, "Don't bury it, don't hide it, don't keep it to yourselves but proclaim it. Tell the world about me." Let the light of the lamp (Word of God) shine so people can see the truth.

**What does He mean by the hearing/measure principle (v. 24)?** Consider carefully what you hear/listen to. If you're hearing the right stuff—the more you hear, the more you learn; the more you understand, the more you grow and experience God's blessings. This snowball effect starts from listening.

**We need to be intentional about hearing/listening. What are some ways we can "hear" right things?**

**Parable of the growing seed (v. 26).** A farmer scatters some seed. Over time, day and night, the seed sprouts and grows all by itself and produces a crop. The farmer doesn't know how the growth happens. He can't see it growing. How exactly the seed grows is a mystery to the farmer.

**Spiritual meaning—what does the seed represent?** Word of God. **Who is the man spreading the seed today?** Believers including us. **What happens when we spread the seed?** New life. Growth of the seed. Fruit. **How does it work?** We can't see the Word of God working. It works in a way that it invisible to our eyes and unexplainable. The Word of God will bring forth fruit by itself.<sup>1</sup> *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).*

The Bible isn't just an instruction manual or a list of rules to follow. It has supernatural power to change lives.

**Parable of the mustard seed (v. 30).** A mustard seed, the smallest of seeds, is planted and grows into a huge tree.

**Spiritual meaning—what does the mustard seed represent?** Word of God. **Tiny mustard seed grows into a huge tree. What does the tree represent?** Kingdom of God. The contrast is between the Kingdom of God's small beginnings and how it will eventually become something very large and beneficial. When Jesus came He planted the seed in twelve men. Look at the Kingdom now!

**Jesus and His disciples are in the boat. A big storm swamps the boat. What is Jesus doing (v. 35)?** Sleeping!

**What does that tell us about Jesus?** He is not worried. He knows His life is not in danger; it will not end prematurely. The fact that Jesus could sleep in such a storm reflects one indication of His humanity. He's exhausted.

**How did the disciples react? Did they breathe a sigh of relief and thank Him for saving their lives when the wind calmed down (v. 41)?** They were terrified. They didn't understand.

**As you look at the terrified reaction of the disciples, what observations can you make about them and their faith?** They still didn't "get it." They didn't fully understand the truth of who Jesus is.

**Any take-aways on handling the storms of life?** Jesus can control the natural circumstances of life. Storms come even when Jesus is in the boat with you. He doesn't always calm the storm because often there is a purpose to the storm.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 70

## Mark 5

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After crossing the lake, Jesus was immediately confronted by a demon possessed man. Demons have all the theological facts. The demons knew the true identity of Jesus—the Son of the Most High God—better than the religious leaders did. **They knew who Jesus is, but they are missing what?** The right heart. A surrendered heart, as opposed to a prideful, rebellious heart **If they know the truth, what is getting in their way of trusting the One they know about?** Angels are created beings. They rebelled and rejected their creator. Now they are separated from God. Unlike human beings, there is no plan of forgiveness and redemption for angels. God didn't become an angel and die for their sins. Once they've gone over to the dark side there is no returning.

**Why were the demons so terrified of Jesus (v. 7)?** They feared being tortured. They knew who He was. They knew that He had power over them and would judge them: *Even the demons believe—and shudder! (James 2:19).*

**What is the demon's name (v. 9)?** Legion.

**What is the significance of the word Legion?** When they replied, "Legion," they really weren't saying a name; they were implying a number. A Roman legion usually consisted of 6,000 men. The implication is that there were a lot of them. They were simply trying to intimidate Jesus with their large number.

**There was a herd of 2,000 pigs there. What does that tell us about the area (v. 13)?** This was a Gentile area. Decapolis (v. 20) is also a non-Hebrew (Greek) name.

**How did the Gerasenes react to Jesus after the exorcism (v. 17)?** They asked Him to leave their area. **Why?** They were afraid (v. 15). Fear of the unknown—this this the first time they had seen or perhaps even heard of Jesus. They didn't understand who He was. Coupled with their financial concern over losing 2,000 pigs.

**In the past Jesus has told demons and people He has healed to be quiet/not to tell anyone. Why did He instruct this man to go tell others about what the Lord had done for him (v. 19)?** Apparently there was little danger in this Gentile region that the people would create problems for Jesus' mission, as they did cause in Jewish territory<sup>1</sup> where the Jews were waiting for a Messiah. If the Jews realized who Jesus was, there could be an outright revolution to install Him as a political king, which would interfere with the timeline of His three-year journey to the Cross. Here among the Gentiles, He is not worried about any kind of uprising that could have any potential impact on His schedule. Perhaps He also wanted to spread the news that although He came primarily for the Jews, He was also here for the Gentiles.

Application: **Why did Jesus cross the lake?** His story showed the value of one life to Jesus, because this was the only reason why Jesus came to this side of the Sea of Galilee. And each one of us is just as important in the eyes of Jesus as that demon possessed man. His story also showed that with Jesus, no one is beyond hope or unimportant, because if this demon-possessed man could be changed, then anyone can.

### The story of Jairus (vv. 21-24, 35-43)

**How would you describe the mindset of Jairus (vv. 21-24)?** Desperate yet confident in Jesus' ability. God often uses desperation to draw us to Himself. Jairus, a prominent Jewish leader, falls at the feet of this "podunk rabbi" in a sign of true humility.

**Jesus, on His way to Jairus' home, is diverted by the bleeding woman (vv. 35-43).** Put yourself in Jairus' shoes. He is worried about his daughter in critical condition at home, her life slipping away. Then he gets the message, "Your daughter is dead." God is never late, but He often seems slow to the sufferer, the waiting, the needy.

**Jesus tells Jairus to do what two things (v. 36)?** First, stop being afraid. Secondly, Jesus told Jairus to only believe. **What was it that Jairus was supposed to believe?** Believe in Jesus. Believe that Jesus was in control of his daughter's life. The Greek word for "believe" is the verb form of the word for "faith." In that sense, believe is more than just mental assent, such as believing in the historical Jesus. Included in the word "believe" are the concepts of trust and commitment.

**Do you deal with any fears in life? What is the antidote to fear?** Put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ for \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank). Allow God to be a big God.

**How did Jesus raise the little girl from the dead (v. 41)? CPR?** With the power of God, Jesus spoke this girl back to life from the dead, *Little girl, I say to you, arise.*

**How did the crowd respond (v. 42)?** Everyone was completely astonished at Jesus' power. The Greek word for "astonished" literally means they were "out of their minds" with great amazement.

### **(vv. 25-34) A woman is healed of a hemorrhage**

**How would you describe the mindset of the woman?** She was in a desperate condition. Yet she is humble.

**She had been suffering from what was probably a menstrual bleeding condition for twelve years! What impact would this condition have had on her daily life?** She would be ceremonially and socially unclean. According to the Jewish law, if this woman touched anyone, she made that person ceremonially unclean, which would not allow that person to take part in any aspect of Israel's worship (Leviticus 15:19-31).

She was leading a life of rejection and loneliness: ostracized from all society, excommunicated from the synagogue services, shut out from the women's courts in the temple. She couldn't even come into contact with her old friends. Quite a burden to live under for twelve years!

**When Jesus passed by she touched His cloak and was healed (vv. 27-29).** He knew who she was but He made her go through this confession and identification exercise. The woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. **Why did Jesus take her through all this?**

- For the benefit of the woman. Jesus did it so that *she* would absolutely know that she was healed. That this was a legitimate permanent miracle. Otherwise she might begin to doubt. She might have thought, "I only touched His cloak. I wonder if that's good enough?"
- Jesus did it so *others* would know she was healed. This woman had an ailment that no one could see and which made her a public outcast. It would sound suspicious to many if she just announced that she was healed. They would think that she made it up just to be considered "clean" again.
- Jesus did it so that she would know *why* she was healed. When Jesus said, "Daughter, your faith has healed you" it showed the woman that it really wasn't touching the clothing of Jesus that healed her. This was not about the cloak. It was all about the object of her faith.
- Jesus did it because He didn't want her to think that she *stole* a blessing, that she could never look Jesus in the eye again. She didn't steal anything, she received it by faith and Jesus wanted her to know that.
- Jesus did it because He wanted to bless her in a special way. **What did He call her?** "Daughter." Jesus never called any other person by this name. Jesus wanted her to hear this special name of tenderness.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 75

## Mark 6

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**What was Jesus' hometown?** Nazareth. He was born in Bethlehem but raised in Nazareth.

**How did the people in his hometown describe/label Him (v. 3)?** *Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?* This was not a compliment; it was an insult. It was a way of pointing out that Jesus had no formal theological training. He was never a formal disciple of a rabbi, much less a prominent rabbi. He didn't make the religious cut.

**Why was Jesus not accepted in his hometown?** The town folks' neighborly relationship with Jesus and His family as well as His occupation as a carpenter made it hard for them to think of Him as anything more than a mere man. He was just a common worker in their eyes, as most of them were.

**What was the significance of their question: *Is not this... the son of Mary (v. 3)*?** This also was not a compliment. It was contrary to Jewish usage to describe a man as the son of his mother, even when she was a widow, except in insulting terms. Rumors to the effect that Jesus was illegitimate (born out of wedlock—someone other than Joseph was the father) appear to have circulated in his own lifetime and was likely behind this reference as well.

**What was the result of the people's refusal to believe in Jesus (v. 5)?** The Nazarenes' refusal to believe in Jesus resulted in His not being able to do miracles among them—no one came bringing the sick and lame. This is the only time Mark said that Jesus was amazed. He marveled that the unbelief of the Nazarenes was as strong as it was.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus also knew that He could not “wow” them into believing with miracles. Jesus refused to “perform” miracles in order to gain acceptance. He was willing to be rejected of men—both here in Nazareth and at the Cross.

Application: Have you ever encountered similar difficulty trying to share the gospel with family or old friends when going back to where you grew up? Have you ever faced that same rejection and ridicule?

**The twelve are sent out. Why did Jesus tell them not to take anything with them (vv. 7-13)?** Traveling light kept them dependent upon God and helped to prevent any potential sense of self-sufficiency. This was designed to be a faith testing experience. He has three years with these men and will then turn over the ministry to them. He was ratcheting up the training. He was in essence saying, “The training wheels are coming off men. I'm sending you out to do some of the same things you've seen me doing.”

**What was the main objective in sending them out (v. 12)?** They went out and preached. Some of the best, most effective proclaiming of the truth never happens inside a church. It happens when followers of Jesus are one-on-one with others, telling about what Jesus has done.

In the same sense we are sent out, each with a unique story to tell, which is perhaps our most powerful witnessing tool. The common denominator of our stories is, “I once was blind but now I see.” Most unbelievers don't really care about the parable of sower, feeding of 5,000, etc. They want to hear that God is real and has done incredible, life-changing things in your life and He loves you! God has to be an experiential God, not merely a philosophical God.

Application: Jesus sent the Twelve out on a specific mission. Do you sense God directing you to a specific ministry? Is God placing a particular passion in your heart?

**Mark reviewed the events leading up to the death of John the Baptist (vv.17-29).** There is some confusion about Jesus. **Who do they think He is?** Everything except that He's the Messiah.

**Who does Herod think Jesus is? (v. 16)** John the Baptist. **Why?** Herod was haunted by the memory and the guilt of having John beheaded.

**Herod had John the Baptist imprisoned because of Herodias. Why did Herodias hate John (vv. 17-19)?** John called out Herod for being married to her—his own brother’s wife. John was a man of character. He was not concerned with political correctness. When he preached repentance, John did not spare the rich and powerful. We behold in John an illustrious example of moral courage. And ultimately he paid the consequence of his moral courage with his life.

**Why would Herod agree to the demand of Herodias’ daughter (v. 26)?** Because Herod was afraid to cross his wife or lose face before his friends, he did something he knew to be wrong. What a contrast with John. We see here the antithesis of moral courage—cowardice.

Herod’s pride got him in trouble, as Pilate’s did later. Both of these rulers sacrificed a righteous and holy man on the altar of their personal popularity.<sup>2</sup>

**How did Jesus see the crowds (v. 34)?** He saw them as sheep without a shepherd and He was moved with compassion. Jesus knew that without a shepherd, sheep are in a lot of trouble. They can’t fend for themselves against predators, and they have a hard time finding the food and water they need. ~~(v. 34)~~ **How did Jesus respond to those He felt compassion toward?** He taught them many things. Their greatest need was to understand. Even though healing was what they really wanted.

**How would you describe the disciples’ attitude toward the crowd (v. 36)?** The disciples often saw the crowds as *work*, constantly demanding, getting in the way of their well-deserved rest. They wanted to send them away.

**He gathered the fish and loaves.....Why did Jesus give the bread to the disciples to distribute (v. 41)?** As an attitude check and/or teaching lesson. To give them firsthand experience in performing the miracle.

**What is the significance of twelve basketfuls left over (v. 43)?** Abundance and no waste. One basketful per disciple.

**A long difficult day spent ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of the multitude left Jesus exhausted. What did He do next (vv. 45-46)?** That hard day drove Jesus *to* prayer, not *from* prayer.

**What was the disciples’ reaction to seeing Jesus walking on the water (vv. 49-50)? Cool?”** They thought He was a ghost and they were terrified. And completely amazed.

**To what does Mark attribute the fact that they were completely amazed (v. 52) ?** Their hearts were hard. The disciples had not gained any understanding from the feeding of the 5,000 that Jesus was God. Their collective mind was not open to this possibility.<sup>3</sup>

Application: Do you ever feel like you’re rowing/straining against the wind in life? That life is an ordeal? Unbeknown to the disciples, Jesus saw their difficulty and took care of them. He rescued His disciples from working in futility. In doing so He assured them that He was in fact in control, and that He would always lovingly be there to help them fulfill what He commanded.

**(vv. 54-56) How did the people of Gennesaret respond to Jesus’ arrival?** With eager, welcoming hearts.

**What did Jesus have to offer the masses like these people?** Hope!

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 83

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 90

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 97

## Mark 7

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Here we have another official delegation coming from Jerusalem to check out Jesus (v. 1-5). The concept of Jewish religious leaders evaluating Jesus' ministry was fine. In theory, these religious leaders were responsible for the spiritual well-being of the nation which included protecting Israel from a potential false prophet or false messiah. Their motives may be questionable, though, because they immediately found something to criticize Jesus for.

**What did the Pharisees criticize him for (v. 5)?** Eating without (ceremonially) washing their hands.

**There is no biblical mandate for hand washing. Where did they get the standard they used to judge Jesus and his disciples?** Their oral traditions. They did not evaluate Jesus against God's Word. They had so distorted the law that their traditions were considered by the scribes and Pharisees to be as binding as the Law of Moses itself, if not more so.

Note: According to tradition, for these ceremonial washings, special stone vessels of water were kept, because ordinary water might be unclean. To wash your hands in a special way, you started by taking at least enough of this water to fill one and one-half egg shells. Then, you poured the water over your hands, starting at the fingers and running down towards your wrist. Then you cleansed each palm by rubbing the fist of the other hand into it. Then you poured water over your hands again, this time from the wrist towards the fingers. A *really* strict Jew would do this not only before the meal, but also between each course.

**Is there anything wrong with tradition?** Nothing is wrong with tradition unless it trumps the truth of the Bible. When tradition becomes binding and/or when it becomes law and supersedes scripture, it is wrong. Our sole authority in the way we live our lives has to be the Bible. Not my church, my pastor, my denomination, etc.

**What are some examples of traditions in our churches today?** Communion style and frequency (Jesus did it Thursday night at dinner). Baptism type. Music style. No alcohol. No R-rated movies.

Application: Not everything in the Christian life is a matter of right and wrong, black and white. Some things are simply matters of personal conscience before God. The Scriptures do not command ritual washing before meals. If you want to do it, then fine. Do it unto the Lord (between you and God) and without a sense of spiritual superiority—don't look down on your brothers and sisters who don't share your convictions.

You cannot legislate obedience to God's Word. That can easily evolve into legalism.

**What were the harsh words Jesus had to say about their tradition (v. 6-8)?** *This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* They appear to be religious or spiritual but actually are far from God. They talk the talk but they don't walk the walk. They have a heart problem.

**He accused them of being what (v. 6)?** Hypocrites. The word for "hypocrite" in the ancient Greek language referred to "an actor" or "someone who wears a mask." The image they try to project is different than what they actually are.

**He gives them a practical example of their hypocrisy (v. 11-12). What is the Corban issue all about?** Jewish tradition permitted people to declare something they owned as Corban or "dedicated to God" and therefore inaccessible for everyday needs. Their perspective was, "I'm sorry Mom and Dad but I can't help you out financially because all my money is devoted to God—until or unless I need it for something."

**What biblical principle does that violate?** The 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment. The Old Testament clearly lays out the responsibility of children to honor their parents. The New Testament did not change that standard.

The Mosaic Law defined certain animals as unclean: pig, rabbit, shrimp, etc. (Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14). If the Jewish people ate unclean animals they became unclean and couldn't participate in Jewish celebrations including



the Sabbath and had to go through a ceremonial cleansing ritual administered by a priest which may have required as many as seven days to become clean again.

**Jesus explained the aim of the Mosaic Law when it came to clean vs. unclean food (v. 14-23). What was the principle He was laying out?** Uncleanness was not a result of eating unclean food. Uncleanness is a sin issue. It was a result of disobeying God's word not because of anything they ate. In essence Jesus said, "You're unclean because of the evil that comes out of your heart in the form of one of these ~~13~~ thirteen sins."

**What is the significance of Jesus traveling fifty miles north to Tyre (v. 24)?** It was Gentile country. Even though His focus was on the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 15:24), Jesus increased His ministry to the Gentiles as He experienced increasing rejection from the Jews. If his own people would not listen, then Jesus would fulfill the mission foretold by ~~Is~~ in Isaiah (Is-49:6): *I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.* Jesus is fulfilling that prophecy by engaging the Gentile communities.

**The woman who heard about Jesus and sought Him out was a Gentile (v. 25-30).** A demon was afflicting her young daughter, and she begged Jesus to drive the demon out. Her persistent request for help demonstrated her faith in Jesus. She believed Jesus could heal her.<sup>1</sup>

**What did Jesus mean when He said, *Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs* (v. 27)?** Jesus seems to discourage the woman, reminding her that the children (the Jewish people) have priority over the dogs (Gentiles like her) when it comes to His mission/ministry.

The term dogs here does not refer to wild dogs (scavenging animals roaming around the countryside) but to small dogs taken in as house pets. It is thus not a derogatory term per se, but is instead intended by Jesus to indicate the privileged position of the Jews (especially his disciples) as the initial recipients of Jesus' ministry.

**How did the woman respond (v. 28)?** She understood. The woman recognized that the Jews were a higher priority when it came to Jesus' ministry. In essence she said, "Just like the pet dogs get the table scraps, I'm willing to take the crumbs that fall off the table, the leftovers, anything you have to offer. She identified herself with the dogs (humility).

**Why was Jesus pleased with the woman's response (v. 29)?** The woman displayed strong faith, humility (her willingness to accept whatever Jesus would offer) and persistence. Her response pleased him to such an extent that he granted her request. She serves as a model for us on how to approach Jesus.

**Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears (v. 33). Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. Why would Jesus use such an unusual way of healing?** Jesus used many different ways of healing. He healed with a word, healed without a word, healed in response to one's faith, healed in response to the faith of another, healed those who asked, and He healed those He approached. He healed four blind men differently.

They begged him to "lay his hand" on him. Jesus didn't want to be tied down to any one "method." It's not about the method, but rather all about the sovereign power of God. You cannot put Jesus in a box. He is totally unpredictable.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark*, 2014 Edition (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 102

## Mark 8

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**Have the disciples seen anything like this feeding of the masses previously (v. 1-10)?** Yes (Mark 6:30).

**Did the disciples clearly remember the earlier lessons they had learned?** They had arranged the 5,000 people in groups, distributed the food, cleaned up twelve basketfuls, and they didn't remember a thing. We can imagine Jesus hoping one of the disciples might say, "Jesus, this rings a bell; didn't we do something like this before."

**Did Jesus rebuke the disciples at this time? No What does that say about Jesus?** He is gracious and merciful.

Application: Have you ever experienced God's patience? Has He ever had to teach you the same lesson more than once? It's easy to criticize the disciples for their response. But when we truly acknowledge how patient Jesus is when we lack faith or are slow to understand, then we can sympathize identify with these disciples' struggles.

**Why did the Pharisees ask Jesus to show them a miracle, a sign from heaven (v. 11)?** To test Him. To see if He really was who He claimed to be. This demand for a "special" sign was an extreme example of the arrogance and pride of the Pharisees towards Jesus. Haven't they seen enough signs already? **How did Jesus respond ? (v. 12)?** You're not getting a sign. This is not a sideshow at the carnival!

**What did Jesus mean when he said, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod"? Yeast was a common metaphor for what (v. 15)?** Corruption or evil or sin that spreads like yeast as it permeates the whole loaf of bread. The yeast in this case was the pervasively corrupt teaching of the Pharisees (distortion of Scripture, rules, legalism) that spreads slowly and quietly and affects everything it touches, i.e. the hearts and minds of the people. The leaven of Herod would include skepticism, immorality and worldliness.

**How did the disciples react when Jesus spoke of the two leavenings (v. 16)?** They were clueless. The disciples didn't relate it to a spiritual idea at all. All they could think of was the bread that goes into the stomach.

**This time Jesus strongly confronted His disciples over their lack of understanding. In view of the two miraculous feedings they had witnessed, they should have understood who He was. Why didn't they understand (v. 17-21)?** Their hearts were hard: *And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened (Mark 6:51-52).*

**Why are their hearts hard?** Because of humanity's Fall in the Garden of Eden. We are born with hard hearts: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9).* **When will their hearts be softened so they will be able to understand?** At Pentecost (Acts 2). Their hearts will be filled with the Holy Spirit: *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26).* **When is our Pentecost?**

**Jesus opened the eyes of the blind on four different occasions. This was the most prevalent type of miracle He did. What strikes you as unique about this miracle (v. 27-29)?** This is the only "gradual" or "progressive" healing described in the ministry of Jesus. It took place in stages.

**But who do people say I am? Jesus asked this question as an introduction/lead-in to a more important follow-up question, which was what?** "But who do *you* say that I am?" It was fine for the disciples to know what others thought about Jesus; but Jesus had to ask them, as individuals, what they believed about Jesus. He personalized the question. Peter got it right, but he still didn't understand everything. His understanding was incomplete. He knew who Jesus was, but he knew nothing of the Cross or what the future would hold for Jesus.

Application: **Who do you say He is?** He's the one who died in my place. He's the one who shed his blood to cover my sins. He's the one who opened the gates of heaven for me. He is my Lord and Savior. This is the most important question each one of us will ever answer.

**What was Jesus mission that He revealed so plainly (v. 31-32)?** To come and suffer, be rejected and die—and and then rise again. He’s talked about it before, but now He’s teaching them by speaking plainly and directly —no parables, no vagueness.

**This was an unbelievable shock to everyone. Why?** They were expecting or hoping that Jesus was the national and political messiah who would come and throw off the Roman oppression and set up His earthly kingdom. The disciples were unprepared for this clear revelation that Messiah would suffer, die and rise again.

**After Jesus declared his mission to die and then rise again, Peter took him aside and rebuked Jesus. What does that say about Peter (v. 32)?** Peter loved Jesus and was devoted to Jesus, but he was far too confident in his own understanding. He thought he had this “Messiah thing” figured out. He was bold, unafraid, and sincere—and wrong.

*Charles H. Spurgeon: Peter was openhearted, bold, enthusiastic. To my mind, there is something very lovable about Peter; and, in my opinion, we need more Peters in the church today. Though they are rash and impulsive, yet there is fire in them, and there is steam in them, so that they keep us going.*

**Jesus rebuked Peter in public. Why did Jesus refer to Peter as Satan? What’s He saying/His message (v. 33)?** “Don’t get in my way Peter. I’m on a mission from the Father. You’re doing the same thing as Satan—getting in my way.” Peter is trying to abort Christ’s mission—stop Him from going to the cross. Peter is still focused on the wrong concept of a political Messiah. Peter is standing in opposition to God's will in favor of the popular messianic idea.

Then he called the crowd to Himself along with his disciples (v. 8:34-38). He said, *If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.* Jesus warns those who want to follow Him. It was bad enough for the disciples to hear that Jesus would suffer, be rejected and die on a cross. Now Jesus tells them that they must walk that very same road that He would walk.

**In our day and age, what does it mean for us to deny ourselves and take up our cross?** Denying self means to live as an others-centered person—an unselfish life, giving our lives to Jesus completely. Willingness to suffer and die for the Lord’s sake. Becoming a servant. *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20).* Mother Theresa is perhaps a good example.

Application: One question we are all faced with—are we willing to take up our cross and follow Jesus? No matter the cost? No matter what He asks you to do? In reality most of us want the best of both worlds. Yes, I want to follow Jesus, but can I bring my shiny stuff + my comforts + my pleasures along?

Jim Elliott: *He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.*

**What does it mean to save your life (v. 35)?** Jesus meant that if a person wants to retain control of his or her life now, he or she will suffer the loss of something more valuable in the future. Conversely, if a person will relinquish control of his or her life to follow God's will faithfully, he or she will gain something of greater ultimate worth (eternal life).<sup>1</sup>

**If someone is ashamed of Christ what might that look like (v. 38)?** Being unwilling to speak up, a chameleon—someone who blends in with their surroundings, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 119

## Mark 9

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**What is Jesus referring to when He says, *some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power (9:1)*?** The Transfiguration. Peter, James and John were the “some” Jesus was referring to.

**Jesus led Peter, James and John up a mountain (v. 2).** He took on a stunning new appearance right before their eyes: *And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them (Mark 9:3).*

**What did the Transfiguration represent? What was Jesus doing?** He took on the form of deity thus revealing His glory to the three disciples. Based on 2 Peter 1:16, Matthew 24:30 and Mark 8:38 the transfiguration is interpreted as a glimpse of the future glory of the Son of God at His second coming. A second interpretation based on John 1:14 and Philippians 2:6-9 might indicate that the transfiguration represents the glory of the preincarnate Son of God. Jesus is in essence saying to them, “Since I came to earth as a man, my glory has been concealed, but now I’m going to let you take a peek. I’m going to let you see what I will look like in all My glory when I return.” The Greek word for transfiguration, *metamorphoo*, from which we get our word “metamorphosis,” describes a complete change of form and substance—like going from a caterpillar to a butterfly.

Jesus had just told His disciples some hard news—that He would suffer, be rejected, and die on a cross (8:31) and they too must walk that very same road that He walked (8:34). Imagine how the disciples must have felt upon hearing that! It would have been easy for them to lose confidence in Jesus after such a “negative” statement. The Transfiguration would address their fear and confidence issues.

**What was the purpose of Moses and Elijah showing up (v. 4)?** When they saw Moses (who died 1,400 years earlier) and Elijah (who died 900 years earlier) right in front of them, the disciples saw evidence of life beyond this life. These two men were alive. It gave them visible proof of the resurrection. It gave them confidence in Jesus’ claim to resurrection. They could now approach their mission with no fear! Some say He was joined by Moses and Elijah as a sign that He was about to fulfill the Law (which Moses represented) and the Prophets (which Elijah represented). **How does Peter respond (v. 5)?** He was apparently uncomfortable with the pregnant silence, so instead of saying nothing, he blurts out. We also see that Peter spoke out of fear: *they fell on their faces and were terrified (v. 6).*

**Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them. What was the symbolism of the cloud to the Jewish people (v. 7)?** This is a familiar cloud, the sign of God’s presence. It was the pillar of cloud that guided Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22) and the cloud, which enveloped the Tabernacle as well (Numbers 9:15). **How did God tell the disciples to respond to Jesus?** This is my Son whom I love—so *listen* to Him.

**What does listening to Jesus mean to you? What are some of the ways we can listen?** Taking time to be quiet. Quit talking. Meditate. **What is chief way He speaks to us?** Through the written Word of God—the Bible.

**What’s the reasoning behind the statement, *Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come (v. 11)*?** The coming of Elijah before the Messiah is clearly prophesied: *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes (Malachi 4:5).* So the disciples are probably wondering, “If Jesus is the Messiah, then where is Elijah?” **There is a sense in which Elijah has already come. What is that?** He has come in the person of John the Baptist, fulfilling the prophecies about Elijah coming. John was not a reincarnation of Elijah, but he did minister in the role and spirit of Elijah. John the Baptist was a type or a picture of Elijah.

**What’s going through the worried father’s mind (vv. 14-24)? Where is he spiritually?** The father voiced his confidence in Jesus, imperfect as it was, and asked Jesus to strengthen his faith. He was an unbelieving believer, namely, a believer whose faith was weak.<sup>1</sup> And he was desperate.

Application: Do you have any areas of unbelief? Areas in which your faith is weak?

**Jesus had previously given His disciples power to cast out demons (3:15), and they had done so successfully (6:13). But here (v. 28-29) they are unable to do so. Why couldn't the disciples cast the demon out?** Evidently they were ineffective because they believed that the power to cast out demons, that Jesus had given them, was now inherent in (part of) themselves. It was not. It was still God's power, and it came directly from Him. Therefore they needed to acknowledge their dependence on Him, for power, in order to be successful.<sup>2</sup> They were trying to do things in their own strength.

**What were the disciples arguing about (v. 33-34)?** Who would be the greatest. They all counted on Jesus to take over the world as "King Messiah," and the debate was about who was most worthy to be Jesus' chief associate. **What does this indicate?** They still had a wrong understanding of the concept of kingdom. It was not to be a political kingdom. There are no cabinet positions up for grabs. They also had a pride problem.

**What did Jesus mean by, *If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all* (v. 35)?** The way to be first was to voluntarily take the lowest place of service and live for others instead of self. Greatness in His kingdom depends on sacrificial service. The desire to be praised and to gain recognition should be foreign to a follower of Jesus. Jesus wants us to embrace last as a choice, allowing others to be preferred before us. This was a lesson in humility, which the disciples needed.

**Why did Jesus use a child as an illustration of true greatness in the Kingdom of God (vv. 36-37)?** In that day and culture, a child was the least significant person. Children were regarded more as property than individuals. It was understood that they were to be seen and not heard. By using "a child" as His object lesson, Jesus was saying that service involves caring about people, even insignificant people such as children.

**What was John's concern (v. 38)?** It had to frustrate John and the other disciples that a stranger, not one of them, and yet apparently a follower of Jesus, successfully cast out demons, when they had just failed (v. 18).

**How did Jesus respond (vv. 39-40)?** "Don't stop him. If he has enough faith in Me to use My name (motive) in casting out demons, he is on My side." There are many that may be wrong in some aspect of their presentation or teaching, yet they still set forth a biblical Jesus in some manner. The power of the gospel does not depend on the preacher's personality or methodology. The Gospel will have its way in the hearts and minds of the people who hear.

**Application for us today?** Street preachers

**Jesus is talking about how to deal with sin (v. 43-48). What is the problem with taking Jesus' words literally?** The problem is that bodily mutilation does not go far enough in controlling sin. My body parts do not cause me to sin. Sin is more a matter of the heart than of any particular limb or organ.

**Since we can't take Him literally, what message is He trying to convey?** Sin can often be conquered only by radical action. We should take prompt and decisive action against anything that might lead us away from our allegiance to Jesus. Be intentional when it comes to battling sin. Take the battle seriously.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 124

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 125

## Mark 10

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**What was Jesus' primary focus here as well as during his entire ministry (v. 1)?** Teaching the people the truths of the Kingdom. The greatest need of the people was to understand.

**Here we have another entourage coming to check out Jesus (v. 2). What were the motives of the Pharisees in asking Jesus their question?** The Pharisees are trying to get Jesus to speak against Moses (Scriptures) and/or against popular thought. They hope they have Him trapped between a rock and a hard place.

**How did Jesus answer the Pharisees question (v. 3)?** Jesus responded in typical rabbinic fashion with another question. He asked the Pharisees what Moses—the authority whom they all professed to recognize—taught. For the answer Jesus sent them to God's Word rather than debating traditional rabbinical interpretations which the Pharisees treated as authoritative.<sup>1</sup>

**Why did the Mosaic law (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) permit divorce (v. 4)?** It was a concession to the hardness of their hearts (v. 5). Divorce was never looked upon favorably by God, but was permitted because of the hardness of heart of either offending or offended party.

~~The law of~~ That law in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was really given as a *protection* to the divorced wife. Moses permitted divorce, providing a certificate of divorce was given to the wife. Its primary function was to provide a degree of protection for the woman who had been repudiated by her husband. It protected the divorced woman from any charge of adultery, which was punishable by death. It also, in effect, gave legal permission for the woman to remarry.

**They were asking about divorce (v. 6). How does Jesus change their focus?** Jesus now transitions from a talk about divorce to a talk about marriage.

**What is God's perspective on marriage/divorce (vv. 7-9)?** What God has joined together is spiritually binding before God. God's clear preference was no divorce (Malachi 2:16; Matthew 19:8). Marriage is not merely a social contract; it's a covenant between a husband, a wife, and God.

Jesus' disciples also asked Him again about the same matter (v. 10). This is not a two-verse teaching of all there is to know about divorce and remarriage. We can only understand this passage by taking into account the whole counsel of God on the subject of divorce: Matthew 19:9, for example.

**What was the disciples' attitude toward the children (vv. 13-16)?** In that day, a child was the least significant person. Children were regarded more as property than individuals. It was understood that they were to be seen and not heard. Children were unimportant, insignificant, an annoyance.

**How did Jesus respond (vv. 14-15)? What was His attitude toward the children?** He holds them up. They are valuable, important. They are examples of how we must enter the kingdom—with a childlike faith.

**What was the focus of the rich young man's question: *what must I do to inherit eternal life* (v. 17)?** The rich young man obviously did not believe that he had eternal life and wanted to know what he needed to *do* in order to get it. He thought eternal life was a matter of earning and deserving, as opposed to a matter of relationship.

**How did Jesus respond (v. 19)? What did He tell him to do?** Jesus gave him six of the Ten Commandments to follow to inherit eternal life. The six commands Jesus mentioned are easily verifiable in conduct. They are aimed at our relationships with our fellow man. The other four are aimed at our relationship with God.

**At the end of the exchange, what was the man's response (v. 22)?** He went away sad. Note that Jesus loved the man even though He knew the man was going to reject Him and walk away. This is the only time in the Gospels when someone was called to follow Jesus and did not do so.<sup>2</sup>

**What was the rich man's underlying problem?** Essentially, this man was an idolater. Wealth was his God.

**Why were the disciples amazed (v. 24)?** The disciples' amazement arose from the popular belief that riches were a result of God's blessing for righteousness [Solomon, Job]. They thought riches were an advantage, not a disadvantage in one's relationship with God.<sup>3</sup>

**Rather than rebuking Peter's self-centered comment, Jesus graciously promised Him what (v. 28)?** Disciples who have decided to follow Jesus wholeheartedly can anticipate great blessing in this age (along with persecution). Whatever we have given up for Him will be returned to us many times over in this age and in the age to come.

**What was the meaning of v. 31?** The desire to be praised and to gain recognition should be foreign to a follower of Christ. Jesus wants us to embrace last as a choice, allowing others to be preferred before us, and not because we are forced to be last. This verse is a call to humility.

**This is the third and final time Jesus told His disciples that He was going to die and rise again (v. 32-34).**

**Why were they were astonished?** Jesus was walking into an ambush as He headed for Jerusalem—deliberately and without fear. They were afraid of what He described that lay ahead. The disciples are to be commended for continuing to follow Jesus. In spite of astonishment, fear, confusion and uncertainty, they followed.

**How would you characterize the question asked by James and John of Jesus (vv. 35-37)?** Their request seems almost incredible. They wanted Jesus to give them "whatever" they requested: carte blanche. When asked what that might be, they explained that they wanted the positions of highest honor in Jesus' messianic kingdom. The person who sat on a ruler's "right" hand side enjoyed the highest assigned position, and the person who sat on his "left," the second highest. These brothers obviously believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and they thought He was going to establish His kingdom soon, probably when they reached Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup>

**What was the cup (v. 38)?** God's wrath. The punishment Jesus was going to bear for the sins of the human race.

**What was the baptism of Jesus (v. 38)?** His suffering and dying.

**How would you describe the reaction of the other ten disciples (v. 41)? Their selfish ambition comes through loud and clear.** They wanted to be equally considered for the (non-existent) prestigious positions.

Jesus tells them how to be great—for God (v. 43). He clarified the method for obtaining greatness in the Kingdom.

**What do you need to become if you want to be great in the kingdom of God?** A servant. This is the paradox of the Kingdom of God. **Who is the ultimate servant model for us?** Jesus

**What if you want to be great (for God) in the neighborhood or workplace? How do you do that?** Principles for servant leadership are God's principles and they apply everywhere. In the Kingdom community, status, money and popularity are not the prerequisites for leadership. Humble service is the greatest (and only) prerequisite as displayed by Jesus' own ministry.

**How would you describe Bartimaeus (v. 46-52)?** Persistent and determined. People tried to shut him up but they couldn't. He wasn't discouraged because no one led him to Jesus nor by those who told him to stay away.

**What was Bartimaeus asking for (v. 47)?** The blind man knew what he needed from Jesus—mercy. He didn't come thinking that God owed him. He wasn't negotiating. All he wanted from Jesus was mercy.

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 133

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, pp. 139

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, pp. 139

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, pp. 152

## Mark 11

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**Jesus—the King, long-awaited Messiah, and Savior of world—entered Jerusalem riding on a colt of a donkey (v. 2-7). He deliberately chose a colt—not a stallion, nor a chariot. Why a colt?** To fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 written 500 years before: *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

**For most of His ministry, Jesus discouraged people from publicly celebrating Him as the Messiah. “Don’t tell anyone” is a familiar command we have heard from Jesus (Mt. 9:30; Mark 1:43-44, 5:43, 7:36). But here, Jesus allows public praise and adoration as the Messiah (v. 9-10). Why did Jesus no longer discourage praise from the people?** Because His time had finally come.

Jesus had repeatedly said, “My time is not yet come” (John 2:4, 7:6). Jesus was on a three-year journey to the Cross. He was unable to adjust the time frame as set by God the Father. He was sensitive to the schedule. The time was now right.

The praises were not for His sake; it isn’t that Jesus has a self-esteem problem and needs our affirmation. Jesus wants to be praised because *we need* to praise Him. Praising Him is for *our* benefit. Our hearts need to declare His greatness, recognize/appreciate Him for who He is.

If you described Jesus’ “triumphal entry” to Roman, they would have laughed in your face. For them, a triumphal entry was an honor granted to a Roman general who won a complete and decisive victory and had killed at least 5,000 enemy soldiers. When the general returned to Rome, they had an elaborate parade. First came the treasures captured from the enemy, then the prisoners. His armies marched by unit by unit, and finally the general rode in a golden chariot pulled by magnificent horses. Priests burned incense in his honor, and the crowds shouted his name and praised him. The procession ended at the arena, where some of the prisoners were thrown to wild animals for the entertainment of the crowd. *That* was a triumphal entry, not a Galilean peasant sitting on a saddle made out of a few cloaks and riding on a donkey.

**So why do we call this event the “triumphal entry”?** The Roman general is looking back and celebrating victory in battle but Jesus is looking ahead. He is on his way to the victory at the Cross—a triumph over Satan (victory over sin). That victory plus the resurrection (victory over death) are the greatest triumphs of all time.

**What was the point of the fig tree encounter (v. 13-14)? What was the message Jesus was trying to get across?** The religious leaders were impressive on the outside, like the leaves on the tree, but when you looked closely there was no spiritual fruit of righteousness. They were hypocrites. The fig tree paints a picture of hypocrisy which was a prime fault of the leaders of the nation of Israel. The tree looked good and held the promise of fruit but there were no figs. They look good on the outside but there was nothing there. They were empty on the inside.

Essentially, the tree was a picture of “false advertising.” The leaves said, “There are figs here,” but the figs weren’t there. This tree was cursed because it professed to have fruit but did not.

Application: Jesus warned Israel (and us) of God’s displeasure when they have the *appearance* of fruit, but not the fruit itself. When we look good, act good, but have nothing of spiritual substance inside—we are no different than the hypocritical religious leaders Jesus confronted.

Every Jewish male had to come to Jerusalem for three pilgrimage festivals every year. They had to pay a yearly temple tax—an amount equaling about two days pay. They had to buy animals to sacrifice. It all had to be paid in the currency of the temple, and the money exchangers would change their money for the temple money. They performed a valuable function.

**So why did Jesus drive them out of the temple (v. 15)?** They were profiteers in cooperation with the priests and robbed the pilgrims blind by forcing them to purchase “approved” sacrificial animals and currencies at



outrageously inflated rates. And they did this in the outer courts of the temple, the only area where Gentiles could come and pray. Therefore, this place of prayer was made into a flea market and a dishonest one at that! God intended the temple to be a house of prayer for *all* nations (v. 17).

**Peter was impressed with the power of Jesus (v. 21).** Jesus goes on to say in essence, “That fig tree incident will pale in comparison to what you are going to be able to do.” Then he starts talking about throwing mountains into the sea.

**Nobody is literally throwing mountains into the sea. What is the point Jesus is trying to make in (v. 22-24)?** The point was that dependent trust in God can accomplish humanly impossible things through prayer.<sup>1</sup>

We should not interpret Mark 11:24 to mean, ‘If you pray hard enough and really believe and don’t doubt, God will give you whatever you want. That kind of faith is not faith in God; rather it is nothing but faith in faith, or faith in feelings.

**And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses (v. 25). Why?** A lack of faith is one thing that will hinder our prayers (v. 23-24). A spirit of unforgiveness and bitterness can likewise hinder our prayers (v. 25). If we expect to receive God’s forgiveness we need to first forgive those who have wronged us.

**The “chief priests,” teachers or “scribes,” and “elders” constituted the three components of the Sanhedrin (v. 27-28).** This was a very official inquiry prompted by Jesus’ presence and made necessary by His cleansing of the temple.<sup>2</sup>

**What was their concern with Him (v. 28)?** Israel’s official leaders wanted to know about Jesus’ credentials and who gave Him the right to say and do what He did. They questioned the nature and source of His authority. Their questions were legitimate, since the leaders were responsible for supervising Israel’s religious life. Yet their question was a challenge to Jesus’ honor.<sup>3</sup>

**Jesus answers their questions with a question. What was Jesus trying to accomplish (v. 29-30)?** The Lord’s question was not a trap. It was not designed to humiliate; it was yet another opportunity for them to realize and confess their blindness and ask for sight. He was trying to open their eyes to their foolish thinking.

**(v. 33) What did their response to His question reveal about them?** Their response exposed the fact that these men were not sincere seekers of truth. They cared mostly about scoring rhetorical points in debate and in pleasing the crowds. They cared little about knowing the truth. The critics’ concern for their own position rather than for the truth is obvious in their refusal to answer Jesus. Clearly they rejected both John and Jesus as God’s authorized prophets.

Essentially, Jesus asked these leaders if they believed God was behind John’s ministry. If John was from God, then he was right about Jesus, that He was the Messiah. If what John said was true, then Jesus had all authority. The other option was for the leaders to say “No,” which would infuriate the crowd and in turn pose a threat to their prestige, status and power/control over the people. They were between a rock and a hard place.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 154

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 155

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 155

## Mark 12

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**Define parable.** An earthly story with a spiritual meaning.

**Who are the players in this parable?** Man/owner = God. Vineyard = nation of Israel. Farmers/tenants = Israel's leaders. Servants = prophets. Son = Jesus.

**The man (owner) sent his servant to receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the farmers who were renting the vineyard. How did the farmers receive him (v. 2-3)?** They beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Note that the farmers didn't own the vineyard. A generous owner allowed them to work in his vineyard.

**Who was the final messenger (v. 6)?** The Son/heir. There would be no other. Either they would accept the message, respond correctly to the Son, or face certain judgment. This was the supreme test for the tenant farmers.

**They killed the son (v. 9). What was owners/God's response?** Judgment. He killed the farmers.

**This parable is addressed to the Jewish religious leaders. What is the spiritual meaning of the parable for them?** It was an illustration of the wicked treatment Israel's leaders had given the servants (the prophets) whom God had sent to them. And to let them know that Jesus was aware of their murderous plot to kill Him.

**How did the Jewish leaders react to the parable (v. 12)?** They knew He had spoken the parable against them. They reacted by plotting to arrest and ultimately murder Jesus instead of repenting before Him. Instead of an attitude of "let's ponder His message," theirs was "let's kill the messenger."

**Another group of leaders came to question Jesus (v. 13). They appealed to His nonexistent ego with flattering comments—which happened to be true (v. 14). Why did Jesus label them as hypocrites (v. 15)?** Their hearts were not pure. Their motives were not pure. They were not asking because they wanted to know the answer. They were trying to trap Him.

**If He agreed the tax should be paid, what effect would that have on the Israelites?** In their eyes He would be denying the sovereignty of God over Israel, and He would lose popular support and alienate the people.

**If Jesus agreed that the tax should not be paid, what effect would that have on the Romans?** He would be openly declaring Himself to be an enemy of Rome and would be treated like a revolutionary.

**What's the message of v. 17?** If we take advantage of the benefits of governmental rule, we are obliged to submit to government, as long as it does not infringe upon our service to God. Be a good law-abiding citizen (Romans 13:1-7).

**What do we know about the Sadducees (v. 18-27)?** The Sadducees were mainly wealthy, influential and educated Jews—the property owning class. The liberals of the day. They limited their beliefs to what was prescribed in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible). They observed their own set of traditions which were different from those of the Pharisees. For example, they did not believe in the resurrection, immortality, spirits or angels.

They were very ready to cooperate with the Romans, which, of course, enabled them to maintain their privileged political position while angering their fellow Jews.

**With their ridiculous question, they wanted to make the idea of resurrection seem absurd (v. 24-25). How does Jesus respond?** He informs them that the marriage relationship does not continue in heaven. Things won't be the same. Heaven will be much more than just a glorious version of earth.

**Regarding resurrection, what is the significance of Jesus' statement, *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob* (v. 26)?** If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not continue to live after death, He would

have to say that He *was* their God. But here, Jesus quotes from Exodus 3:6 where God says that He *is* their God, speaking in the present tense and thus proving there is a resurrection of the dead.

Since the Sadducees said the true Bible only contained the first five books of the Old Testament, that is why Jesus proved the legitimacy of the resurrection from this passage in Exodus 3, one of the books of the Bible the Sadducees said was genuine.

**How did the Sadducees respond?** There was no apparent response from the Sadducees. They were stumped once again by Jesus' wisdom.

**Which commandment is the most important of all (v. 28)?** The rabbis counted 613 commands in the Mosaic Law, 365 positive and 248 negative.<sup>1</sup> **How did Jesus respond to the question?** Instead of promoting one command over another, Jesus defined the Law in its essence by quoting two Old Testament sources—Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18. In other words, the two greatest commandments are not something new that Jesus just invented. In this, we see what God really wants from man is love—love God with everything you have and love your neighbor as yourself.

**Why are these are the two greatest commandments?** These are the greatest commandments, in that they summarize the two basic responsibilities regarding the Law: our duties toward God and our duties those toward other people. These are basic human responsibilities. The termination of the Mosaic Code does not invalidate them.<sup>2</sup>

**Was the scribe's response to Jesus on the mark (v. 32-33)?** Yes. It is easy to think that religious ceremony and devotion are more important than love for God and our neighbor but that isn't the case as the teacher discerned.

**What did Jesus mean that the scribe was not far from entering the kingdom (v. 34)?** His openness to Scriptural revelation and his positive orientation to Jesus, if continued, would bring him to faith in Jesus and ultimately entrance into His kingdom.<sup>3</sup> He knew the Scriptures but he didn't personally know the author of the Scriptures quite yet.

**If these are the two greatest commandments, what role do they play in our lives?**

**What is Jesus doing in this section (starting at v. 35)?** Teaching. Since Jesus is the Christ, here He speaks of Himself. He's getting to the heart of the matter: "Do you really know who I am?" Jesus' primary ministry was to teach the people. Their greatest need was to understand.

**Is Jesus the son of David or the Lord of David (v. 35-37)?** Yes. The Old Testament clearly taught that Jesus would be a descendant of David in His humanity (2 Samuel 7:8-16). David also described Jesus as his Lord in His deity. As Revelation 22:16 says, *He is both the root and offspring of David.*

**What are some of the principles/applications (v. 41-44)?** A gift's value is determined by the *spirit* in which it is given. God doesn't want grudgingly given money or guilt money. God loves the cheerful giver.

God does not need our money. If God needed our money, then how much we give would be more important than our heart in giving. Instead, it is our privilege to give to Him, and we need to give because it is good for us, not because it is good for God. Generous giving reveals where our hearts are.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 162

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 164

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp. 164

## Mark 13

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**What was the disciples' attitude toward the temple (vv. 1-4)?** Awe. The disciples seem like tourists.

The Jewish people were justifiably proud of this great building. It was one of the magnificent structures of the ancient world. It was the center of Jewish life for almost a thousand years. For many Jews of that day, the temple had become an idol. It subtly got to the point where it began to mean more to the people than God Himself. Then Jesus rocks their world: *Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.*

**What was Jesus prophesying (v. 2)?** The destruction of the temple. **When was it destroyed?** 70 A.D., by the Romans. Seven years after the expansion was completed. The original temple was built by Solomon and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar during the Babylonian captivity. It was rebuilt by Zerubbabel during the time of Ezra. The temple was greatly expanded by Herod the Great. Herod's rebuilding started in 19 B.C. and was not completed until 63 A.D., taking more than eighty years.

**On the heels of Jesus' stark comment about the temple, The disciples ask Jesus two crucial questions (v. 4): When will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?** Jesus doesn't answer their questions directly. He largely ignores the "when" question. He does answer the "what" question by pointing to signs that will be related to the end times.

NOTE: Recognizing that the study of the end times (eschatology) is a controversial subject, the following discussion of the end times is from a pre-millennial/pre-Tribulation/rapture perspective.

Verses 5-27 talk about a period commonly referred to as the "end times," which some consider to be a seven-year period right before Christ returns in His Second Coming, also referred to as the Tribulation/Great Tribulation. Mark's comments are not designed to present a complete picture of the end times.

**What are some of the conditions that will precede Christ's Second Coming (vv. 5-8)?** False Messiahs, wars, rumors of war, earthquakes, and famines. *And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet (v.7).*

**Jesus compared false Messiahs, wars, rumors of war, earthquakes, and famines to the beginning of what (v. 8)?** Labor pains. Signs to remind us that the baby is coming, but the baby is not here yet. We are still in the labor pain phase. The baby is yet to come.

**What things did Jesus tell His disciples they would endure for His sake (vv. 9-11)?** Persecution, betrayal, rejection. Jesus tells His disciples to be prepared for the persecution that will come against them after He returns to heaven. They will suffer because of their allegiance to Him. This will not be a feel-good time for the disciples. **How does Jesus tell them to handle the persecution (v. 11)?** Jesus tells His followers to not worry about what to say when they are "put on the spot" for being a follower of Jesus. At that moment, the Holy Spirit will give them words to say. This is a promise for martyrs, not ministers.

**What one thing must be accomplished prior to Christ's Second Coming (v. 10)?** "All" the nations must hear the gospel before the end of the age (Matthew 24:14).<sup>1</sup>

**What is the source of this family conflict/hatred (vv. 12-13)?** Jesus. **What does Jesus exhort us to do?** He who stands firm to the end shall be saved. The ancient Greek word *hupomeno* for "stand firm" literally means to "remain under", i.e. trusting in the sovereign hand of God. When trials and persecution are swirling about, we can't be so desperate for an escape that we will compromise. **What are some ways we can stand firm?**

**Who is the abomination that causes desolation (vv. 14-23)?** The Antichrist. He will gain political power and spiritual authority over every nation on the earth. He will most likely begin his rise to power as a very influential, very charismatic, political or religious diplomat. He will be seen as an economic genius, a foreign policy genius, a supreme world ruler. The Antichrist will make a covenant with the Jewish people. The Temple will be rebuilt; worship and sacrifice will be reestablished. After three and a-half years the Antichrist will break his covenant, stop

the temple sacrifices, desecrate the temple and proclaim himself to be God. Remember, at this time, the Church (the body of true believers) has been raptured.

**What should be done when the abomination that causes desolation (the Antichrist) appears (vv. 14-16)?** Flee and hide. This applies especially to those who have become believers since the start of the Tribulation. The abomination that causes desolation is his full title in Daniel 9, 11, and 12, and Matthew 24.

**How does Mark describe the conditions during the end times (v. 19-23)?** It will be a time of chaos, calamity, bloodshed, slaughter. If the terrors of the end times were to continue indefinitely, mankind could not survive. So for the sake of God's elect, the days will be limited (to seven total years). No one should be deceived about the nature of Jesus' Second Coming. It will not be secret or private, and it won't be a "different" Jesus. In the midst of such Tribulation, men will be tempted to fall for false messiahs. **In contrast to the appearance of false messiahs, the true Messiah will appear after the predicted Tribulation (vv. 24-25)** This is, of course, a reference to the Second Coming, not the Rapture.<sup>2</sup>

**What will the Second Coming look like (vv. 26-27)?** Jesus will come in the clouds with great power and glory. He will send His angels and gather together His elect. He will come *with* His angels to gather those who have come to Jesus during the end times and have survived. This will be no baby Jesus, but a conqueror, coming in glory and splendor, to judge not to save.

**What is the meaning of the parable of the fig tree (vv. 28-31)?** The fig tree has a regular pattern: the leaves appear, then summer follows. When you see the leaves, you know summer is near. In the same way, when these signs—particularly the abomination of desolation—appear, the world can know that the return of Jesus is near.

***Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place (v. 30). What generation is Jesus referring to?*** It cannot be the generation of the disciples, because they did not see the triumphant return of Jesus. It is undoubtedly the generation that sees these signs—especially the abomination of desolation. It is also possible that the word generation can be understood as a *race* or *people*. This may be a promise that the Jewish race will not perish before history comes to a conclusion.

**What is the common thread/continuing emphasis for the disciples relative to the Second Coming and events leading up to it (vv. 32-37)? What are they to do?** Watch, be alert, be on guard. Live in a state of awareness so they are not deceived by false messiahs and people spreading untruth.

**What are some of the obstacles for us in living with a mindset that Jesus is coming back?** It's so easy to get caught up in the cares of the world and the busyness of life that we forget Jesus is coming back. Complacency—He said He's coming back. We've been waiting 2000 years.

**What is the message of the parable of the doorkeeper (vv. 33-37)?** A doorkeeper or porter was responsible to guard the entrance to his master's house. Entrusted with his master's goods, this doorkeeper did "not know when" his master would return. However, whenever the master returned, the doorkeeper would have to be ready to admit him to a well-managed house.<sup>3</sup> The message is—be ready for the return of the Master! Sleeping = spiritually negligent.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 170

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 173

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp. 176

## Mark 14:1-31

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**Every Jewish male was required to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem every year for Passover (Deuteronomy 16:5-6)—in addition to the festivals of Pentecost and Tabernacles. What do you think Jerusalem must have looked like at this time?** Congestion! It has been estimated that the population of Jerusalem more than quadrupled.

**The rulers/Jewish leaders resolved to kill Jesus, but why not during the festival (v. 1-2)?** Jesus enjoyed a large popular following, Many people who had heard and seen Jesus were present, bringing with them great respect and great expectation. Jesus enjoyed a large popular following, so the religious leaders wanted to avoid a riot by executing Jesus inconspicuously. Evidently they wanted to postpone further confrontation with Jesus until after the feasts when the pilgrims would have returned to their homes.<sup>1</sup>

**The religious leaders did not want to kill Jesus during the Passover feast, but they ending up doing it then anyway. What is the significance of this?** This clearly shows that Jesus is in command. The timetable is not theirs—it is His. He is in control every step of the way leading up to and including his death

**Who is the woman that anointed Jesus with perfume (v. 3)?** John's account of this incident (John 12:1-8) tells us that this was Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. **What does this incident tell us about Mary?** This was an extravagant display of worship, love, and devotion to Jesus, accompanied no doubt by a pure heart.

**What was the reaction of the spectators (vv. 4-9)?** They criticized her sharply. Each one looked at the oil poured on Jesus' head and considered it wasted.

Note: The mention of the poor was natural here because it was customary for the Jews to give gifts to the poor on the evening of the Passover.

**How did Jesus respond (v. 6-9)?** He rebuked them. The disciples thought this extravagant anointing with oil was a waste, but Jesus received it positively—as a good work.

**What was the result of her act of worship and devotion (v. 9)?** She was memorialized. Her story was written in the Bible for millions to read. The disciples longed for fame and influence, but this woman is the one who found an enduring memorial—not by wanting it or trying hard, but simply by loving Jesus and serving Him with a pure heart.

**What can we do—what act of worship/devotion—to be looked upon favorably by God like Mary was?** Obtaining God's approval is not a matter of what we do. It is a matter of the heart: *For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (Psalm 51:16-17).* Any act of devotion, if done with a broken and contrite heart, is looked upon by God in the same light as Mary's.

**Preparation for the Passover celebration (v. 13). A man carrying a jar of water was an unusual sight. Why?** Women usually carried jars of water. Therefore, a man carrying a jar of water would be a distinctive sign to the disciples.

**While eating the Passover meal, Jesus broke what news (v. 18)?** One of you is going to betray Me. The disciples have heard many surprising things from Jesus, but certainly this must have been one of the most surprising things they ever heard Him say. Not one of them suspected Judas, and the idea that one of them would seek to betray Jesus must have seemed absurd.

**What did Jesus do at the Last Supper (vv. 22-24)?** In addition to introducing the ordinance of communion, He replaced the Old Covenant (the Mosaic Law, the Ten Commandments), which had been a way of life for the Jews for 1,500 years, by introducing the New Covenant.

**What is the New Covenant all about?** GRACE! It is all about a covenant that cleanses us from all sin: *For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:34)*. This covenant puts God's Word and will in us: *I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33)*. This covenant is all about a new, close relationship with God: *And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.... they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest (Jeremiah 31:33-34)*. Note the "I will" statements! It is a unilateral and unconditional covenant.

**The New Covenant initiated many changes in the way God relates to His people. What are some examples?**

1) God doesn't live in the temple any longer; He lives in our hearts; 2) No longer is there a need to offer repetitive animal sacrifices for sin. The Lamb of God was sacrificed once for the sins of the world—no more need of repeated sacrifices; 3) the Old Testament dietary requirements are obsolete; 4) God's Law is not written on tablets of stone anymore—it's written on our hearts; 5) the New Covenant is an unconditional covenant—performance on our part is no longer required ("I will do this if you will do that"), and 6) It's a unilateral covenant—God is making this covenant with Himself, not with us.

**Do the Ten Commandments have any purpose in our lives today?** They serve as a moral guide, not as a requirement to win the approval of God. They reveal the heart of God—things that are important to a holy God. The way we live our lives in relationship with people and with Him is important.

**Why do we take communion? What is the purpose according to Jesus?** To remember the sacrifice Jesus made for our sins: *Do this in remembrance of me (1 Corinthians 11:24-25)*. To commemorate the establishment of the New Covenant.

**Why do you think God would require the Jewish men to journey to Jerusalem for three festivals every year?** So they would remember what God had done. It would be easy to stay home and get lazy and/or apathetic.

**They went to the Mount of Olives. What would happen there (v. 26-31)?** Our Lord knew that His time had now come when he must be delivered into the hands of his enemies. He is marching to the Cross. He wasn't hiding or evading the authorities.

**What did Jesus prophecy to His disciples (v. 27)?** They will all fall away. This was not the first time Jesus warned Peter and the other disciples that they would forsake Him.

**Why did they all fall away? Was it a faith issue?** No, it was a courage issue—they were afraid. Peter's faith is still strong. He's still following after Jesus.

**Did Jesus give them any reason to hope (v. 28)?** *But after I am raised up...*

**How did Peter respond (v. 29-31)?** "No way am I bailing out on You! Even if I have to die." **What does this response tell us about Peter at this moment in time?** He was devoted and passionate...but naïve. He knew nothing of the spiritual battle that lay ahead. He overestimated his own courage and boldness while underestimating the power of the enemy.

**When we face our battles, what help do we have that Peter didn't?** Power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

**Like Peter, how do you fill in the blank: I will never \_\_\_\_\_?**

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 177

## Mark 14:32-72

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Gethsemane was a garden on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. **What was Jesus' main purpose in going there (v. 32)?** To turn Himself in. Our Lord knew that His time had now come when he must be delivered into the hands of His enemies. He wasn't hiding or evading the authorities. He was in control of all events leading up to and including His death.

**Why was Jesus overwhelmed with sorrow (v. 34)?** Jesus knew He was going to bear God's wrath for the sins of the world. He was anticipating His upcoming separation from His Father.

**What is the cup symbolic of (v. 36)?** In the Old Testament, the cup was a powerful picture of the wrath and judgment of God.

**In this moment of distress, how did Jesus address His Father (v. 36)?** As "Abba," a child's familiar name for "daddy." **What does that say about their relationship?** Jesus didn't feel distant from God the Father. He felt so close to the Father that He used the familiar name—in spite of what was about to happen. Theirs was an emotional relationship.

**{What was Jesus asking the Father?** "Are you sure about this? If there is any other possible way to save humanity other than the agony which awaits Me at the cross? Please let it be."

**What is the key statement in His prayer?** *Yet not what I will, but what you will.* A statement demonstrating trust and a spirit of submission to The Father's will.

Application: When we pray *not what I will, but what you will*, we are right where God wants us! Our attitude should be: "in the end, when all is said and done, if there's a difference between my desires and Your will, above all, I want Your will, Lord." The Christian life is all about surrender—the surrender of our will to His.

**Jesus found them sleeping. How long had He been gone (v. 37)?** One hour. **When He addressed all three disciples, what did He command them to do?** Watch and pray. Be alert. **Why?** So they don't fall into temptation.

**What kind of temptation lay ahead that He would be referring to?** To deny Christ. To flee and desert Jesus. Temptation is a primary tool of Satan. They are going to be going into battle against the master tempter. They need to get ready, to prepare. The battle is often *won* or *lost* before the crisis comes. The groundwork needs to be laid before getting to battle stage.

**What are some practical examples of how we might "watch and pray"?**

**Mark recorded that Jesus made three separate trips into the depths of the garden to pray, repeating the same words each time (v. 39-42). What is the message for us?** Persistence/repetitive prayer is okay. Jesus' perseverance in prayer demonstrated the extent of His dependence on the Father.<sup>1</sup>

This passage is a remarkable revelation of the humanity of Jesus—a hallmark of the Gospel of Mark. We see emotions ranging from sorrow to agony to irritation.

**Why was such a large group of men that included Roman soldiers and temple guards sent to arrest Jesus (v. 43)?** Jesus had previously escaped through the crowds (Luke 4:30, John 8:59; 10:39). They wanted to make sure it didn't happen again.

**Why was it necessary for Judas to kiss Jesus (v. 45)?** Apparently, Jesus was average in appearance, with no distinguishing features: *He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire him (Isaiah 53:2).* It was necessary that Judas specifically identify Him for the sake of those arresting Jesus, and he chose to identify Jesus by greeting Him with a kiss. Otherwise the Roman soldiers and temple guards wouldn't have recognized Jesus.



The Gethsemane scenario was a way to avoid creating a riot at the arrest of Jesus because of the isolated location and the time of day. Plus the only people there were three disciples.

**When they arrested Jesus what did the disciples do (v. 50)?** The disciples scattered and ran for their own safety just as Jesus had prophesied (v. 27).

**Why did the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Supreme Court of the day) have such a hard time convicting Jesus (v. 53-65)?** The liars couldn't get their act together. They were building a false case but couldn't fit the pieces of the false puzzle together. The so-called witnesses kept disagreeing with one another. It's harder to agree on a consistent lie when trying to avoid the truth.

**Why did Jesus keep silent (also before Pilate) and not defend himself (v. 61)?** Jesus could have mounted a magnificent defense here, calling forth all the people He taught, the people He healed, the dead He had risen, the blind who see—even the demons themselves testified to His deity. His silence had been prophesied in Isaiah 53:7, *He was oppressed and afflicted yet he did not open His mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open His mouth.*

In a real sense, it isn't Jesus who is on trial at all. It's really the religious leaders—and they're on trial before God. They seemingly win, but have actually lost. In the same way, we all are on trial before God and will be held accountable for what we do with Jesus Christ.

**How did the Sanhedrin react to Jesus comments (v. 63)?** They reacted with a self-righteous, melodramatic horror (the high priest tore his clothes) and subsequent abuse and brutality (some began to spit on Jesus and beat Him). The Sanhedrin then sentenced Jesus to death.

**This event happened in the courtyard of the high priest while the hearing continued on the floor above it (v. 66-72). What does Peter's presence say about him?** It was a testimony to His love and devotion for Jesus. Only one other disciple was there.

**Peter's three-fold denial—what does that say about him?** His denial was not a faith issue; it was a courage issue. He was afraid. His love and devotion for Jesus stood the test of faith but failed the test of fear.

Peter, despite his bold proclamation that he will never be made to stumble, he would fail in what he thought were his strong areas—courage and boldness. Peter did not know how weak he was. When it came to crunch time, his courage and boldness, failed him. **Why?** He was operating in his own strength against a formidable enemy.

**Have you ever been in Peter's shoes and made promises to Jesus that you have not kept?** When that is the case, there is an appropriate time to weep bitterly—but then a time to come back to Jesus, who will always receive you back. As the end of this story unfolds, it will provide assurance that if anyone did fail Jesus under the duress of persecution, there was always a way open for repentance, forgiveness and restoration.

**Have you ever denied Christ? What are some ways we can deny Christ?**

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 187

## Mark 15

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**Jesus underwent two trials—a religious trial before the Sanhedrin (Jewish leaders) and now a civil trial before the Roman authorities (Pilate). Why did the Jewish leaders take Jesus to Pontius Pilate for a civil trial when they had already condemned him?** The Jews did not have the legal right to execute their own criminals. Rome had revoked that right in 7 A.D., which was a big blow to the Jewish community. It meant they no longer had the basic right of Jewish self-government—to punish their own criminals—and it was the last straw that demonstrated that they were totally under the oppressive control of Rome.

**The Sanhedrin also wanted Jesus to suffer crucifixion—and the Romans offered this form of execution.** To the Jews, a crucified person was clearly cursed by God (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13). The Sanhedrin wanted to make a statement. They wanted this “heretic” to be on display as a disincentive for anyone to follow after Him. They wanted Jesus to suffer the most horrific, shameful death for all the Jewish people to see. Stoning was the Jews traditional method of execution. **Why was it key that Jesus be crucified?** It was prophesied. There are as many as sixty prophecies fulfilled by the crucifixion.

**What was another reason why the Sanhedrin didn’t take things into their own hands regarding Jesus?** Because they knew the multitudes had a favorable opinion of Jesus, and if they could get Pilate to pass judgment, sentence and execute Him, they would be able to distance themselves from the political fallout. They could point their finger at Pilate and redirect the emotion of the crowd.

**Jesus was convicted of blasphemy (14:64). Why did the Jewish leaders bring Him before Pilate with the charge that He claimed to be the King of the Jews?** The Jewish rulers knew that if they brought Jesus before Pilate on the blasphemous charge of claiming to be God, the Roman authorities would not have prosecuted Jesus for claiming to be God. Pilate would merely yawn. He would say, “We Romans have hundreds of gods. What is the harm with one more?” Pilate would have dismissed them.

**How was Pilate between a rock and a hard place?** Pilate knew that Jesus was an innocent man. Luke 23:14 records him as saying, *I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him.* Yet Pilate had a politically explosive situation on his hands. Will he do what is right by freeing an innocent man? Or will he do what is politically expedient—please the Jews by executing a man brought before him for treason because He claimed to be a king, and there could be no king except Caesar? Pilate is in a dangerous place; the crowd is almost becoming a riot. If there was one thing that would get him in trouble with his Roman superiors, it was a riot.

**What did Pilate do to please the crowd and defuse the situation (v. 15)?** First he handed Jesus over to be flogged and crucified. Secondly he released Barabbas. It was customary for a prisoner to be released at the Passover Feast. Evidently this custom served to improve relations between the Roman ruler and his subjects. Barabbas was one of the popular Jewish freedom fighters whom the Romans had “imprisoned” for participating in an uprising against Rome.<sup>1</sup> From the Roman perspective, he was a terrorist. If anyone should be able to really say, “Jesus died for me,” it should be Barabbas. They literally swapped places on death row. Barabbas could look at the crucified Christ and say, “That should have been me. He took my place.”

**Five days earlier on Palm Sunday Jesus had entered Jerusalem under ticker-tape parade conditions. Now the people are shouting, “Crucify Him” (v. 13-14). Why did the crowd turn on Jesus?** He didn’t live up to their misguided expectations. He didn’t overthrow the Roman oppression and set up an earthly political kingdom.

**They struck, spat upon, and mocked Him, Hail, King of the Jews! Then they lead Him out to be crucified (vv. 17-20). The purple robe and crown were symbolic of what?** Royalty. They taunted Him for claiming to be a king.

**Why didn’t He take the offered wine (v. 23)?** Jesus refused any drug that would numb the pain. He would face the agony of the cross with a clear mind and not be “medicated” in any way.

**What was the significance of dividing His garments (v. 24)?** This was in fulfillment of the prophecy: *They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots (Psalm 22:18).*

**He was crucified at 9 a.m. (v. 25).** Darkness came over the whole land from noon to 3 p.m. (v. 33). This is especially remarkable because at the time of a full moon—during which Passover was always held—a natural eclipse of the sun is impossible. So you can't explain away the darkness by using naturalistic phenomenon. This was an extraordinary miracle in the heavens. Jesus apparently breathed His last shortly after 3 p.m.

**What was going on during the time of darkness (v. 33)?** Jesus was drinking the cup He had referred to at the Passover meal (Mark 10:38-39), which represented the outpouring of the Father's wrath upon Him as a substitute for sinful humanity.

The Father/Son relationship that had existed for all eternity between God the Father and Jesus was shattered temporarily for three hours. The Father looked upon His Son with disgust and repulsion. Jesus was made/became sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). And God cannot tolerate the presence of sin. When the Father looked at the Son, all He saw were the sins of the world. Jesus became an *enemy* of God. And the Father turned His back on His Son—which was the ultimate act of rejection. Jesus' death was much more than a case of another martyr dying for another cause.

At some point right before He died, an awesome spiritual transaction took place. God the Father set upon Jesus all the guilt and wrath our sins deserved, and Jesus bore it in Himself perfectly, totally satisfying the wrath of God toward us. It's as if God said, "I am satisfied—the debt of the world caused by sin is paid for in full."

Jesus' strong "loud cry" indicates that this was not simply the last gasp of an exhausted, demoralized or defeated man. Jesus' "cry" was a *shout of victory*. He triumphantly announced: "It is finished!" (John 19:30).<sup>2</sup>

**What does the crucifixion tell us about God?** He loves us. He loved the world. He was doing all this for us. He knew we were helpless and hopeless and He made a way where there was no way.

**What was the original purpose of the veil/curtain of the temple (v. 37-41)?** It separated sinful man from the presence of holy God. In the mind of the Jews, God lived in the Temple, specifically behind the curtain in the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was located. The people were not allowed to enter the Holy of Holies; they didn't have direct access to God. They needed a mediator, a go-between, when dealing with God. Once a year the High Priest would serve as a mediator and would enter the Holy of Holies and make sacrifices for the sins of the nation of Israel, *And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins (Leviticus 16:34).*

**What is the significance of the tearing of the temple curtain?** People now have free access to the presence of God. The Jewish high priest is out of a job. He is no longer needed to serve as a go-between. Instead Jesus is seated at right hand of God, interceding for us as our great High Priest: *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).* No one should ever think again that God dwells in a temple made with human hands. **What's the significance that the temple curtain was torn from top to bottom?** Only God could do that. It was too high for human hands to reach (reportedly as high as sixty feet). Man would have had to tear it from bottom to top. It represented God opening a way into His presence by the death of His Son.

**What do we know about Joseph of Arimathea (v. 42-47)? Who was he and how would you describe what he did?** Joseph of Arimathea was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, though he was apparently silent when the Sanhedrin sentenced Jesus to death (Mark 15:1). He shrunk back then but is not ashamed to identify with Jesus now. Asking Pilate for Jesus' body is a bold and courageous move.

**How was Joseph's generosity rewarded?** He got his tomb back three days later.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)), pp. 197

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 206

## Mark 16

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**You could totally discredit or perhaps even destroy Christianity if you could disprove what one thing?** The Resurrection! **Why?** Without the Resurrection, our Savior would still be in the grave just like every other great religious leader who could not conquer death. The Resurrection is the foundation of our faith. We worship a risen, living Savior! All other religions worship dead people. Without the Resurrection, there is no hope beyond the grave, and the Cross is of no practical value. Without the Resurrection, Jesus is just another martyr dying for another cause.

The time from sundown on Friday to just after sunset on Saturday was the Sabbath. Jesus died and was buried on Friday just before sunset. Saturday must have been a dark, empty, and desperate day for the disciples. So full of hope and promise, this man they had been following for three years is now dead and gone. Imagine how depressed and despondent they must have been: *they mourned and wept* (v. 10).

**Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. Where have we seen these women before (v. 1)?** At the cross and burial site (Mark 15:40, 47), and later at the tomb just after Jesus' resurrection (Mark 16:2).

These obscure women proved themselves to be the most devoted followers of Jesus. They were given the privilege of being the first to see the empty grave and to proclaim His resurrection. There's a message/lesson here about devotion. No fanfare surrounded these women. They were simply faithful followers of Jesus, and as a result they were recognized and rewarded. They were memorialized in Scripture for their devotion.

**What was their dilemma as they approached the tomb (v. 3)?** *Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?* They knew there was a large stone covering the entrance. They had seen Him buried. No question they went expecting to find Jesus in the tomb. Just like the disciples, the women didn't understand.

Matthew 27:65-66 reminds us that there were armed guards stationed around the tomb. All this shows that the stone could not have been rolled away by the women (not strong enough) or by the disciples (even if they were brave enough, they couldn't overcome the armed guards). We also understand that no one else *wanted* to roll away the stone. **Then how did it move?** Matthew 28:2 tells us that it was an angel who rolled it away. Not so that Jesus could come out, but so that others could see in and be convinced that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead

**Who was the young man dressed in a white robe (v. 5)?** An angel

**What did he tell them (vv. 6-7)?** *Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee.*

**Jesus is going ahead into Galilee for what purpose?** *There you will see him, just as he told you was the message.* The main object was to see Him: for Jesus to reveal Himself in His glorified body to His people. Jesus had earlier prophesied that his disciples would be scattered and would rejoin Him in Galilee (14:28).

**We may find it surprising that Jesus wanted to meet with these men who failed Him so deeply and deserted Him. And the angel makes special mention of Peter. What does that say about Jesus' perspective on Peter?** Jesus distinguished Peter because He had special hope, special forgiveness and a special restoration plan for the one who denied Him the most. He loved Peter in spite of what he had done. Never once did the Lord chide Peter for his failure or give up on him as one of His disciples. Instead, Jesus reaffirms His call on Peter to be a fisher of men.

**What's the message for us?** One of encouragement. Our relationship with God is unconditional. It's grace-based, not performance-based. We don't have to earn His favor: what we do or don't do doesn't sever our relationship with God. We already have His favor 100%.

**What emotion did the women experience from this angelic encounter (v. 8)?** Fear. Everybody was afraid, even the disciples: *And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.* **Why were they afraid?** They didn't understand what was happening. None of His followers understood that Jesus would rise from the dead as He had said multiple times.

Note: Although the followers didn't remember Jesus' prediction about rising from the dead, the Pharisees did: *The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first"* (Matthew 27:62-64).

**Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, as well as the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. How did the disciples respond to the news that Jesus had been seen twice?** Disbelief. They didn't say, "Wait a minute, this rings a bell. Didn't He tell us something about rising from the dead?" He had told them several times over the previous three years that He would rise from the dead. **How did Jesus respond to their disbelief (v. 14)?** He rebuked them for their lack of faith and stubborn refusal to believe.

**What was the commission that Jesus gave to the eleven (v. 15)?** *Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.* This was a command—not a suggestion. The idea of a faith that would go out into all the world wasn't a part of the Jewish thinking of Jesus' day. **What did the disciples do (v. 20)?** They went out and preached everywhere.

**Does this command apply to us? We're going out into the world but we're not preachers. What are some ways we can preach the gospel?**

**Is water baptism is required for salvation (v. 16)?** Jesus did not say that *condemnation* belonged to the one who was not baptized, only to the one who does not believe. Condemnation rests on unbelief, not on baptism. Christian baptism in the New Testament is always defined by an outward expression of an inward change brought about by faith in Christ. This verse also regards baptism as such. In the early church baptism normally followed closely after a confession of faith.

**If baptism is not essential to salvation, why do we do it?** It may not be essential to salvation, but it is absolutely essential to obedience. Jesus set the example of baptism (Matthew 33:13-16). Jesus commanded that believers be baptized (Matthew 28:19). It becomes essential as soon as Jesus commands it.

**Why did Jesus leave forty days after the resurrection (v. 19)?** So the Holy Spirit could come. Jesus had to ascend so that confidence would be put in the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit, not in the geographical presence of Jesus. The unseen Holy Spirit would have been overshadowed by the visible Jesus.

**Where is Jesus now?** In heaven, sitting at the right hand of God the Father.

**What is the new ministry of Jesus now?** Jesus has gone ahead for us to *prepare a place for you (John 14:3); is interceding for us (Romans 8:34); and gives gifts to men (Ephesians 4:8).*

**So what do the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus Christ mean to you personally? His resurrection means:**

- We have assurance of our own resurrection.
- Jesus is alive and has a continuing ministry.
- Christianity and its God are unique and completely different among any and all world religions.
- Our sin debt is fully paid and perfect in the sight of God the Father. Jesus' death on the Cross was the payment for our sins, but the resurrection is the receipt of guarantee: *paid in full.*

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