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Relational Concepts has been organized to provide motivational instruction for men and women interested in being used by God.

We believe that Christian doctors, mechanics, housewives, realtors, lawyers, plumbers, secretaries, businessmen, businesswomen, students, etc. are the most effective spokes persons the church has.

These people are generally not in a position where they can take the time to go to a Bible college. Our purpose is to bring quality instruction to them, where they are, to be applied in their families, churches, businesses, and schools—the communities in which they live. We believe that *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16-17).



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Introductory Questions

Who Wrote the Gospel of Mark?

Technically, the Gospel of Mark is anonymous, because the name of the author does not occur anywhere in the book. The title *Κατὰ Μάρκον* (*Kata Markon*) “According to Mark” was added by some unknown scribe between when it was written and the year A.D. 125. But the unanimous testimony of the apostolic fathers of the second century is that John Mark composed and wrote the book. The earliest known statement about the authorship of Mark comes from a man named Papias (A.D. 110). Papias quoted someone he called “John the elder,” which is probably a designation for the Apostle John. From these early writings, we learn:

1. Mark was not an eyewitness follower of Jesus.
2. Mark accompanied the Apostle Peter and heard his preaching.
3. Mark wrote down accurately all that Peter remembered of Jesus’ words and works but not necessarily in chronological order.
4. Mark was Peter’s “interpreter.” [This probably means he translated Peter’s messages into Latin. It is likely Peter spoke Aramaic and Greek, but not Latin.]
5. Mark’s account is wholly reliable.

[This information is confirmed by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 3. 39. 15), Justin Martyr (*Dialogue* 106. 3; ca. A.D. 160), Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 3. 1. 1-2; ca. A.D. 180), Tertullian (*Against Marcion* 4. 5; ca. A.D. 200), Clement of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 195), and Origen (ca. A.D. 230). So the evidence for the above five comments is confirmed by various sources of early Christianity from Alexandria, Asia Minor, and Rome.]

It is reasonable to understand that John Mark composed and wrote this gospel. But it is also reasonable to conclude that the majority of the content of the book came from the Apostle Peter. In that sense, it may be more of the gospel according to Peter than the gospel according to Mark. But it is right to call it the Gospel of Mark because even if that’s the case, it was Mark who took the information from Peter’s teaching, composed it, and wrote it in the text we know as the *Gospel of Mark*.

Who Was Mark?

There is no reason to suppose there is more than one Mark in the New Testament. Mark was John Mark, the son of a woman named Mary who lived in Jerusalem and the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10).

The first mention of Mark in the Bible is about 11 years after the death of Christ. When Peter was released from prison by an angel, we are told *he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying* (Acts 12:12). Apparently, Mark’s mother Mary hosted a gathering of the church in her home. This event took place in A.D. 44 because it’s the year of Herod’s death (Acts 12:1, 23). [This Herod is not the one before whom Jesus appeared. This is his brother, known as Herod Agrippa (both sons of Herod the Great, who tried to kill the baby Jesus) and the father of the Herod before whom Paul will later appear.] If Jesus was crucified in A.D. 33, then this took place 11 or 12 years later. At this time, there seems to be a connection between Peter and Mark’s family. Mark has also been listening to the messages of the apostles, which tell about the life of Christ. So probably many times during this 11 or 12 years, Mark would have heard the accounts about which he later wrote.

The next we hear of John Mark is two years later, in A.D. 46, when he accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey to Cyprus and Galatia. But, for some unrecorded reason, Mark turned back when they went to Perga in Pamphilia. Because of this, Paul refused to take him on the second journey, so he went with Barnabas to Cyprus in about A.D. 50 (Acts 15:38-40). This is the last time Luke mentions Mark in the book of Acts.

When Was the Gospel of Mark Written?

After Mark traveled with Barnabas to Cyprus, the chronology of Mark is not so clear. He is mentioned four more times in the New Testament.

- **Colossians 4:10** *Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him).*
- **2 Timothy 4:11** *Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.*
- **Philemon 24** *as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.*
- **1 Peter 5:13** *She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.*

Most likely, after the journey to Cyprus, Mark returned to Jerusalem in the mid-50s. But we know nothing about Mark from the mid-50s to the early 60s. It is likely that this is the time in which Mark composed and wrote his gospel, possibly while traveling with Peter. There is much discussion about which gospel came first—Matthew or Mark. Clearly, both came before the Gospel of Luke (written in the 60s) and the Gospel of John (written around 70). But it is not necessary to assume Matthew or Mark were based on each other or were even aware of the composition of the other's gospel. Matthew may have been written in Jerusalem or North Africa, while Mark may have been written while traveling with Peter. The similarities are more easily explained by the fact that Matthew and Peter were both eyewitnesses of the same events. Matthew, being a tax collector, probably took notes as he traveled with Jesus, and Mark wrote from sermons he heard from Peter. At any rate, they were both inspired by the Holy Spirit to remember what happened and to write it down accurately (John 14:26). It seems to me that there is no need to assume one gospel was based on the other.

After that, Mark seems to be ministering with Paul in the first part of the 60s and Peter in the last part of the 60s, or possibly with both of them off and on. Both Peter and Paul mention Mark as being a fellow worker. Paul says Mark was with him in Colossians 4:10 (which was written about 62) and in Philemon 24 (which was written about 63).

At the end of his first letter (written between 64 and 68), Peter said, *she who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark* (1 Peter 5:13). So Peter was writing from *Babylon* when Mark was with him. This could be the city on the Euphrates, which is about half as far from Jerusalem as Rome, or the word *Babylon* could be a metaphor for Rome, which is what most commentators believe. At any rate, there is much evidence that Mark received most of the information for his gospel from Peter. Jack Wellman writes,

There is extremely reliable evidence through church tradition and early church historians that the Gospel of Mark is actually the gospel of Peter. Peter is said to have dictated his discipleship with Jesus to John Mark, who was a companion of his for many of the later years of his life. If you read the Gospel of Mark you can see the extremely fine details of what appears to be an eyewitness from the perspective of Peter... This is testified by the fact that Mark was not present for Jesus' ministry and the extremely intimate details that are described in Mark. Some of the events

where Peter, John, and James who were often alone with Jesus, like the Transfiguration, are like a first-person retelling of the story [<http://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/apostle-peter-biography-timeline-life-and-death/#ixzz3u7dRaXnm>].

Why Does Mark Use the Word "Immediately" so Often?

The word εὐθύς (*euthus*) *immediately*, or *suddenly*, occurs 59 times in the New Testament, and 42 of them (71%) are in the gospel of Mark. Mark's obsession with this word is strange, if not confusing. For example, recording the call of James and John, Mark writes:

Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him (Mark 1:20).

This sounds like Jesus was walking by one day and out of the blue called James and John and immediately they left their occupation and started following Jesus. In reality, we learn from the Gospel of John that they knew Jesus and traveled with Jesus for over a year before He called them in Mark 1:20.

Most of the uses of εὐθύς (*euthus*) add nothing to the meaning of the account. For example, in the following passage, no meaning would be lost if you left out the word *immediately*.

Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee. And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her (Mark 1:28-30).

So why use the word εὐθύς (*euthus*) *immediately* 42 times? Several suggestions have been made:

- Mark's style keeps the narration moving along. It's a gospel which focuses on the actions of Jesus rather than His words. But it seems to me there is a lot of focus on Jesus' words.
- It is consistent with the rapid pace of the gospel. Episodes are usually brief, scenes change often, and minor characters appear and quickly disappear. It draws the audience quickly into the story and maintains their attention.
- It communicates the urgency of Christ's ministry, but I don't see how it does that.
- More likely, it's his style, that's just the way he writes. Remember, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit means it is without error, not that it was dictated by the Holy Spirit. It was composed and recorded by Mark.

I suspect the last suggestion is the best. At any rate, the dominance of the word εὐθύς (*euthus*) *immediately* confirms that the gospel was all written by the same author. Whatever accounts, messages, and sermons Mark may have heard from Peter or the other apostles, it was only Mark who composed it and wrote it down. [By the way, the word εὐθύς (*euthus*) *immediately* does not occur in the questionable passage at the end of the gospel (Mark 16:9-20).]

Comments on the Gospel of Mark

As we study this book, the most significant thing is to learn about Jesus. So we should ask ourselves:

- What does this incident tell us about Jesus?
- What was important to Jesus and what was unimportant for Him?
- How did He live? How did He want His disciples to live?
- What did He think about the religious and social institutions of His day?
- For whom did Jesus like and feel compassion?
- Who did He dislike? Of whom was He critical?

Chapter 1

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

This seems to be the title of the book. The word εὐαγγέλιον (*euaggelion*) *gospel* is used 99 times in the New Testament, and only six of them are in Mark's gospel. Interestingly, the word *gospel* is in the three synoptic (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) but not in the Gospel of John. The word "gospel" is a combination of "good" and "message," usually thought of as "glad tidings" or "good news." After Christ's death and resurrection, it's equated with the plan of salvation. But in the synoptics, it seems to have a broader meaning. Matthew, Mark, and Luke connect it to the Good News that *the Kingdom of God is at hand*. So the word *gospel* seems to refer to a message of good revelation from God.

Notice also that Mark begins his gospel declaring the deity of Christ with the phrase, *Jesus Christ, the Son of God*.

Verses 2-8 *John the Baptist Paves the Way for the Son of God*

Mark tells us six things about John the Baptist:

1. John's ministry was prophesied by Isaiah and Malachi.
2. The purpose of John's ministry was to *make ready* (KJV *prepare*) *the way of the Lord*.
3. John had a public ministry without having a place for ministry. *And the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem*. All here does not mean every last person, but people from all around Jerusalem and Judea. [Notice the context determines the final meaning of a word, in this case, of the words *country* and *all*.]
4. *They were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins*. John seems to have invented baptism (the word means "to dip"), possibly developing it from the ceremonial washing of the Old Testament. *Confession* is to speak out in agreement or admission, in this case, of their sin.
5. *John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey*. Apparently, he looked a lot like Elijah.
6. John's message was three-fold: (1) *A baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*. *Repentance* is to change your mind, in this case, about their sin. Repentance is only a change of mind, but the proof of repentance is a change of life. (2) *One is coming who is so significant that John was not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals*. (3) *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit* instead of water. Without knowing it, John proclaimed the coming church/grace age, where every believer is baptized with the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Verses 9-11 *The Baptism of Jesus*

The most amazing thing about the baptism of Jesus is that all three members of the Trinity are present in a specific way. God the Son was baptized, God the Father spoke, and God the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a bird (the word can mean *dove* or *pigeon*, some sort of white bird). Although all persons of the Godhead are omnipresent, they also (unlike the god defined by pantheism) have a specific localized presence. It is very unusual to find an example of the localized presence of the Holy Spirit. For example, the indwelling, baptizing, sealing, regenerating, and filling of the Spirit during this age is a work of the Spirit, connected to His omnipresence but not His localized presence. But here at the baptism of Jesus, we see His localized presence in the form of a descending dove.

Verses 12-13 *The Temptation of Jesus*

It is the Holy Spirit, who *impelled* (a strong word meaning "drove") Jesus to go into the Judean Wilderness (where John the Baptist was from) for 40 days, to be tempted by Satan and face wild beasts.

Verses 14-20 Jesus Called Four Disciples in Galilee

Mark's gospel now jumps over a year to the time *after John had been taken into custody*. Mark omits the events covered in John 1:19–4:54 and 6:17-20. During this year,

- Jesus acquired His first five disciples, two by referral from John the Baptist and two by referral from their brother, and one a referral friend of the other four.
- Jesus' early Judean ministry, where He spoke with Nicodemus about being born again
- The discussion of Jesus with the woman at the well about worshiping in spirit and in truth

The call of the two sets of brothers was, therefore, not a first-time encounter, but a call to leave their occupations and follow Jesus to become *fishers of men*. Notice the message of Jesus was the same as John the Baptist, and He added the concept of faith. *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*

Verses 21-28 Teaching and Healing in the Synagogue on the Sabbath

Two things happened during the first visit Mark records of Jesus to the synagogue at Capernaum. Both result in the Jews being amazed at the authority of Jesus.

- 1) *He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes, and*
- 2) *He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.*

In other words, Jesus placed the authority for His teaching in Himself rather than the Jewish institutions like the rabbinic Judaism of the scribes and Pharisees, and He proved it by casting out a powerful demon.

Verses 29-34 Healing Peter's Mother-in-law and those Who Heard about It

It's a short (less than five-minute) walk from the synagogue in Capernaum to Peter's house, where Peter, his wife, his wife's mother, and his brother Andrew were living. James and John went with them, and they found that Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a fever. When Jesus took *her by the hand, the fever left her*, she also *waited on them*, probably meaning she fixed them dinner. But the word got out about Jesus' healing so *the whole city had gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons.*

Verses 35-39 Teaching and Healing in Synagogues Throughout Galilee

Early the next morning, Jesus went out to pray in a secluded place, apparently, not the nearby synagogue, and when the four disciples found Him, He said they should go together *to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for*. Notice He did not say that He came to heal people. We know He came to die for our sins, but He also came to proclaim a message of the righteous nature of the kingdom of God. As He traveled, Jesus authenticated His message with healing and casting out demons. Notice that proclamation and proof, not unsubstantiated visions and dreams, were the foundation of presenting the gospel (Romans 10:13-15).

Verses 40-45 The Healing of a Leper

Mark then records one specific instance where a leper came to Jesus to be healed. This healing seems to have two purposes. First, it gives us something we would never learn from observing the healing itself. Mark tells us the motive of Jesus for healing the leper was compassion. *Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him*. A second interesting thing about this healing is that Jesus told the former leper to show himself to the priests. *See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them*. This would be a witness to the priests of the truth that Jesus was the Messiah. A cleansed leper was to show himself for inspection to the priests according to Leviticus 13–14. It's a safe bet that the Jerusalem priests of Jesus' day had never seen anyone come to them for this cleansing.

Applications from Chapter 1

- 1. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the plan of salvation.** But in the synoptic gospels, it is more than that. The gospel is the Kingdom of God brought about through the revelation of Jesus Christ. And His Kingdom is not of this world. We should present the gospel to unbelievers as the plan of salvation, but we should then also tell them about the Kingdom of God, which was revealed in Christ and then His apostles. It seems to me from our music and our preaching, we are more interested in the plan of salvation than we are in the Kingdom of God.
- 2. We should teach as Jesus did, with authority, not as the religious leaders who are defending their various traditions.** But our authority is not in ourselves, or our opinions, it is in the words of the Jesus of the Bible.
- 3. Our reason for helping people should be our compassion for them because Jesus healed out of compassion.** The virtue in giving is in the motive of the giver to glorify God by displaying His compassion, not just in meeting the needs of the receiver. Jesus healed and cast out demons to give evidence that He was the Son of God, not to make the world free of disease and demons. The world will pervert this by putting the focus on the one with the need, instead of the one meeting the need. If the needs of the needy are met without personal compassion, such as forced redistribution of wealth, then all spiritual moral value is lost.

Questions from Chapter 1

- The word “gospel” in the Gospel of Mark is the Good News that
 - A. Jesus gives us the Kingdom of God.
 - B. Jesus gives us eternal life.
 - C. Jesus paid for the sins of the world.
- John’s converts both confessed and repented. Which is correct?
 - A. Confession always results in a change of life.
 - B. Repentance always results in a change of life.
 - C. Both confession and repentance can happen without a change in life.
- In Mark 1:18, we read of James and John, *Immediately, they left their nets and followed Him.* Actually,
 - A. They *left their nets* after seeing Jesus the first time.
 - B. They *left their nets* after meeting Jesus earlier through John the Baptist.
 - C. They *left their nets* after a year of traveling with Jesus.

Answers: 1. A. 2. B. 3. C.

Chapter 2

The second chapter of Mark records three significant events from the life of Christ: the paralytic healed, the call of Levi/Matthew, and the disciples picking grain on the Sabbath.

Verses 1-12 The Healing of the Paralytic

After speaking in several synagogues around Galilee, Jesus returned to Capernaum, and *it was heard that He was at home*, probably Peter's home (1:29). A very large crowd gathered, and Jesus taught them from inside Peter's house, even though there was a synagogue with much more room for teaching only a five-minute walk away. Then four men came, carrying a paralytic on a pallet. *Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they* apparently reached the roof by an outside stairway. Then the four men *removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening* [the roof perhaps made of clay and branches, fairly easy to remove], *they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying* (2:4), maybe using fishing ropes Peter had laid on the roof to dry out.

The next statement of Jesus defined His person and His ministry, and it set in motion the conflict that led to His crucifixion. *And Jesus seeing their faith* [that is, the results of the faith of all five of them] *said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."* The four men and the paralytic were basically making a prayer request for healing. Whether they were seeking forgiveness is unknown. But seeing their faith, Jesus forgave and healed the paralytic. Their faith that Jesus could heal was based on the evidence that He had been healing others in the area for days. Faith should trust evidence.

When Jesus said, *"your sins are forgiven,"* the point being made was *the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins*. The scribes understood this very well. They thought, *He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?* Of course, they would have been right except there is one way that this is not blasphemy, if indeed Jesus was God. So Jesus asked the question, *which is easier* [ευκοπος (*eukopos*) "better work"], *to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk'?* The point of this question had nothing to do with which is easier, or easier to say. The point was forgiving sin is a better work than physical healing. Jesus said He healed the paralytic *so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins*. They should have believed He was the Messiah of Israel because of the evidence He provided.

Verses 13-22 The Call of Levi/Matthew

Jesus left Peter's house, walked along the shore of the Sea of Galilee and then out somewhere near the road the Romans called the Via Maris. This was the oldest road in the world, stretching from Babylon up between the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers, across to Damascus, then down through Galilee, Samaria, and Judea to Egypt. At the time of Christ, the road passed near or through Capernaum, which served as a customs' station and a taxing point for travelers headed either north or south. *As He passed by, He saw Levi* [also called Matthew—Matthew 9:9] *the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him. And it happened that He was reclining at the table in his* [Matthew's] *house, and many tax collectors and sinners* [probably unbelieving friends and invited guests of Matthew] *were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him.*

During the meal at Levi's house, Jesus was asked two questions. The first came from the scribes and the Pharisees. They asked Jesus' disciples, *"Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?"* I'm sure the disciples had no idea, but *hearing this, Jesus said to them* what was apparently "a well-known proverb" ["Bible Knowledge Commentary"]. *"It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick."* Jesus used this proverb on several occasions (Mark 2:17;

Matthew 9:12, 13; Luke 5:31, 32). But He added the comment, “*I did not come to call the righteous [meaning the self-righteous, those who saw themselves as not needing a Savior], but sinners*” [those who saw themselves as sinners in need of a Savior].

It’s hard to determine who asked the second question. It may have been the disciples of John the Baptist, or those of the Pharisees or someone representing both of them. The question they asked was, “*Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?*” It is interesting that fasting was apparently something John and the Pharisees did regularly but Jesus did not do regularly. In the Mosaic Law, only the Day of Atonement required a fast (Leviticus 16:29, 31; 23:27-32; Numbers 29:7). After the Exile, the Jews added four other annual fasts (Zechariah 7:5; 8:19). I am told that by Jesus’ day, the stricter Pharisees fasted twice a week, on Monday and Thursday (Luke 18:12). This twice-a-week fast is probably what is in question here. Jesus’ answer is that His disciples will fast after He *is taken away from them*. This refers to His death, possibly including a reference to His resurrection and ascension. But the point is, His ministry with them on earth will come to an end.

Then Jesus added two parabolic statements. “*No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment*” and “*No one puts new wine into old wineskins.*” The unshrunk cloth and the new wine represented the new revelation Jesus was bringing to His disciples. It would equip them to begin the new upcoming church age, not help them conform to Judaism. The new revelation would tear Judaism apart. But the old garment and the old wineskins are not just the bad ministry of the Pharisees and the Scribes but also the good ministry of John the Baptist. The distinction Jesus is making here is not between good and bad but between old and new. Jesus’ disciples would usher in a new administration (KJV *dispensation*), one unknown to either the Pharisees or John the Baptist (Ephesians 3:3-9).

Verses 23-28 The Disciples Picking Grain on the Sabbath

On a Sabbath day, possibly the next Saturday after the Pharisee’s Thursday fast day, Jesus walked with His disciples west along the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee. *And it happened that He was passing through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain.* They probably reached the Plain of Gennesaret, on the northwest edge of the sea. This is the only place where the land is flat enough for significant farming. I’m not sure if the Pharisees came from the town of Gennesar or if they were following Jesus from Capernaum, but *The Pharisees were saying to Him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”*

Jesus’ answer is quite surprising. One would expect Him to say something like His disciples were not actually breaking the Mosaic Law, only the Pharisees’ legalistic application of it. But He said quite the opposite. He defended breaking the Law. He reminded the Pharisees about *what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry*. David ate the bread of the high priest. And if there is any question as to the legality of what David did, Jesus confirms that David ate *consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests*. So rather than say His disciples did not break the Mosaic Law, Jesus confirms that they did, and it had a precedent, and a justification, in the illegal actions of David and his men when they were hungry. The principle Jesus derives from this is something not found anywhere in the Old Testament, *The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath*. Sabbath-keeping was designed for man so he would not have to work all the time. Man was not created so that he could serve the Sabbath, the Sabbath was created to serve man. But there is another point here which introduces the first incident of chapter 3, “*the Son of Man is Lord even [better translated and or also] of the Sabbath.*”

Applications from Chapter 2

- 1. Faith is trusting reasonable evidence.** The four men bringing the paralytic, and most likely the paralytic himself, had faith based on evidence that Jesus could heal him, or else they wouldn't have come. Jesus had been healing in the area for some time now, so they had reasonable evidence for their faith. When Jesus forgave the man of his sins, He gave the Pharisees an opportunity to believe that He was the Son of God because only God could forgive sin and only God had the authority to heal the paralytic. They should have trusted the evidence provided by the healing and believed in Jesus. Biblical faith is never a blind leap. It's trust placed in real evidence.
- 2. Never be in a place where you no longer see yourself as a sinner.** When Jesus was (rightly) accused of *eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners*, He said, *I did not come to call the righteous but sinners*. If you believe "I'm okay, you're okay," or that living in what the Bible calls sin doesn't matter, then Jesus did not come for you. As soon as you see yourself as experientially righteous, or without a sin nature, or having achieved a life without sin, or that sin doesn't matter, then Jesus did not come for you.
- 3. Morality is not about mindless participation in mechanical acts.** Morality is about pleasing God. The Pharisees saw innate value of things like offering long prayers, getting the best seats in the synagogue, fasting, and Sabbath keeping. We could also add seeing value in attending, joining, being on boards or serving on committees. But with Jesus it's all about attitudes like compassion, repentance, conviction of sin, and matters of the heart and conscience.

Questions from Chapter 2

1. Jesus said to the paralytic, "*son, your sins are forgiven.*" Jesus forgave his sins because
 - A. The paralytic had faith.
 - B. The four men who brought him had faith.
 - C. The Pharisees and scribes needed to know Jesus could forgive sin.
 - D. A and C
 - E. All of the above
2. Jesus' answer to the question about fasting indicates that
 - A. Fasting should be connected to prayer.
 - B. Fasting should be connected to sorrow.
 - C. Fasting should be connected to sincerity.
 - D. A and C
 - E. All of the above
3. Why was Jesus *eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners*?
 - A. Because they were friends of Matthew.
 - B. Because they knew they were sinners.
 - C. Because He wanted to irritate the scribes and Pharisees.
 - D. A and B
 - E. All of the above

Answers: 1. E. 2. B (fasting was for after He was gone). 3. D.

Chapter 3

Mark 3 has four paragraphs: healing on the Sabbath, healing by the Sea of Galilee, appointing the 12, Jesus accused of being Satan, and comments about Jesus' mother and brothers.

Verses 1-6 Healing on the Sabbath

Jesus entered a synagogue, probably the one in Capernaum, on a Sabbath day, and there was a man there with a crippled hand. The Pharisees were watching so they could accuse Him of violating the Sabbath. Jesus asked them, *“Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?”* The Mosaic Law said they had to keep the Sabbath as a day of rest (Exodus 20:8; Deuteronomy 5:12), but it said nothing about meeting in synagogues on the Sabbath. There was only one *place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come* (Deuteronomy 12:5). And when the Temple was rebuilt in Jerusalem, that was the only designated place of worship. *“I will fill this house with glory,” says the LORD of hosts* (Haggai 2:1-7).

Synagogues have an uncertain origin. Devote rabbinical Jews will claim synagogues go back to the Old Testament, but there is no evidence for that. Most likely, they were developed, at least in some form, during the Babylonian Captivity, when the Jews were out of the land and Solomon's Temple was destroyed. When the Jews returned to the land beginning in the 400s B.C., even though the Temple was rebuilt, they apparently brought back the idea of having local synagogues.

The Pharisees (Hebrew: *Perushim*, meaning “separated”) emerged as a distinct group shortly after the Maccabean revolt (165–160 B.C.). Josephus first mentioned the Pharisees in connection with Jonathan, the successor of Judas Maccabeus (“Antiquities” 13:5 & 9), so sometime in the 150s B.C. The Pharisees were a party of laymen and scribes in contradistinction to the Sadducees—who were a politically-oriented, wealthy, non-Levitical priesthood that ran the Temple. The Pharisees believed that, in addition to the written Torah, there exists another Torah consisting of the body of oral laws and traditions. These oral traditions were supposedly spoken by God to Moses, and then memorized and passed down from the time of Moses. That became the Mishna and the Gomorrah and what is today the Talmud. The Pharisees believed all Jews had to observe the purity laws, which applied to the Temple service, outside the Temple. So the synagogue became the place for that service and especially for Sabbath keeping. The Pharisees chose to apply their oral traditions and to focus on their synagogue, neither of which have a basis in Old Testament Scripture.

Jesus pointed out that everybody has to do something on the Sabbath. Unless you are dead, you can't just do nothing. Since you have to do something, Jesus asked, *“Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?”* This turned the discussion to good and bad, rather than keeping traditions, and brought the source of authority back to the character of God, not the supposed oral laws. Jesus' statement also implies Jesus was saving people and the Pharisees were killing them with their traditions. Also, with His healing in the synagogue on the Sabbath, Jesus changed the question of morality from the Pharisees' mechanical acts of obeying their traditions, to the intentions of their hearts.

When Jesus healed the man, *the Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.* The Pharisees disagreed with the Herodians politically because the Herodians were loyal to Herod and Rome, and the Pharisees wanted independence from both. But the Pharisees hated Jesus more than they hated the Herodians, because Jesus challenged their power derived through their oral traditions and applied in their synagogues.

Verses 7-12 Healing by the Sea of Galilee

The news about Jesus' healing spread *around Galilee*, down south to *Judea, Jerusalem*, east to *Idumea, and beyond the Jordan*, all the way up north to *Tyre and Sidon*. Only Mark mentions *He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him*. The question here is, "Why did Jesus start His ministry with healing?" It seems to have attracted crowds of people who were only interested in being healed, it prevented His movements, and it is not something any of us can imitate. But that last observation seems to be the point. Since it is not something anyone can do, it was factual evidence that He was the Messiah He claimed to be. Even the demons, who were aware of the heavenly realm and who Jesus was from that realm before His incarnation, declared, "*You are the Son of God!*" But *He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was* because it is inappropriate for evil spirits to proclaim anything about Jesus.

Verses 13-19 Appointing the Twelve

Jesus somehow escaped the crowd and went up to the mountain, probably the high area north of Capernaum where He later delivered "The Sermon On the Mount," which Mark does not record. The ones He called (NASV *summoned*) in verse 13 are probably the same ones He *appointed* in verses 14 and 16. There are three other lists of the disciples given in the New Testament (Matthew 10:1-4; Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:13). Thaddaeus, Matthew, and Peter had more than one name. Mark gave three reasons for appointing 12: (1) *so that they would be with Him, and (2) that He could send them out to preach, and (3) to have authority to cast out the demons*.

Verses 20-30 Jesus Accused of Being Satan

When Jesus and the 12 returned to Peter's house in Capernaum, there was such a huge crowd that they could hardly find a time and place to eat. Then His own biological family (the wording indicates His kinsmen) tried an intervention with Him, *saying, "He has lost His senses."* Let's summarize the impact of Jesus' message so far: (1) the Pharisees were plotting against Him with the Herodians, (2) His family thought He was crazy, trying to *take custody of Him*, and then (3) *the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul."* This is a good place for the question, "Do you want to be like Jesus, follow in His footsteps, imitate His ways?" Maybe the question is, "Do you want people to think you are dangerous, crazy, and possessed by the devil?"

Jesus pointed out the absurdity of the accusation, *He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons*. Then He went further and said, "*Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.*" Jesus said this because they were observing Jesus' work through the Holy Spirit and calling it the work of the devil. That's *an eternal sin* because it is rejecting Christ as the Son of God. Technically, all sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, since He is the one who *will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment* (John 16:8), and all sin is unforgivable without the cross of Christ.

Verses 31-35 Comments About Jesus' Mother and Brothers

Jesus' *mother and His brothers* thought He was crazy and tried an intervention to take Him captive. Apparently, they couldn't get to Him, so *they sent word to Him and called Him*. It should be noted: (1) Mary's husband Joseph is not mentioned, possibly he had died, (2) Jesus had brothers who were connected to Mary, the most obvious way to understand this was that Mary was not a perpetual virgin, and (3) Jesus never gave special significance to His mother, and defined His family as His disciples spiritually rather than biologically. The Christianity of Christ and the apostles did not seem to prioritize the family. At any rate, He concluded, "*for whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.*"

Applications from Chapter 3

- 1. Morality should not be defined religiously.** In the last chapter, we saw that morality is not about mechanical acts. But here we see that religion itself can prevent morality. By healing on the Sabbath, Jesus placed compassion for a crippled man over keeping the Sabbath in the synagogue. This went right to the heart of conservative Jewish morality. Jesus asked the question “What is good?” “*Is it lawful* [i.e., according to the Mosaic Law] *to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?*” This assumes what He did [being *lawful*] was saving people, and what they were doing, while keeping the Sabbath traditions in their synagogues, was killing people.
- 2. Following Jesus will result in rejection from religious authorities.** It is a certainty, not just a possibility, if you follow Jesus, there will be leaders of “Christianity” who will not approve of you. You can be certain that if all the established Christian leaders you know believe that you are a good guy or gal, you are doing something less than following Jesus. In Jesus’ day, that was because of the traditional conservatism in the synagogues. Today, in the western part of the world, it’s because many of our leaders have abandoned biblical standards in order to be “relevant,” so they can keep people coming to their meetings. But in both cases, it’s because if you follow Jesus, you will be a threat to the “success” of the religious leadership.
- 3. You cannot follow Jesus and put your family first.** Being a Jew in Israel was all about family. Israelites related to God through their genealogical tie to Abraham. But in the church, we relate to God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Social order is established through families in all ages, including our church/grace age. Also, our families are among those *allotted to your charge* (1 Peter 5:3). But the apostles called their fellow believers brothers and sisters and their disciples their true children. Whereas the Old Testament is filled with genealogical information, we don’t know anything about the apostles’ wives except that some of them traveled with them (1 Corinthians 9:5), nor do we hear anything about their biological children. The church is a band of brothers and sisters in Christ, where the more mature serve the less mature.

Questions from Chapter 3

- The Pharisees did not think Jesus should
 - Heal on the Sabbath
 - Heal in the synagogue
 - Heal during a meeting in the synagogue
- Some people came a long way to Jesus in Galilee because
 - They wanted to be healed.
 - They wanted to see miracles.
 - They were curious about what was happening.
 - A and B
 - All of the above
- In Mark 3:31-35, the comments about Jesus’ mother and brothers, argues against Mary’s
 - Immaculate conception
 - Perpetual virginity
 - Sainthood

Answers: 1. A. 2. E (3:8). 3. B (by implication all of these, but that answer is not offered).

Chapter 4

Mark 4 has seven paragraphs: the parable of the sower, the explanation of the parable of the sower, the parable of the lamp, statements about listening, measuring and having, the sprouting seed, the mustard seed, and calming the sea.

Verses 1-9 The Parable of the Sower

A **parable** is a brief, often unrealistic, story or illustration drawn from everyday experiences, in which a single moral or spiritual truth is illustrated by an analogy. About one-third of Christ's teaching was in parables of different lengths. Most of them were given without explanation.

Again (as in 3:9), Jesus entered a boat to teach a large crowd gathered on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He began with the word *Ακούετε* (*akouete*), a one-word command to *hear* or *listen*. Then He told them an unrealistic story about a farmer who sowed his seed randomly so that it landed beside the road, on rocky places, among thorns, and finally *into the good soil*. Of course, no farmer would sow seed like that. The point is, all but the good soil, for various reasons, were useless, and the good soil reproduced in different amounts. So the parable is all about the condition of the soil, but the only commentary the crowd received was, "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*"

Verses 10-20 The Explanation of the Parable of the Sower

This explanation to Jesus' *followers, along with the twelve*, was made later, at some other location (Matthew 13:36). Mark put it here to tie the parable to its explanation. Jesus began with a contrast between what is given to His disciples and *those who are outside*. Jesus calls it a *μυστήριον* (*musterion*) meaning a *mystery*. This word only occurs in this parable, and it is in all three of the synoptic gospels (Matthew 13:11; Luke 8:10), but this word *mystery* occurs 21 times in the epistles and four times in the book of Revelation (1:20; 10:7; 17:5, 7). The idea of the word is not something mystical or mysterious. A *μυστήριον* (*musterion*) is a new revelation that God kept secret (Romans 16:25-26), hidden from past ages. For example, Paul calls this age a *μυστήριον* (*musterion*), a *mystery which for ages has been hidden in God* (Ephesians 3:9). This parable would not fit Israel because God's covenant with Israel included a national collective commitment. This parable was something new. It was all about, and only about, the individual, pictured as a certain kind of *soil*.

In contrast to the disciples, who have *been given the mystery of the kingdom of God*, all the others are outsiders, who just get everything in parables, so that they (using a statement derived from Isaiah 6:9-10) will not *perceive* or *understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven*. So the point is to give understanding to a few, and keep understanding from the many. It's interesting that some are not chosen of God to understand, but Jesus also orchestrates their not understanding.

Jesus said the sower sows the *λόγος* (*logos*), the *Word*. This term is used to describe Jesus in John 1:1, and in the statement, *His name is called the Word of God* at the Second Coming (Revelation 19:13). This means that Jesus' teaching would fall on different kinds of soil, representing different receptivity among people.

Verses 21-23 The Parable of the Lamp

The lamp being *put on a lampstand... For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed*, means that God is about to reveal what He will do in the future through Christ and the apostles.

Verses 24-25 Statements about Listening, Measuring, and Having

Next, Jesus makes three difficult statements:

1. *Take care what you listen to (KJV, hear).*
2. *By your standard of measure, it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides.*
3. *For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.*

If these three are connected, we can conclude the following: If we listen to the revelation given by Jesus, that revelation will become the standard by which we will receive more revelation. If we listen to some other message, we will lose even what the revelation from Jesus offers.

Verses 26-29 The Sprouting Seed

Jesus is the initial sower of this seed. But He will be joined by the apostle and other disciples, like you and I, who do not know *how the seed sprouts and grows*. The seed represents the kingdom of God, which includes all those who become believers in Jesus Christ. After the kingdom grows to the point where all those who are chosen of God throughout the ages have become believers, then Jesus will return for His own and put *in the sickle, because the harvest has come*. The **interpretation** is that all those sowing the seed (the Gospel and the Word of God) through the centuries have no idea how it grows. The **application** is we should not try to develop a strategy or set specific goals to reach, like, for example, to disciple or minister to a certain number of people for Christ. Numbers are God's job. Our job is to plant the seed of the Word of God in the lives of people.

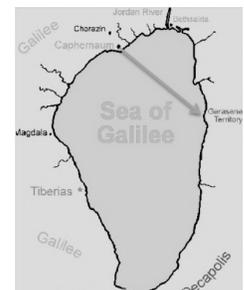
Verses 30-34 The Mustard Seed

This is a prediction of the history of the spread of the Gospel. Jesus' ministry is the like a mustard seed (there are about 21,000 mustard seeds per ounce, 750 per gram). Jesus' tiny ministry was planted in the tiny area of Israel with a tiny group of disciples. But it will grow to a global band of brothers and sisters in Christ.

Verses 35-41 Calming the Sea

This story is given in the vivid details of someone who was an eyewitness to the event. Most likely this is Peter's account, which he told on many occasions, recorded here by Mark.

In the evening of the day Jesus was teaching in parables from a boat, He said, "*Let us go over to the other side,*" meaning, from the north side to the east side of the Sea of Galilee. So this event took place as it was getting dark or already dark. The deep valley on the north side of Mt. Arbel on the west side of the Sea of Galilee functions as a wind tunnel capable of channeling a west wind and causing a *fierce gale* across the northern half of the lake. While the disciples were fighting for their lives and *the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up, Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion*. So they woke Him up and accused Him of not caring that they were perishing.



Jesus then spoke to the storm, saying, "*Hush, be still,*" as if it were a noisy child responding to a parent's command. This demonstrated Jesus' control over nature. He not only created all of nature (John 1:3), He controlled it (Colossians 1:17). Jesus said they had two problems—fear and faith. "*Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?*" They were afraid of the wrong thing—the storm rather than the God of the storm. They also had a faith problem. He said, "*Let us go over to the other side,*" not "Let us go out in the sea and drown in a storm." The reprimand includes the word οὐπω (*oupo*) for *not yet*, meaning, *Do you **not yet** have faith*, indicating that they already had plenty of evidence for their faith. Lack of faith meant (what it always does in the Bible) not trusting reasonable evidence. The response of the disciples was a new understanding of who Jesus was. They said, "*Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?*"

Applications from Chapter 4

- 1. Only those who receive the Word of God will reproduce the character of God.** Jesus taught the idea that each individual is like a different kind of soil with different receptivity to the Word [λόγος (*logos*)] of God. The value of the soil is based on that receptivity. Satan, shallowness, and worldly desires all make us unreceptive. The evidence for those who are receptive to the Word of God is that it reproduces itself in their lives. For example, if someone says they believe in the Bible but pursue divorce, lying, cohabitation or homosexuality, then they are not indeed receptive to the Word of God. As has been said, “God will never lead you to fall in love with someone else’s husband or wife.”
- 2. We should focus on an accurate, dignified presentation of the Gospel and the Word of God, not the numerical result of that message.** In the parable of the sprouting seed, Jesus indicated that those sowing it have no idea how it grows. So we should not create or focus on goals to reach “x” number of souls for Christ or disciple “x” number of people by such and such a time. When we do that, we will inevitably change the message to accommodate our goal. We should only focus on spreading the Word of God by whatever gifts and calling we were given. Of course, you should not be obnoxious or insensitive, you should, as Peter said, *give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence* (1 Peter 3:15).
- 3. Fear God, not what’s going on around you.** When the disciples thought they were drowning, they were guilty of misplaced fear. They feared the storm rather than the God of the storm. Their response was quite different than that of Jesus. They were afraid. He was asleep. And Jesus indicated that they should have had faith in the midst of the storm. He also connected their faith to their fear, “*Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?*” They feared the storm, and their inability to overcome it, rather than the one who controlled all of creation. After Jesus calmed the storm, the disciples asked a different question, “*Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?*”

Questions from Chapter 4

- To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God* means that the apostles would
 - A. Understand Jesus’ parables
 - B. Understand new revelation from God
 - C. Understand that the Old Testament predicted Christ
- In the parable of the sower/soils,
 - A. Only the fourth soil represents people who are saved.
 - B. The third and fourth soil represents people who are saved.
 - C. Neither of the above
- When Jesus calmed the sea, most likely,
 - A. They were in the northern half of the sea.
 - B. They had blown into the middle of the sea.
 - C. They were in the southern half of the sea.

Answers: 1. B. 2. C (the parable is not about salvation). 3. A (they could have blown to the middle, but it’s unlikely since the wind probably came alongside Mt. Arbel from the west).

Chapter 5

Mark 5 has three rather large paragraphs: the Gerasenian demoniac, the interruption of the woman with the issue of blood, and raising Jairus' daughter.

Verses 1-20 The Gerasenian Demoniac

After the calming of the sea, Jesus and His 12 disciples *came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes* (also called the Gadarenes in Matthew 8:28), which referred to the area around the small town Gersa (probably the modern town of Khersa), located on the lake's eastern shore. *When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him.*

Matthew said *two men who were demon-possessed met Him* (Matthew 8:28), whereas Mark and Luke just mention one, probably the one multiple-possessed man who approached the boat. But this is further evidence that Matthew and Mark did not just expand or copy the gospel of the other. Five things are said about the demon-possessed man:

1. He was *dwelling in the tombs* (caves where demented people were forced to live)
2. *He had often been bound with shackles, torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces*
3. *No one was strong enough to subdue him*
4. *Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and*
5. He was *gashing himself with stones*

The first thing Jesus did was address the demon, saying, "*Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!*" Next, there ensues a conversation between the demon and Jesus. The most interesting comment the demon made was, "*What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God?*" We can see where James gets the thought, *...the demons also believe, and shudder* (James 2:19). Actually, the demons seemed to have a more accurate concept of who Jesus was than His disciples. So what made demons, demons instead of angels? Answer: Like the people of this world, they *loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil* (John 3:19). They knew Jesus was the Son of God, but they were not willing to follow Him into the Kingdom of God. Instead, they preferred to follow Satan into the kingdom of darkness.

The demon Jesus talked to, named *Legion*, was, apparently, the leader of about 2,000 demons, because when he asked that they be allowed to enter *into the swine*, about that many pigs *rushed down the steep bank into the sea*. It is unclear why they asked this or why Jesus granted it. It seems that, although they don't prefer it, demons can also possess animals, and can destroy them as well. Pigs were unclean food for the Jews (Leviticus 11:7), so these herdsmen were either Gentiles or disobedient Jews. At any rate, when the people of the city saw the pigs destroyed and the man *clothed and in his right mind*, they *implored* Jesus to leave. [παρακαλέω (*parakaleo*), is a common New Testament word for *exhort, encourage* or *urge*, as in Romans 12:1]. Interestingly, the people were more comfortable with the demon-possessed man than they were with Jesus. The same is true today. Apparently, they also *loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil* (John 3:19).

The formerly demon-possessed man wanted to follow Jesus, but He told him to "*Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.*" So he obeyed *and began to proclaim in Decapolis* [the 10 Greek cities southeast of the Sea of Galilee] *what great things Jesus had done for him.*



Verses 21-34 The Interruption of the Woman with the *Issue of Blood*

When Jesus and His disciples crossed back over the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum, a large crowd gathered again. *One of the synagogue officials named Jairus* [one of several laymen (probably not a Pharisee) responsible for the physical management of the synagogue building and the worship services] *came up, and on seeing Him, fell at His feet.* Jairus begged Jesus to come and lay hands on his sick daughter. So Jesus went with him and the crowd followed.

Next, we read about a very odd healing. A woman with a *ῥύσει αἵματος* (*hrusei haimatos*) *flow of blood* [either a chronic menstrual disorder or a uterine hemorrhage], unable to get help from physicians for 12 years, touched Jesus' *cloak* [His outer garment]. This may have been because she believed the popular notion that the clothing of a healer has power to heal or she may have heard that others touched Jesus and were healed (3:10; 6:56). At any rate, she hoped to touch His cloak and disappear into the crowd unnoticed. That didn't work.

The power was not in Jesus' cloak but in Jesus Himself because He *knew the power went out from Him.* So He asked, "*Who touched My garments?*" The disciples were confused, since people were constantly touching Him. But the question wasn't because Jesus was unaware of the woman or did not control His healing power or He would not have known she had faith. What she (and His disciples) needed to know was, her *faith* had *σέσωκέν* (*sesoken*) *saved* her. It was an example of salvation by faith, not by keeping the Mosaic Law or the Pharisees' traditions, a message central to Jesus' ministry. And, as with the paralytic lowered through the roof, the evidence of her salvation by faith was to *be healed of your affliction.* This is the only record of Jesus addressing someone as a *daughter.* [If she had the illness since her early teens +12 years = mid-twenties.]

Verses 35-43 Raising Jairus' Daughter

While He was still speaking, they came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, "Your daughter has died." One can imagine how anxious Jairus was during the whole delay caused by the woman with the issue of blood, knowing his daughter was on the verge of death. Jairus' friends asked, "*Why trouble the Teacher anymore?*" The assumption was Jesus' power was limited to healing. *But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid any longer, only believe."* Once again, faith was the key. And, once again, faith meant to trust the evidence pointing to who Jesus was.

At this point, Jesus separated from the crowd and took only Peter [the one who supplied Mark with the details of this incident], James [the first apostle martyred], and his brother John [the last apostle to die and the author of the fourth gospel]. When they arrived at Jairus' house, the people who were weeping, laughed when Jesus said, "*The child has not died, but is asleep.*" Notice the laughing was not humor (there is no humor in the Bible) but mocking. Whereas Paul used the figure of speech *asleep* to refer to actual death, Jesus used it to represent a state where her body had died but her spirit had apparently not left her body (the definition of death in Genesis 35:18). Spiritually, she was in something like a coma, that is, her spirit didn't go to Paradise and return. He did the same when Lazarus died (John 11:11-14). Jesus then spoke in Aramaic, probably because she and her parents spoke Aramaic in the home, "*Talitha kum!*" (*which translated [into Greek] means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"*). Her dead body not only came back to life, but she *got up and began to walk and eat.* Once again, *Jesus gave them strict orders that no one should know about this,* apparently, because such knowledge would hinder His movements even more.

Applications from Chapter 5

- 1. Faith in Christ includes a belief that He is good.** The demons possessing the Gerasenian demoniac believed Jesus was *the Son of the Most High God*. They believed He was God, but not that God was good. There are many today who want salvation through Jesus, but they don't like what He said about things like judgment, fearing God, materialism, sexual purity, lying, lust, and anger. Many want to claim salvation in Jesus but think it is good to do what Jesus said is bad to do, like get a divorce, cohabit, tolerate homosexuality, be proud, and hate their enemies. They say they believe in Jesus, but they *loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil* (John 3:19).
- 2. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him.** The reason Jesus did not let the woman with the issue of blood just get healed and walk away is because He wanted her to know "*Daughter, your faith [σέσωκέν (sesoken)] has saved you.*" She worked her way through the crowd because she believed Jesus could heal her. The power of God, not Jesus' cloak, saved her. But the reason it did was because of her faith in Him. And Jesus did not want her to get away without that understanding.
- 3. Jesus, not nature or some mystical force in the universe, has power over life and death.** When Jesus raised Jairus' daughter, it also raised the revelation of who He was to a whole new level. Jesus was not just a healer, He had the power over life and death. John wrote, *In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men* (John 1:4). Jesus was not just alive, as we are, He was a life-giver, a source of life. Before His death on the cross, Jesus said, "*I lay down My life so that I may take it again*" (John 10:17). We need to understand that life did not evolve, or come from some mystical universe. It came from Jesus alone.

Questions from Chapter 5

- The Gerasenian demoniac was
 - Homeless
 - Sick
 - Insane
- Jairus' daughter died because Jesus
 - Took too long to get there
 - Healed the woman with the issue of blood
 - Wanted to show that He could raise the dead
 - A and B
 - All of the above
- When Jesus said, "*Who touched me?*", the woman responded with
 - Faith
 - Fear
 - Surprise

Answers: 1. C. 2. E. 3. B (5:13).

Chapter 6

Mark 6 has five paragraphs: a trip to Nazareth, sending out the 12, the death of John the Baptist, feeding the 5000, and walking on the water.

Verses 1-6 A Trip to Nazareth

In the trip to Nazareth, where Jesus grew up about 20 miles (32 kilometers) west of Capernaum:

- The hometown people were astonished at Jesus' *wisdom* and *powers* [δύναμις (*dunamis*)]. So, apparently, He had not done those things, at least not publically, before His ministry began when He was *about thirty* (Luke 3:23).
- Jesus grew up as a *carpenter, the son of Mary*. He had four physical half-brothers named *James* [who, after he became a believer, became the head of the church in Jerusalem and wrote the book of James], *Judas* [who, after he became a believer, wrote the book of Jude], *Joses*, and *Simon* [about whom we know nothing else]. He also had more than one (unnamed) physical half-sisters, living *here with us* in Nazareth.
- Jesus was a true prophet, but not honored, in this case, that would be “not believed” in His hometown or by His relatives. And Jesus said that would generally be the case.
- For Jesus, *He could not do His powers* [δύναμις (*dunamis*)] *there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them*, due to their unbelief. The purpose of Jesus' miracles was to prove that He was the Messiah and draw attention to His message (salvation by the grace of God through faith in Him as the Son of God). The purpose of His miracles was not to please the people of His hometown, or anywhere else.

Verses 7-13 Sending Out the Twelve

As far as we know, Jesus never returned to Nazareth, but He did continue to travel *around the villages teaching*. Then He sent out the twelve, two-by-two (see 11:1; 14:13; John 8:17; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). Jesus *gave them authority over the unclean spirits*, but restricted what they could take on the journey. Apparently, the point was, they didn't need it because He would take care of them.

The two exceptions to the travel restrictions, a staff and sandals, are unique to Mark. Matthew used κτάομαι (*ptaomai*) to *procure* or *acquire*, instead of Mark's word αἶρω (*airo*) to *take*. Matthew's point is, the disciples were not to *acquire an additional* staff or sandals. But again, this shows that neither Matthew nor Mark copied the other's work. The disciples were to meet rejection with rejection, *shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them*. They cast out demons and healed the sick, all with a message of repentance.

Verses 14-29 The Death of John the Baptist

Mark interrupted his gospel of Jesus with the account of the death of John the Baptist. He introduced the story with the information that Herod Antipas (tetrarch of Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to 39 A.D.) had the idea that Jesus was a resurrection of John the Baptist, because Herod feared John. Then Mark tells us John was in prison because he told Herod it was not right *to have your brother's wife* (Leviticus 18:16; 20:21). Herod had divorced his first wife to marry his half-niece Herodias, the daughter of his half-brother Aristobulus, who had married his other half-brother Philip (Josephus “Antiquities” 18. 5.1-2). Are you confused yet? During their marriage, Philip and Herodias had a daughter Salome who was now living with her mother and Herod Antipas. After her dancing pleased Herod and at the prompting of her mother, she asked for *the head of John the Baptist*, which she received *on a platter*.

Verses 30-44 Feeding the 5,000

When the disciples returned and reported about their journeys, Jesus said, “*Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while,*” generally good advice after a ministry effort. So they tried to avoid the crowd and went up into the hills above and east of Bethsaida. But when Jesus saw the crowd of people, *He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.* The place was full of religious leaders, especially Pharisees, and scribes, yet the people were *like sheep without a shepherd.*

After teaching them most of the day, it was getting late, so the disciples suggested He send the people away to buy food. Jesus responded with, “*You give them something to eat.*” Whether it was a calculation or an exaggeration, the disciples said feeding them would take 200 denarii, about eight months’ wages for an average worker. When Jesus asked them, “*How many loaves do you have?*”, they found *five and two fish* [probably roasted, salted, and dried]. Jesus then had them sit on the grass in groups of 100s and 50s. He *looked up toward heaven* (a rarely used prayer stance today) and blessed (said good words for) the food.

The miracle happened in Jesus’ hands as He *broke the loaves, divided up the two fish and kept giving them to the disciples to set before them.* Not only were the people fed, *They all ate and were satisfied* (literally filled) to the extent that *they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish.* Most likely, each of the 12 disciples picked up a basket of leftover food. There were 5,000 men (the word for *males*), but women and children (Matthew 14:21) would make the number much larger. The whole incident provided more evidence for faith that Jesus was who He claimed to be.

Verses 45-56 Walking On the Water

Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away. There is a geographical problem concerning the location of *Bethsaida* (6:32; Luke 9:10; John 12:21). It seems that the name refers to an area across the north-eastern part of the sea. On the east was Bethsaida Julias. Julias, being the name of Caesar Augustus’ daughter, given to the city by Herod Philip (Josephus. “Antiquities” 18:28 [ii.1]). But at the north-western edge of the Sea of Galilee was “Bethsaida in Galilee,” the original home of Peter, Andrew, and Philip (John 12:21; 1:44; Mark 1:21, 29). It was a fishing suburb of Capernaum and probably on the shore of the sea in Jesus’ day (John 6:17).



While attempting to make the short boat ride from there to Bethsaida in Galilee, sometime between 3 A.M. and 6 A.M., a strong east wind came up and blew them out into the midst of the sea. While the wind was blowing, Jesus came *walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them. But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost.* At that point He identified Himself, and said, “*Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.*” *Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped and they came to land at Gennesaret* on the northwest side of the sea, the area where earlier the disciples were picking grain on the Sabbath. [This is also when Peter walked on water with Jesus (Matthew 14:28-31), but Mark does not mention it.] Mark’s comment on the incident was *they had not gained any insight [or understanding] from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened [stubborn or dim].* So the evidence of the feeding of the 5,000 should have created faith in the hearts of the apostles.

The chapter ends with Jesus healing the sick *wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside.* Jesus never refused healing for anyone who asked Him, yet He refused to perform signs for those in Nazareth and the religious leaders.

Applications from Chapter 6

- 1. There is no evidence for the idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary.** Both the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches claim that Mary remained a virgin all her life. But that is clearly not so. The only reasonable way to understand the first part of Mark 6 is that, although Mary had Jesus via a virgin birth, afterward, she and Joseph had several other children who were Jesus' half-siblings. The idea that these were cousins or children of a first marriage of Joseph are without biblical support and purely an attempt to defend Catholic or Orthodox doctrine.
- 2. There is a limit to the amount of rejection of the gospel we should tolerate.** Jesus told His disciples, “*Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them*” (6:11). As we go about telling those we encounter about the gospel, making a defense for the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15), we will encounter rejection. That's expected, and we will often pray and witness to those people persistently. But there comes a time when we need to *shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them*. Rejection should be met with rejection. We should do more than just move on to someone else, but make an outward testimony against those who reject the truth of the Word of God.
- 3. What we have, when it is given to Jesus, is sufficient for meeting the needs for what He requires of us.** The feeding of the 5,000 verifies the deity of Christ, but it also carries the all-over lesson that what we have plus Jesus is sufficient to do what He asks us to do. Jesus has not asked all His disciples through the ages to participate in miracles, like feeding the 5000. But He did ask us to apply His revelation by making disciples of all nations, entrusting the things we have learned to others who can in turn teach others, obey His Word, and combat false teaching. What we have is enough to do what God has asked us to do, if we give it over to Jesus and let Him do the work.

Questions from Chapter 6

1. Which is closest to the number of biological children Joseph and Mary had?
 - A. 4
 - B. 5
 - C. 6
2. John the Baptist was killed because
 - A. Herod hated him
 - B. Herodias hated him
 - C. He said Herod should not have married Herodias
3. When Jesus walked on water, the disciples were going to
 - A. Bethsaida
 - B. Capernaum
 - C. Gennesaret

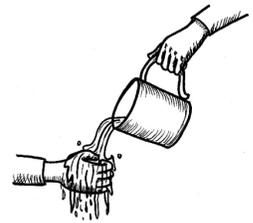
Answers: 1. C. 2. B. 3. A (although they ended up at Gennesaret).

Chapter 7

Mark 7 has four paragraphs: arguing about unwashed hands with the Pharisees, explaining external and internal defilement to the disciples, healing the Syrophenician woman's daughter, and healing one who was deaf and could hardly speak.

Verses 1-13 Arguing about Unwashed Hands with the Pharisees

Word about Jesus reached the Pharisees in Jerusalem, so they sent a delegation up north to Galilee to confront Jesus about all His law breaking. Right away, they notice that Jesus' *disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed*. Mark tells us that the Pharisees not only washed their hands but also their cups and pots. It's especially interesting because this practice is what often preserved the Jews and kept them from serious diseases that killed others, such as during the bubonic plague in Europe in the 1300s and 1400s.



Yet Jesus quoted Isaiah 29:13 to tell them they are *hypocrites* whose *heart is far from Me*. He said, *"neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."* Then He doubled down on it, saying, *"You are experts [καλῶς (kalos) good] at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition."* This He proved by giving an example where they neglected the command to *honor your father and your mother* for a tradition called *Corban*, which said you didn't have to care for your parents if you tell them you gave a δῶρον (*doron*) gift, probably a donation to the synagogue, *"...thus invalidating the Word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that."* In so doing, Jesus affirmed the Old Testament and rejected the oral traditions supposedly handed down since the time of Moses, in what later became the Talmud of rabbinic Judaism. And that's a **conservative**, one who honors the past and can't tell the difference between the "good old days" and the Word of God. A conservative thinks within a box that brings chaos into order, but everything outside of the box is wrong. They are what Jesus later called "old wineskins."

Verses 14-23 Explaining External and Internal Defilement to the Disciples

Jesus first gave the concept to the crowd, then explained it to His disciples. The concept is verse 15:

"There is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man."

[The sentence in Mark 7:16, "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear," is not in earlier manuscripts.]

When He was with His disciples, Jesus clarified that what we eat goes through us and is eliminated. So there is no enduring problem. Even keeping the food requirements of the Law (Leviticus 11) was about obedience, not the food itself. But then Mark makes his own concluding (inspired of God) dispensational comment, *Thus He declared all foods clean*. Remember, the Gospel of Mark was written to the church, not to Israel. It was written in the mid-50s, about 20 years after the church began in 33 (as recorded in Acts 2). Mark is projecting Jesus' comments into the church age, the age where Mark is living and the audience Mark is addressing. He is pointing out that Jesus paved the way for the replacement of the Law with grace (John 1:17). In the new church age dispensation, there would be no unclean food (Acts 10:15; Romans 14:14; Galatians 2:11-17; Colossians 2:20-22).

Then Jesus extended His statement further in verses 21-22, giving a list of 13 things that defile us:

"That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the (1) evil thoughts, (2) fornications, (3) thefts, (4) murders, (5) adulteries, (6) deeds of coveting and (7) wickedness, as well as (8) deceit, (9) sensuality, (10) envy, (11)

slander, (12) pride and (13) foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”

What’s significant about the things that proceed out of our hearts is that they are incurable. It’s easy to regulate what we eat, impossible to keep from evil thoughts. No monastery, convent, legalistic or conservative system can prevent, contain, or control it. Only the external manifestations can be controlled. The point made by the whole account of the life and death of Christ throughout the synoptics is that, without the cross, we have no hope.

Verses 24-30 Healing the Syrophenician Woman’s Daughter

Jesus left the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee and traveled north to Tyre (two early manuscripts add *and Sidon*). This is the only recorded time Jesus was outside of Palestine or near the Mediterranean. This woman, not being Jewish, did not speak Aramaic, so it is clear Jesus spoke to her in Greek, indicating He probably did so most of the time. First, Jesus entered a private home, apparently of someone He knew. *After hearing of Him, a woman [called a Syrophenician, from Phoenicia, a province of Syria] whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet, asking Him to cast out the demon. Jesus responded with a symbolic statement the woman clearly understood. He said,*

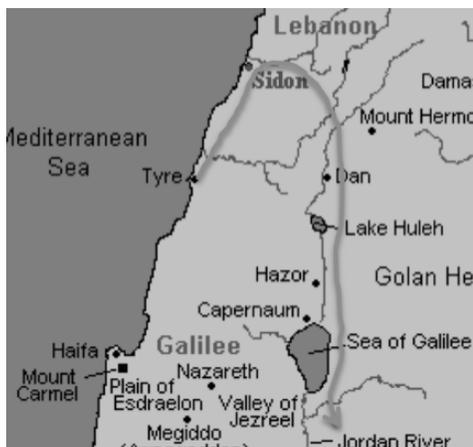
“Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

Jesus is not trying to be, or trying to avoid being, insulting, calling Gentiles *κυνάρσιος (kunaraios)*, a small house dog. He is pointing out God’s prioritizing the Jews (John 4:22). The woman gave a very significant answer, one that got her daughter healed. And it was from a distance, without any vocal command from Jesus. She said, *“Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the children’s crumbs.”* The whole point of this incident was to point out the need for humility. This was not only a statement of faith (Matthew 8:10), but one of humility. If you want to get God’s attention, remember, He said, *“to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word”* (Isaiah 66:2).



Verses 31-37 Healing One Who Was Deaf and Could Hardly Speak

The chapter ends with an incident only recorded by Mark. Jesus went north from Tyre through Sidon, then apparently southeast through the territory controlled by Herod Philip. He seems to have returned to Galilee, by the area we call the Golan (Old Testament Bashan), across the Yarmuk River to Decapolis (Old Testament Gilead) on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee.



They brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty. Jesus took him aside privately and healed both his ailments. The healing was done by touching the man’s ears and his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, as He did when He blessed the bread, Jesus gave the Aramaic command “Ephphatha! meaning Be opened!” This indicates again that Aramaic was something Jesus used occasionally, but not regularly. It may also mean the man was a Jew, living in a Gentile area, who understood Aramaic.

But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My Word (Isaiah 66:2).

Applications from Chapter 7

- 1. Traditions, anything outside of the Bible, will end up being used to deny the Word of God.**
The traditions of the Pharisees were used to disobey the Old Testament Scripture. Traditional authorities used today include the writings of Mrs. White, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the Book of Mormon, and various creeds and catechisms. People following them become *experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep their tradition*. Also, conservatism will lead you away from the Bible as much as liberalism. Catholicism, Calvinism, Orthodoxy, and devotion to a political party will also lead you away from the Word of God.
- 2. We are condemned for what comes from our heart, not what goes in our mouth.** This would include food, alcohol, and drugs. But what about abuses, don't they defile us? Answer: Abuses must be treated. But if you think the problem is the abuse of physical substances, you are not dealing with the real problem. You can slim down obesity, dry out a drunk, and get someone off drugs, while not having dealt with what is destroying him or her at all. That's because it doesn't deal with what is really destroying them and defiling them before God. The physical abuses may not even be symptoms of the problem, because the *heart* problem exists, even if we don't commit any of these abuses. The real problem is things like *evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man*.
- 3. If you want to get God's attention, you will need to eliminate pride and come in humility.**
The Syrophenician woman had to overcome Jesus' basic principle that God prioritized the Jews. She did it, not by arguing against the point, but by accepting the humble position of being a needy Gentile, willing and eager to take the scraps that fell from the table of Israel. *For God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

Questions from Chapter 7

- The Pharisees' accusation about Jesus' disciples eating with unwashed hands is like
 - Being told to not mow the grass on Sunday
 - Being told by the Mormons that God was once a man on the planet Kolob
 - Being told drinking is a sin
- There is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him*, is like
 - Being told to not mow the grass on Sunday
 - Being told by the Mormons that God was once a man on the planet Kolob
 - Being told drinking is a sin
- What actually defiles a man is
 - Being told to not mow the grass on Sunday
 - Being told by the Mormons that God was once a man on the planet Kolob
 - Being told drinking is a sin

Answers: 1. B (Mormonism like Phariseeism is connected to a formal tradition that was oral and became written). 2. C.
3. B (Mormonism defiles man's thoughts about God).

Chapter 8

Mark 8 has six paragraphs: feeding the 4,000, the Pharisees asking for a sign from heaven, discussing the leaven of Herod and the Pharisees, healing a blind man in two steps, Peter's rebuke, and denying yourself.

Verses 1-9 Feeding the 4,000

The exact location for this second group feeding is unknown. However, in the last chapter, Mark told us He came *to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis* (7:31). So we would expect that this occurred in the same area, somewhere southeast of the Sea of Galilee. The miracle was very similar, but there is one notable difference. The Greek word for *baskets* is not the same as with the feeding of the 5,000. Here the word used for the seven *baskets* of food picked up is *σπυρίδας* (*spuridas*), that of a *huge basket*. It is the word for the *basket* used to let Paul down over the wall in Damascus, recorded in Acts 9:25. This could feed the disciples for many days, and may be part of their embarrassment later when they forgot to bring bread.

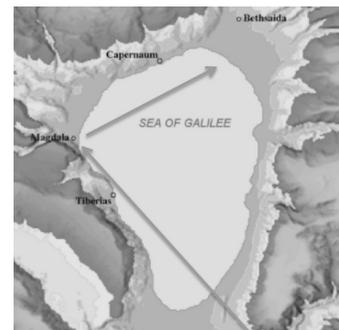
Verses 10-12 The Pharisees Ask for a Sign from Heaven

Jesus and the 12 got into a boat and crossed the sea to the region of Dalmanutha. Most understand this to be the town also known as Magadan, or Magdala (Matthew 15:39), the hometown of Mary Magdalene. It was located between Tiberius and Gennesaret, below Mount Arbel.

Here *The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him*. Although the discussion is longer than that, Mark only records Jesus' statement, "*Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.*" *This generation* refers to the Jewish people. The Pharisees were asking for some overtly miraculous sign, like fire coming down from heaven. This was a temptation like Satan gave Him in the wilderness, not something that would generate faith in the Pharisees. They asked because they did not believe He could provide such a sign. Throughout history, God supplied miraculous evidence appropriate for believing the truth He was revealing. He did not perform miraculous signs for people trying to test Him.

Verses 13-21 Discussing the Leaven of Herod and the Pharisees

Then they got in a boat again and crossed the top of the sea to Bethsaida. On the way, Jesus said, "*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.*" The leaven of the Pharisees was the hypocrisy of religious conservatism, following religious ideas as if they were in Scripture. Conservatives think they are following God because they have replaced godliness with conservatism. The leaven of Herod was secularism and materialism, and possibly also politics. Liberals liberalize old morality, progressives create new morality. But the disciples thought He was reprimanding them for not remembering to bring bread. Jesus then pointed out their lack of understanding. If He could feed 5,000 and 4,000, then He did not need them to bring bread. Once again, they reduced His spiritual teaching to something physical, which (as usual) caused their lack of understanding. Jesus always taught that the real problems in life were not physical. As the old saying goes, "If money can solve the problem, it isn't a very big problem."



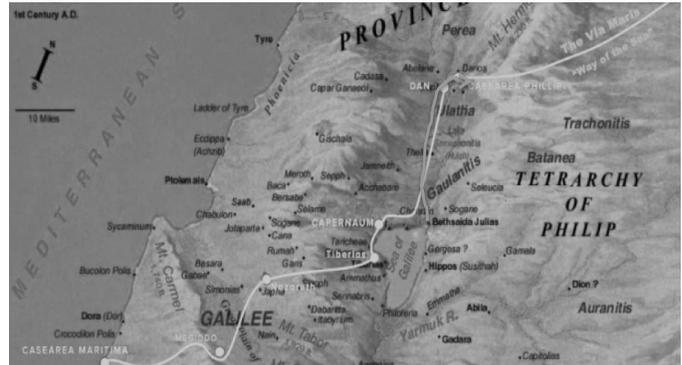
Verses 22-26 Healing a Blind Man in Two Steps

This is a second healing that only Mark records. When they arrive in Bethsaida, someone *brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him*. *Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought*

him out of the village. Then Jesus healed the man in two stages. No comment is made as to why He did this.

Verses 27-33 Peter's Rebuke

Before leaving Galilee for the year-long ministry in Judea, ending in His crucifixion in Jerusalem, Jesus took the disciples on a sort-of retreat up north, near the southern edge of Mount Hermon toward the villages of *Caesarea Philippi*. We are told that *on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?"* After they gave a few popular but wrong answers, He asked, *"But who do you say that I am?"* This was an easy one for Peter to answer, so he said to Him, *"You are the Christ."*



Then Jesus repeated the idea we find throughout His ministry and especially in the Gospel of Mark, *He warned them to tell no one about Him*. This was probably, in general, for two reasons: (1) because it hindered His travel, and (2) it interfered with His time alone with the disciples. But now there was an additional reason. (3) He wanted to be crucified at exactly the right time. He told them He would be *rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again*. This was the first clear prediction of His death, burial, and resurrection. But the timing of that was something Jesus orchestrated to occur exactly at the time predicted by Daniel 9:24-27. Public knowledge of His claim to be the Messiah would accelerate that timetable. But Daniel and most of the prophets did not describe the Messiah as suffering and dying (Daniel 7:13-14). Peter expected Jesus to go to Jerusalem and begin reigning as King of a kingdom on earth. So he rebuked Jesus for that idea, and was rebuked for his rebuke. Jesus said, *"Get behind Me, Satan."* [Not a nice way to talk to "the Pope".] The point is the same as in the earlier wilderness temptations. Satan also wanted to keep Christ from the cross. Then Jesus added, *"for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."* This is our most common error when applying the Word of God.

Verses 34-38 Denying Yourself

Next, Jesus gave four specific, though connected, requirements for following Him:

1. Verse 34 *If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me*. Self-denial is essential because our sin nature will always want to do things contrary to our new nature. Temptation toward sin we desire can only be dealt with by denying ourselves our sinful desires.
2. Verse 35 *For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it*. This is about the future martyrdom of most of the apostles, but it also applies to losing our own worldly selfish ambitions for what is pleasing to Christ.
3. Verses 36-37 *For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?* This is the basic profit motive. Eternal profit is eternally better than earthly temporal profit.
4. Verse 38 *For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels*. We become ashamed of His words when we refuse to take a stand when sinful values show up in those close to us who claim to be Christians.

Applications from Chapter 8

- 1. God does not respond to antagonistic prayer requests.** Many people asked Jesus for a miracle in the area of healing. Jesus always responded positively because they asked in faith—trust based in evidence. Satan and the Pharisees asked Him to do a miracle and were rebuked because they were trying to prove He wasn't who He claimed to be. Antagonistic people will not get a response from God.
- 2. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.** There are two areas of thought that will permeate our lives like leaven permeates bread dough. One is religion. When our religion is separated from or added to the Bible, it will poison our perspective on everything God said. The other is politics and secular goals to improve our lives or that of the society. When either of these take over our thoughts and goals, they will pollute our minds, making us useless for the kingdom of God.
- 3. If you are not willing to deny yourself, you are not a follower of Christ.** You can all day sing songs about loving Jesus, but it will not make you His follower. You can claim you are a new creature in Christ, so all your desires are new, but you will be kidding yourself. A common phrase in books and movies is “follow your heart.” Well, there is no way to “follow your heart” and follow Jesus. We all have a sin nature that desires *fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness*. If you do not constantly deny yourself, those desires, and thoughts about those desires, you are not following Christ.

Questions from Chapter 8

1. The feeding of the 4,000 was the same as the feeding of the 5,000 except
 - A. One was in a deserted place
 - B. One had more food left over
 - C. One had no thought of buying food
2. Which is most likely about the two feeding miracles?
 - A. The 5,000 were north of the Sea of Galilee, the 4,000 were south of it.
 - B. The 5,000 were east of the Sea of Galilee, the 4,000 were west of it.
 - C. The 4,000 were east of the Sea of Galilee, the 5,000 were west of it.
3. According to Mark 8, it appears Jesus traveled from
 - A. Capernaum to Caesarea Philippi to Decapolis
 - B. Decapolis to Magdala to Bethsaida
 - C. Caesarea Philippi to Magdala to Bethsaida

Answers: 1. C. 2. A. 3. B.

Chapter 9

Mark 9 has four paragraphs: the Transfiguration, questions about Elijah, casting out a strong demon, and six lessons taught in Capernaum after the trip north.

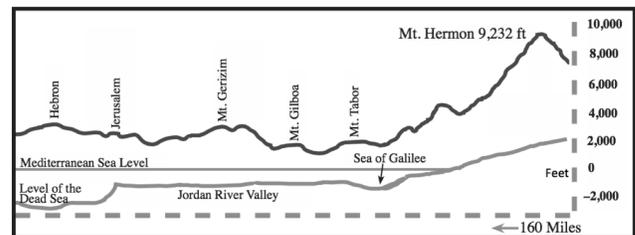
Verses 1-8 The Transfiguration

Before they left Caesarea Philippi, Jesus said, “*Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.*” All three synoptics have this statement.

“The words ‘taste death’ are a Hebrew idiom for experiencing physical death” (BKC). Although there are many opinions about this, the context would favor this being a reference to the Transfiguration of Jesus that Peter, James, and John would see a few days later. The Transfiguration gave them a glimpse into *the kingdom of God after it has come with power*. Ryrie says, “Transfiguration..., which was, in miniature, a preview of the kingdom, with the Lord appearing in a state of glory (Daniel 7:9-14).”



Six days later, Jesus took the three disciples *up on a high mountain by themselves*. Luke says it took about eight days, probably including the beginning and ending day. This is most likely Mount Hermon, since they were 12 miles (19 kilometers) south of it at Caesarea Philippi in chapter 8. [Mount Hermon is 9,232 feet (2,814 meters) above sea level, located 40 miles (64 km) north of the Sea of Galilee].



The word for *transfigured* is μεταμορφωθῆ (metamorphothe), as in the English “metamorphosis,” which is “to be changed into another form,” as when a worm becomes a butterfly, is not merely a change in outward appearance. For this short time the three disciples saw Jesus as He will appear when He returns visibly in power and glory (1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Revelation 1:14-15; 19:15; 20:4-6). This also tells us something about the heavenly state:

1. It is not out in space somewhere but a different sort of dimension, which may be all around us.
2. There seems to be no “soul sleep,” since Moses and Elijah were alive and awake.
3. We are the same people in heaven. Moses and Elijah were the same people they were when they lived on earth. The apostles probably learned this as they and Jesus greeted one another.
4. Believers from all ages are together. Moses had been dead about 1500 years and Elijah about 800 years, yet they were together in the same place.
5. This is the place of the special presence of God. His voice was heard saying, “*This is My beloved Son, listen to Him.*”

Verses 9-13 Questions about Elijah

Jesus told the three disciples not to talk about the Transfiguration until He rose from the dead. That led to a discussion about whether or not Elijah will come first. Jesus said two things about that:

1. He said, “*Elijah does first come and restore all things*” (Malachi 3:1-4; 4:5-6).
2. He said, “*Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him,*” clearly referring to John the Baptist. The angel told John’s father that John would come *in the spirit and power of Elijah* (Luke 1:17). And that’s the best way to connect John the Baptist to Elijah.

Verses 14-29 Casting Out a Strong Demon

When they came down the mountain, probably Mt. Hermon, they found a boy possessed by a strong demon, which the disciples could not cast out. When the boy's father asked Jesus for help, *Jesus said to him, "If You can? All things are possible to him who believes."* Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, *"I do believe; help my unbelief."* Faith should never be seen as having power by itself. True faith does two things: (1) it never sets limits on the power of God, and (2) it always submits to the will of God. For example, as we shall see in chapter 14, before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed that *the hour might pass from Him*. He acknowledged these two things: *all things are possible for You, and yet not what I will but what You will* (14:35-36; see also 1 John 5:14-15).

Later, the disciples asked Jesus why they couldn't cast out the demon. Jesus answered, *"This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer"* [some manuscripts add *and fasting*, unlikely, since Jesus was known for not fasting (Matthew 11:19; Mark 2:20)]. The disciples had been given authority over evil spirits (6:7) and had successfully cast out many demons before (6:13). There is no indication they were ignoring the power of God, as some have claimed. It's simply that some demons are very strong and require extra prayer.

Verses 30-50 Six Lessons Taught in Capernaum After the Northern Trip

On the trip back to Capernaum, Jesus repeated the prediction about His death and resurrection after three days, although the disciples still didn't understand and were afraid to ask about it. Once back in the city, Jesus went into a house, probably Peter's, so He could talk to the 12 and give them some vital lessons.

Lesson #1: *"If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."* Then He took a child, possibly Peter's child, and said, *"Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me."* Jesus used children, not to illustrate faith, but humility. If the disciples want to be first, they must humbly receive those who come in humility.

Lesson #2: *"For he who is not against us is for us. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward."* There are other followers of Christ you don't know about. True disciples of Christ will all be rewarded.

Lesson #3: *"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea."* Be careful not to cause young believers to stumble morally or theologically. Teach them discernment.

Lesson #4: *"If your hand [foot or eye] causes you to stumble, cut it off."* This is a hyperbolic statement (the apostles never suggested anyone do this mechanically) about eliminating anything in our life that tempts us to sin.

Lesson #5: *"For everyone will be salted with fire."* Everyone, both believers (2 Corinthians 5:10) and unbelievers (Revelation 20:11-15), will be judged by the holiness of God.

Lesson #6: *"Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."* Before giving this general principle, He said, *"Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again?"* The disciples were being told to not be like everybody else in the world. They would change the world, not by trying to do so politically or socially but by bringing it the impacting Word of God and specifically, the judgment found in the Word of God.

[Verses 44 and 46 repeat verse 48, but are not found in early manuscripts.]

Applications from Chapter 9

These are applications of the six lessons Jesus taught in Capernaum:

1. **Christian leadership is all about service.** Christian leadership is not about power, authority, being upfront, or having titles. It's about humility, responsibility, giving, and being unnoticed.
2. **Stand against false teaching, not a different ministry.** Never be territorial in ministry. There are others serving Christ that you will never know about. Don't hinder good ministries.
3. **Be careful not to teach young believers falsely.** Don't teach believers who are young, physically or spiritually, by word or example, that it is somehow okay to get a divorce, cohabit, practice homosexuality, lie to their customers or cheat on their taxes. Don't let them believe things like: Allah is God, Mormons are a Christian denomination, or Shriners (Masons) are good believers.
4. **Eliminate things that cause you to sin.** If you have a persistent sin, one that you commit regularly, then ask yourself what are the conditions, or what is the situation where I commit that sin the most. Then do your best to eliminate or limit that condition or those situations.
5. **Keep in mind, even though you are a believer, you will be judged.** *For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil* (Ecclesiastes 12:14; 1 Corinthians 4:5).
6. **Don't be boring and ordinary.** *Have salt in yourself* is about being a creative, motivational, judgmental person by following the Word of God in the midst of a sinful world. The world will try to make everybody the same: redistribute wealth, have a global morality, accept everybody's religion, be politically correct, support global warming, evolution, and a progressive society. If you stand for the Word of God, they will be boring as sand, and you will be as flavorful as salt.

Questions from Chapter 9

1. How many human beings were on the Mount of Transfiguration?
 - A. 3
 - B. 4
 - C. 5
 - D. 6
2. In Mark 9, Jesus told the disciples He would be
 - A. Delivered into the hands of men and killed
 - B. Killed and rise three days later
 - C. Delivered into the hands of men, killed, and rise three days later
3. Who said, "*Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us*"?
 - A. Peter
 - B. James
 - C. John

Answers: 1. D (all were humans). 2. C (verse 31). 3. C (verse 38).

Chapter 10

Mark 10 has seven paragraphs: teaching on divorce and remarriage, the example of little children, answering the question, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*, predicting Jesus' rejection, death, and resurrection in Jerusalem, requesting to sit on His right and left in the kingdom, greatness through serving people not lording it over people, and healing blind Bartimaeus.

Most of Mark 10 occurs in *the region of Judea beyond the Jordan*. So Jesus has moved from Galilee south to the Transjordan, and at the end of the chapter, He moved across the Jordan to Jericho.

Verses 1-12 Teaching on Divorce and Remarriage

In verse 2, we learn that the Pharisees were testing Jesus by asking Him *whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife*. Later, Jesus clarified His answer with His disciples, but first we should notice that Jesus gave a basic definition of marriage, *“God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and the two shall become one flesh.”* Notice this prohibits homosexual marriage, and by implication all homosexual relationships.

Altogether, Jesus gave four principles about divorce and remarriage recorded in Mark:

1. Moses issued a legal certificate of divorce is *because of your hardness of heart*, not from any law of God. But Jesus called it a *“commandment”* which came via Moses, that ended marriage. Therefore, divorce ends marriage, or, for example, Jesus would not tell the Samaritan woman in John 4 that she had five husbands. So divorce both ends marriage and prohibits remarriage.
2. *What therefore God has joined together* [indicating that normal heterosexual marriage is in the plan of God], *let no man* [ἄνθρωπος (*anthropos*) human or person] *separate*. So no one should take the initiative to get a divorce. It is not sinful to be divorced, but it is sinful to seek a divorce.
3. *Whoever* [it's masculine, *whatever male*] *divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery* [μοιχάω (*moichao*), the word for *adultery* not fornication] *against her*. My understanding is the word *adultery* is used as a sin that represents the act of divorce and remarriage, not the sex involved in the remarriage. This may mean the divorce is just as sinful as adultery, or it assumes a divorced woman would need to remarry to support herself, hence being forced into committing adultery by the act of remarriage.
4. *If she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery*. The word γαμήσῃ (*gameese*) for *marries* is an aorist verb, which is an accomplished fact indicating the second marriage is real, therefore, the divorce was real. So it is unwarranted to assume she is still married to her first husband “in God's eyes.” But that does not make it okay for her to remarry. It's having been divorced that prohibits the remarriage. The present tense with the middle voice on [μοιχάω (*moichao*)] *adultery* indicates the wife herself is committing an act of adultery by the act of remarriage. It does not teach anything one way or the other about the idea of ongoing adultery.

[It is my opinion that we should **not** remove fellowship from those with different views on divorce and remarriage, since the church has had differing views on the related passages throughout the centuries. But no traditional, i.e., literal, view has concluded that divorce and remarriage are good.]

Verses 13-16 The Example of Little Children

The reason for encouraging the children to come to Him was to teach the lesson, *“for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.”* There are three things said about this passage which are not true:

- 1) This does not teach that children should be baptized as infants before they confess faith in Christ.
- 2) This does not say that all children will go to heaven.
- 3) As mentioned earlier, this is not about child-like faith.

What this passage does teach is child-like humility. Pride is independent value. Humility is dependent value. A person can only *receive the kingdom of God* from a position of dependence upon God to remove sin, without personal strength or authority, *like a child*.

Verses 17-31 Answering the Question *What Shall I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?*

Apparently, as Jesus began His departure from the Transjordan area back west toward Jericho, *a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* The man's question was different than most in that he did not ask for healing but for *eternal life*. Seemingly because of his question, Jesus responded in two ways that are different from those who asked for healing.

- 1) Mark tells us Jesus ἠγάπησεν (*egapesen*) [an aorist verb from ἀγάπη (*agape*)] *loved him*. The usual motivation or feeling we read about Jesus having is compassion, defined as "being moved with a feeling of affection or pity" (Mark 1:41; 6:34; 8:4). But this response emphasized giving, not feelings.
- 2) Mark also records Jesus' rare invitation for this man to *come, follow Me*. It would seem that he is invited to become a possible future apostle, or at least one of Jesus' close disciples. When the man told Jesus he had kept the commandments, Jesus told him, "*One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me.*"

During this discussion, Jesus gave five statements about eternal life:

- 1) *No one is good except God alone*. God Himself is the standard of good. Good is not some standard which God keeps.
- 2) *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God*. It's impossible to gain eternal life through this life's accomplishments. This does not teach difficulty but impossibility. And no, the *eye of a needle* is not a small door in the large door in the Jerusalem city gate.
- 3) *With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God*. Eternal life comes only through a work of God. Eternal life comes only through the cross, which is never discussed in the synoptics.
- 4) Those who sacrifice in this life will receive something better in this life *and in the age to come, eternal life*.
- 5) *But many who are first will be last, and the last, first*. Importance in this life is not an indication of heavenly rewards.

Verses 32-34 Predicting His Rejection, Death, and Resurrection in Jerusalem

This, His third such prediction (8:31; 9:31), is the most precise and comprehensive of the three. Notice eight very specific predictions made in verse 34. *Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be:*

- 1) *Delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and*
- 2) *They will condemn Him to death and*
- 3) *Will hand Him over to the Gentiles*
- 4) *They will mock Him and*
- 5) *Spit on Him, and*

- 6) *Scourge Him and*
- 7) *Kill Him, and*
- 8) *Three days later He will rise again.*

Verses 35-40 Requesting to Sit on His Right and Left in the Kingdom

Jesus gave two responses to this request:

- 1) *“You do not know what you are asking.”*
- 2) *“Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”*

The cup (His death) and the baptism (His suffering) both represent Christ’s persecution, which they will also endure (note the metaphoric use of baptism). The denial of their request is interesting to keep in mind as an application to prayer requests. Jesus told them, *“this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”* This means our prayer **requests**, which are in the plan of God, can be contrary to the plan of God but the answers will never be contrary to the plan of God.

Verses 41-45 Greatness Through Serving People, Not Lording Over People

Hearing this [what James and John requested], the ten began to feel indignant [KJV displeased] with James and John [apparently, because they also wanted that position]. Calling [all of] them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant.” One might ask “pastors,” “priests” and ministry “directors,” or anyone who we have placed in a position of authority, just what part of *“it is not this way among you”* do you not understand? Authority of certain believers over other believers is never from God. New Testament leadership is always defined with responsibility, never with authority.

Jesus ended the discussion, giving Himself as the example, *“the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

Verses 46-52 Healing Blind Bartimaeus

Then they came to Jericho. This is New Testament Jericho, built by Herod the Great as the site for his winter palace, about 5 miles (8 kilometers) west of the Jordan River, 1 mile (1.6 kilometers) south of the Old Testament Jericho. *And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus...cried out.* There was another blind man healed as He entered Jericho (Luke 18:45-43). Probably because they heard about that, there were two blind men sitting by the road who called out to Jesus as He was leaving Jericho (Matthew 20:29-34). Either, possibly one of those two was Bartimaeus, or Bartimaeus was a third blind man who asked Jesus for healing as He left Jericho.

Specifically, he said, *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”* Interestingly, he knew Jesus’ Davidic genealogy. Notice, Jesus asked him, *“what do you want me to do for you?”* And Bartimaeus asked for healing instead of eternal life. And again we should notice that Jesus did not heal every sick person in Galilee or Judea or here in Jericho, but He healed everyone who asked for healing. Apparently, His purpose was not healing. It appears that Jesus did not have a social agenda.

Applications from Chapter 10

- 1. Whatever your view on divorce, divorce is not a good thing.** There are many views on divorce, and there have been throughout the history of Christianity. But don't get the idea that it is ever a good thing. Nearly every social situation can be handled (separation of finances, restraining , etc.) without divorce. Divorce is always needed for one thing—remarriage. If you take all the passages together and ask, “What does God prefer?” instead of “What can I get by with or get away with?”, then you will conclude divorce and remarriage are wrong. God said, “*I hate divorce*” (Malachi 2:16). Trust me, you will, too.
- 2. Don't try to find an alternate path to eternal life. It's only through the blood of Christ.** In Mark 10, Jesus said at least five things about eternal life. All of them lead to the conclusion that it is impossible for man to obtain it. Only God can do it. Later, Jesus paid for our sins on the cross, and the apostles told us we gain eternal life by repentance and receiving Him as our Savior. Salvation does not come through works, or confessing sins to a priest, or having a dream about a man in white, or someone's private revelation that they already belong to God. “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus....” 
- 3. Let me repeat this, just in case you missed it.** *Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them But it is not this way among you. One might ask all Christian authority figures, pastors, priests, and ministry directors:*
Just what part of “it is not this way among you” do you not understand?

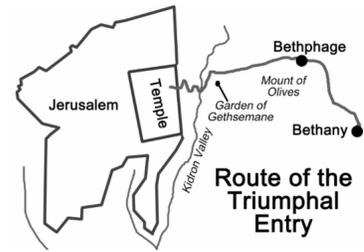
Questions from Chapter 10

1. According to the events recorded in Mark, Jesus traveled from
 - A. Capernaum to Caesarea Philippi to Jericho
 - B. Caesarea Philippi to the Decapolis to Jericho
 - C. Capernaum to beyond the Jordon to Jericho
2. When the man asked Jesus, “*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*”, Jesus referred him to
 - A. Genesis
 - B. Exodus
 - C. Leviticus
 - D. The Pentateuch
3. After Bartimaeus was healed of blindness, he
 - A. Began praising God
 - B. Went into the city and told people what happened
 - C. Followed Jesus

Answers: 1. C. 2. B (Exodus 20:12-16). 3. C (10:52).

Chapter 11

Mark 11 has five paragraphs: the Triumphal Entry, cursing the fig tree, overturning the tables in the Temple, teaching about faith and forgiveness, and questioning Jesus' authority.



Verses 1-10 The Triumphal Entry on “Palm Sunday”

Jesus and His disciples left Jericho and traveled west up the Wadi Qilt (the road of the “Good Samaritan” story) until *they approached Jerusalem, at Bethpage* [meaning “house of figs”] *and Bethany* [meaning ‘house of dates,’ about 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) from Jerusalem], on the east slope of *the Mount of Olives* [2,600 feet (800 meters) high] overlooking the Kidron Valley and Jerusalem. Jesus sent two disciples to obtain a donkey and colt with the explanation *the Lord has need of it*. The detail of the account suggests Peter may have been one of the two. Jesus entered Jerusalem on the colt in fulfillment of Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9. The crowd said, “*Hosanna,*” an Aramaic word for *salvation now* and then a statement from Psalm 118:26, “*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*”

Verses 11-14 Cursing the Fig Tree On Monday

After the Triumphal Entry, Jesus entered the Temple briefly, then returned to Bethany with the 12 for the night [possibly with His friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus]. Then on Monday, He was hungry and cursed a fig tree that had no fruit.

A Time Line of Jesus' Final Week

Sunday	Jesus enters Jerusalem in triumph.
Monday	Jesus curses a fig tree and cleanses the temple.
Tuesday	Jesus' authority is questioned and He teaches in the temple.
Wednesday	Jesus' enemies plan a plot against Him.
Thursday	Jesus shares the Last Supper with His disciples and prays at Gethsemane.
Friday	Jesus is betrayed, arrested, tried, crucified, and buried.
Saturday	Jesus' body remains in the tomb.
Sunday	Jesus rises from the dead!

Verses 15-18 Overturning the Tables In the Temple On Monday

The event (see Hosea 9:15; Malachi 3:1-5) took place in the large outer court of the Gentiles, surrounding the inner sacred courts. This is the second time Christ cleansed the Temple of money-changers (see John 2:13-17). Historians tell us that the high priest Caiaphas had authorized a market for the sale of ritually pure items necessary for Temple sacrifice. Greek and Roman coins were changed into the standard half-shekel required for the Temple tax. Jesus condemned two practices of the merchants: (1) they were charging an excessively high rate of exchange, and (2) they were using the Temple as a shortcut between the city and the Mount of Olives. Jesus drove them out with force.

Verses 19-26 Teaching About Faith and Forgiveness On Tuesday

As they were passing by, on Tuesday morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. When Peter pointed it out, Jesus gave the disciples two lessons about prayer: (1) concerning faith, *all things for which you pray and ask, [like moving a mountain] believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you* and (2) concerning forgiveness, *forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions*. Faith is trusting the God-given evidence, understood in the context of the will/plan of God (Matthew 6:10; 14:36). We are to forgive others just as God has forgiven us, *so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions*, in order to be living in daily fellowship with God (Matthew 18:21-35; Ephesians 4:32). [Verse 26 is not in the earliest manuscripts.]

Verses 27-33 Questioning Jesus' Authority On Tuesday

The chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him, and began saying to Him, “By what authority are You doing these things?” Jesus asked them a clever counter question, “*Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men?*” The point is, only authority from God is real, and it is not reflected in the organizations we create. It's seen in the truth of the Word of God.

Applications from Chapter 11

- 1. The Temple in Jerusalem is the House of God, not local synagogues or local churches.** Jesus reacted with force, driving the moneychangers and merchants out of the Temple area. He did nothing like that in the many synagogues He visited. Jesus just taught and healed in synagogues, just as He did in a boat, on a mountain, on a level place, in someone's home, and on the street, saying nothing about the value of the establishment itself. But the Temple was established by a command of God, and will be rebuilt by a command of God (Haggai 1:9; Zechariah 1:16; Ezekiel 40–48). Today, we believers in Christ are a temple of God in the sense that we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; 12:13). But the church did not replace the Temple in Jerusalem, which was even valued as the House of God by the apostles, after the beginning of the church age (Acts 3:1-8). When God designates a sanctuary, which today is the body of a believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit, then that sanctuary should focus on God, not the world's business.
- 2. Daily forgiveness from God requires daily forgiveness of others in order to have fellowship with God.** Believers have a positional justification because of the finished work of Christ on the cross. Our sin has been paid for so our daily sin does not cancel out our justification. But our fellowship with God requires regular confession of our sins, depending on the grace of God *to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9). If we harbor bitterness against someone, refusing to forgive them in our hearts, then we should not expect God to forgive us and be in fellowship with us. *If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth* (1 John 1:6).
- 3. Never get your authority from anywhere other than the written Word of God.** Where do you get your authority for how you live and what you proclaim? If you get your authority from an institution, you are not getting it from God. But there is also no evidence that dreams, visions, and coincidences are authority from God. Only the truth of Scripture is authority from God.

Questions from Chapter 11

Match the events on the left, as recorded in Mark 11, with the day of the week on the right.

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Jesus first approached at Bethpage and Bethany | Sunday |
| 2. <i>They saw the fig tree withered from the roots up</i> | Monday |
| 3. Jesus taught on faith and forgiveness | Tuesday |
| 4. Jesus entered the Temple area the first time | Wednesday |
| 5. Jesus is challenged about His authority | Thursday |
| 6. Jesus became hungry | Friday |
| 7. The disciples were sent to get a donkey colt | Saturday |

Answers: 1. Sunday. 2. Monday. 3. Tuesday. 4. Sunday. 5. Tuesday. 6. Monday. 7. Sunday.

Chapter 12

Mark 12 has seven paragraphs: the parable of the vineyard, paying the poll tax, the Sadducees question the resurrection of the dead, the greatest commandment, David's son is his Lord, beware of the Scribes, and the gift of the poor widow.

Verses 1-12 The Parable of the Vineyard

All of Mark 12 takes place on Tuesday of Jesus' final week, after the cleansing of the Temple area on Monday. In the first paragraph, Jesus created a parable using a common Old Testament example of Israel as God's vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-2; Psalm 80:8-19). *A man [God] planted a vineyard [Israel] and put a wall around it, and dug a vat under the wine press and built a tower [God gave Israel the land, His law, His covenant, and His blessing], and rented it out [allowed it to be put in the hands of Jewish leaders] to vine-growers [like the judges and the kings, but currently the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees] and went on a journey [the ~1500 years since Moses]. At the harvest time, he sent three slaves [Old Testament prophets through John the Baptist] to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers.* The owners sent other slaves representing prophets all of whom were killed by the vine-growers, representing the Jewish leadership.

Then the owner sent his son, representing Jesus. But *they took him [predicting Jesus's arrest and torture], and killed him [the crucifixion] and threw him out of the vineyard [thinking] the inheritance will be ours [they wanted to take the leadership of Judaism from God].* Then Jesus said, *the owner of the vineyard...will come and destroy the vine-growers [set Israel aside as God's chosen people, scattering them all over the world, which began with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70].* Last, He said the owner *will give the vineyard to others [the church Christ will begin through the apostles (Matthew 16:18)].* At the end of the parable, Jesus compares Himself to the *chief cornerstone* of the Temple, *which the builders rejected.*

Verses 13-17 Paying the Poll Tax

An annual poll tax was required by the Roman emperor to be paid by all Jews since A.D. 6, when Judea became a Roman province (according to Josephus, "The Antiquities of the Jews," 5.1.21). The Herodians favored the tax, wanting Judea to be a Roman province, and the Pharisees opposed it, wanting independence from Rome. So they asked Jesus about it. Jesus asked for a coin. It's interesting that He didn't have one. Then He asked, "*Whose likeness [εἰκὼν (eikon, like the English word "icon") image] and inscription is this?*" And they said to Him, "*Caesar's*" with a Latin inscription, "*Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus*". And Jesus said to them, "*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.*"

The lesson from this encounter is **not** to prioritize giving money to God, or to the local church. [There is no example or command in the New Testament about anyone ever giving anything to their own local church. Not that such giving is right or wrong.] The point is, whose image is on you? Answer: God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). The lesson is: give the tax to Caesar, but give yourself to God.

Verses 18-27 The Sadducees Question the Resurrection of the Dead

The Sadducees came mostly from an illegitimate priesthood of upper class Jews who were involved in controlling Temple worship. They did not believe in a bodily resurrection, future punishments or rewards, or the existence of angels and demons (Acts 23:8). However, they generally cooperated with Roman officials and held to the Mosaic Law but opposed the oral traditions of the Pharisees. *Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Jesus, and began questioning Him about the resurrection in which they did not believe. They created an outlandish story about a wom-*

an who marries and outlives seven husbands who were brothers, with a question about whose wife she will be in the resurrection. Jesus said they were *mistaken* because they did *not understand the Scriptures* (like Job 19:25; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Daniel 13:13) *or the power of God* (to raise people from the dead). Then Jesus used a passage (from Exodus 3:6) that surprised everybody. He quoted God saying, “*I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*” This statement not only proves Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive, but demonstrates a literal hermeneutic, since Jesus made His argument based on the present tense of the “to be” verb *I am* and *He is*.

Verses 28-34 The Greatest Commandment

Then Jesus was asked a question from a scribe who had been paying attention. He wanted to know, “*What commandment is the foremost of all?*” Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:4, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.*” Then Jesus added one the scribe didn’t ask for (from Leviticus 19:18), “*the second is this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” Jesus picked two passages that were not part of the Ten Commandments and said, “*There is no other commandment greater than these.*” Then, in verses included only in Mark, we learn that the scribe repeated this in his own words, then rightly concluded to love *is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices*. Jesus said he was *not far from the kingdom of God*. One can imagine that this man was likely one of the 3000 who became believers after Peter’s first sermon (recorded in Acts 2).

Verses 35-37 David’s Son Is His Lord

In the Temple, probably the women’s court, Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1, referring to Himself as David’s son genealogically and David’s Lord spiritually.

Verses 38-40 Beware of the Scribes

Next, Jesus gave a warning about being like scribes who are outwardly religious and desire *respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets*, but they are inwardly immoral men because as payment for their legal services they *devour widows’ houses, and for appearance’s sake offer long prayers*. Then Jesus added an important conclusion, “*these will receive greater condemnation.*” This tells us some sins receive a *greater condemnation* than other sins, implying some sins are greater than others and will be judged accordingly (John 19:11; Luke 12:47-48; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; James 3:1).

Verses 41-44 The Gift of the Poor Widow

The Mishnah says that against the wall of the woman’s court, there were 13 trumpet-shaped collection receptacles for receiving contributions from worshipers, especially at this Passover season (Mishnah *Shekalim* 6.5). *And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums* [gold, silver, copper, and bronze coins, which would make considerably noise as they were put in]. *A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins* [worth about 1/64 of a day’s wage for a laborer]. Jesus then gave the meaning of giving when He said, *this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on*. It was a lesson for the disciples who would give all they had to follow Christ. By way of application, everyone can be a giver no matter how much wealth they have, or how poor they are, because the general principle is, the value of our gift is determined by what we have left after we give. Also, giving is all about the motive of the giver, not the need of the receiver. The value of giving is not in the accomplishments of the gift but on the intentions of the giver. If you focus giving on the receiver, you will teach socialism.

Applications from Chapter 12

- 1. Paying what you owe is, first of all, not about money, but giving yourself to God.** Jesus' answer to the question about paying Rome's poll tax was that we should pay our taxes. But the main point He made was not about paying the money we owe the government, or giving money to God. The point was, we are made in God's image, therefore, we belong to God.
- 2. Every word of the Bible is inspired by God.** When the Sadducees *began questioning Him* about the resurrection in which they did not believe, Jesus quoted Exodus 3:6 and based a theological argument for the resurrection of the dead on the present tense of the basic "to be" verb *is*. God said, "***I am*** [not 'I was'] *the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*" So every word of the Bible is true and essential (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- 3. Love God first and love people second, but do not get that order reversed.** Jesus said the foremost command is to *love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength* [from Deuteronomy 6:4]. *The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"* [from Leviticus 19:18]. Much of the apostasy in the church comes from reversing these and putting the love of people first. We hear: "God wouldn't want me to live like this." "God would want me to be happy." "God created me same-sex attracted." "If we don't tolerate divorce, remarriage, cohabitation and LGBT relationships, 'our church' will not be relevant." All this is about loving people first.

Questions from Chapter 12

1. In the parable about the vineyard in Mark 12, how many slaves were killed by the vine-growers before the son was sent to them?
 - A. 1
 - B. 2
 - C. 3
2. Who asked Jesus about paying the poll tax?
 - A. Pharisees
 - B. Sadducees
 - C. Scribes
 - D. A and B
 - E. All of the above
3. Who asked Jesus about the greatest commandment?
 - A. Pharisees
 - B. Sadducees
 - C. Scribes
 - D. A and B
 - E. All of the above

Answers: 1. A (12:5). 2. A (12:13). 3. C (12:28).

Chapter 13

Mark 13 has six paragraphs: the Temple buildings, two questions about the future, the first half of the tribulation, the second half of the tribulation, the Second Coming, and parables about being alert.

Verses 1-2 The Temple Buildings

It is not clear if Mark 13 takes place on Tuesday or Wednesday of Jesus' last week. On the occasion described here, Jesus and the disciples left the Temple (probably by the Beautiful Gate, where Peter would later heal a lame man – Acts 3). Before they crossed the Kidron Valley toward the Mount of Olives to the east, Jesus' disciples admired the stones and buildings of the Temple complex. But Jesus said, *“Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down.”*



The second Temple, originally built by Zerubbabel, mostly in the 400s B.C., had fallen into disrepair. Herod began the re-building project in 20 B.C. The courtyard was enlarged to about four hundred yards (436 meters) by about five hundred yards (545 meters) in order to accommodate the large number of Jews who came to Jerusalem for the festivals. Herod himself died before it was completed. The Temple wasn't finished until A.D. 64, six years before the Romans destroyed it in A.D. 70. Jesus was undoubtedly referring to this destruction.

Verses 3-4 Two Questions about the Future

When they arrived on the Mount of Olives, the two sets of brothers: Peter and Andrew, James and John, asked Jesus two questions: (1) *“When will these things be, and (2) what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?”* All Jesus said about the first question was, *“be on the alert.”* But He gave an elaborate answer to the second question.

Verses 5-13 The First Half of the Tribulation

Even though some form of these things happened throughout history, Jesus referred only to the global events that will take place during the future seven-year *tribulation* period that will precede His Second Coming. The word *you* [ὁμοῦς (*humas*), second person plural pronoun] refers to the disciples of Jesus who are alive during the time that the seven-year *tribulation* occurs.

Jesus told them eight things [with some explanations], which would happen in the first 3½ years of the Great Tribulation, what He called, *merely the beginning of birth pangs*.

1. *Many* [false teachers and false Messiahs] *will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He!’ and will mislead many* [all those who do not take the Scripture literally will follow the antichrist].
2. [There will be] *wars and rumors of wars* [nation will rise up against nation].
3. *There will be* [natural disasters] *earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines*.
4. *They will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues* [assemblies].
5. *You will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them*.
6. *The gospel must first be preached to all the nations* [by believers or an angel – Revelation 14:6].
7. Family unity will be destroyed. *Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death*.
8. *You will be hated by all because of My name*.

Verses 14-23 The Second Half of the Tribulation

Verse 14 is the pivotal point of the tribulation, when *the abomination of desolation* comes into the Temple, *standing where it should not be*. Then Mark added the phrase, *let the reader understand*. Mark does not add (as Matthew does) that Jesus also said, *spoken of by Daniel the prophet* (Matthew 24:15). But the phrase itself brings us back to Daniel, who wrote down a revelation from the angel *Gabriel* (Daniel 9:27).

And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.

The first fulfillment of *the abomination of desolation* was the desecration of the Temple in 167 B.C. by the Syrian ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Daniel 11:31-32; 1 Maccabees 1:41-64; 6:7;). But Jesus and the apostles told us that Daniel's ultimate meaning is that the antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:4) *in the middle of the week* (at the midpoint in the tribulation) breaks the *firm covenant* he made with *the many* Jewish people at the beginning of the tribulation. Then the antichrist demands that they and the world worship him. Jesus ends His tribulation teaching with two comments:

1. The severity of the tribulation, *Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved.*
2. The religious nature of the tribulation, *False Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect.*

Verses 24-27 The Second Coming

Mark records three aspects of Jesus' Second Coming:

1. *The powers that are in the heavens will be shaken.* There will be extreme weather conditions that hide the sun, moon, and stars.
2. *Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.* They here refers to *all the tribes of the earth* (Matthew 24:30). So everyone will be able to witness the Second Coming, probably due to modern technology.
3. *Then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.* These angels gather together the believers who came to Christ during the tribulation and the 144,000 Jews sealed to survive (Revelation 7 and 14), and they will go alive into the Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:1-10). The *farthest end of heaven* may refer to the resurrection of Old Testament saints and believers martyred during the Tribulation (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 6:9-11; 20:4).

Verses 28-37 Parables about Being Alert

Five times in this conclusion Jesus told the disciples to be *on the alert*. He emphasized that with four additional statements.

1. *When you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door.* We should recognize the signs of our times that lead toward the global government of the antichrist.
2. *This generation will not pass away until all these things take place.* This common word *γενεά* (*genea*) for *generation*, meaning *race* or *family*, here referring to the Jewish people.
3. *Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.* This earth will be totally destroyed. Peter said, *the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up* (2 Peter 3:10). When John saw a new heaven and a new earth, he said, *the first heaven and the first earth passed away,*
4. *But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.* Each of the Trinity is deity, but they are not equal in their role.

Applications from Chapter 13

- 1. Expect an increase in those who lead people away from the Bible with *signs and wonders*.** Jesus said, “*See to it that no one mislead you. Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He!’ and will mislead many... False Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect.*” Jesus is speaking about the future tribulation, but as we get closer, we can expect an increase in those wanting to mislead us with signs and wonders, like dreams, visions and experiences. Everyone who does not take the Bible literally will follow the antichrist.
- 2. Never try to calculate a date and time for the Second Coming of Christ.** The apostles wanted to know *when will these things be?* But the only answer Jesus gave them was to be on the alert, and He said it five times. *But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.* So it’s none of our business.
- 3. Be aware of the signs leading to the Second Coming of Christ.** Although we cannot know the time, we are to know the signs leading to the Second Coming. Jesus said there will be an increase in global conflicts, global disasters, the destruction of the family, and hatred for Christ’s disciples.

Questions from Chapter 13

- The stones that the disciples admired were in
 - A. The inner Holy of Holies in the Temple
 - B. The outer Holy Place in the Temple
 - C. The courtyard of the Temple
- Jesus said, “*When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end.*” He was talking about
 - A. Today
 - B. Just before *the abomination of desolation*
 - C. Just before the Second Coming
- The period of great suffering preceding the Second Coming is first called the *tribulation* by
 - A. Daniel
 - B. Jesus
 - C. John

Answers: 1. C (13:1). 2. B. 3. B (13:19, 24).

Chapter 14

Mark 14 has seven paragraphs: the anointing at Bethany, eating the Passover in the upper room, the announcement of Peter's denial, the prayer at Gethsemane, the arrest on the Mount of Olives, the trial before the high priest, and Peter's denial.

Verses 1-11 The Anointing at Bethany

It's Wednesday, two days before the Passover, and *the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill Him*. Meanwhile, Jesus is on the east side of the Mount of Olives in Bethany, eating at the home of one called *Simon the leper*, presumably someone Jesus had healed. An unnamed woman came in and anointed Jesus head with some expensive oil.



Most commentators equate this event with the one in John 12, but this may have been a separate incident. In John 12, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anointed Jesus feet six days before the Passover and Judas objected. Here, an unknown woman anointed His head two days before the Passover and several people objected. This anointing was a known gesture of love and appreciation (Psalm 23:5; Luke 7:46). The interesting lesson is that Jesus was more important than the poor. We would expect Jesus to say something like, "Thank you, but there is a better use for something this costly." Instead, He commended her for doing the best thing with the oil. The incident ended with Judas leaving to make a deal with the chief priests for Jesus' betrayal.

Verses 12-26 Eating the Passover in the Upper Room

On Thursday (determined because Josephus tells us that the Galilean Jews ate the Passover on our Thursday evening), Jesus sent two disciples to prepare for the meal. As in the Triumphal Entry, this event was either prearranged or supernaturally arranged. The meal was eaten *reclining* on couches, a first century custom which was actually required by the Mishnah. Mark records two issues Jesus brought up during the meal.

First was the betrayal of Judas. Jesus' concluding statement about it revealed two things: (1) "*For the Son of Man is to go just as it is written of Him.*" That is, His death was inevitable because the literal fulfillment of prophecy (like Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53) is inevitable. (2) "*But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.*" This tells us that Judas was never a believer. But the statement can be applied to all evil actions of man, like, say, an act of terror that kills people. The death of the people are in the plan of God, but woe to those who commit those acts, it would have been good for them if they had not been born.

Second, Jesus talked about the significance of the bread and the wine. The distribution of the bread was apparently before the main part of the meal but after Judas had left (John 13:30). Jesus distributed the ἄρτον (*arton*) an unleavened flat cake, then gave thanks, [εὐλογήσας (*eulogesas*) as in Mark 6:41]. Concerning the cup, Jesus said, "*This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.*" Some manuscripts add *new* before *covenant*, probably to assimilate 1 Corinthians 11:25. The word for *covenant* is not a negotiated covenant but a declared covenant that the other party can either accept or reject. The New Covenant that the cup inaugurated is not the church but the millennial covenant with Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-33). But this cup also represented Christ's blood poured out *for ὑπὲρ (huper)*, that is, as a substitution *instead of* (2 Corinthians 5:21) πολλῶν (*pollon*) *many*. The *many* represents all people. The point is, there are *many* of them (Romans 5:15-17). Jesus said *this is my body* and *this is my blood*. Body and blood are metaphors, like His reference to Himself as a vine, a door, a bridegroom and a shepherd. The word *is* means *represents*. *This*

represents My body and this represents My blood. Obviously, Jesus was physically present with the disciples, and the disciples did not literally eat His body or drink His blood.

Verses 27-31 The Announcement of Peter's Denial

This event is recorded in all the gospels (Matthew 26:31-35; Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:31-34; John 13:36-38). Apparently, Jesus gave this prediction in the upper room, but only about Peter's denial (recorded by Luke and John). Then He repeated it on the way to Gethsemane (recorded in Matthew and Mark), but this time He said, *you will all fall away*, meaning all the other eleven. The quote in verse 27 is from Zechariah 13:7, which reads, "*Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man, My Associate,*" *declares the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered."* This not only tells us that the disciples will be scattered, it also clearly indicates that the death of Jesus is the result of the plan of God the Father. After Peter declared that he would not fall away, Jesus made the specific prediction, "*this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times.*" Peter continued to deny it, *and they all were saying the same thing also.*

Verses 32-42 The Prayer at Gethsemane

This passage describes the most significant unanswered prayer in all of history. It was late Thursday or past midnight (our Friday morning) when they arrived at Gethsemane (from a Hebrew word meaning *oil press*), a garden on the western slope of the Mount of Olives. This was one of their usual meeting places (Luke 22:39; John 18:2). Four significant things should be noticed here:

1. Jesus separated Peter, James, and John from the others to be with Him when He prayed. His selectivity of believers does not stop with salvation. Some are chosen for special service and a closer observation of His character. But even those fail Him.
2. Jesus *began to be very distressed* [ἐκθαμβέω; (*ekthambeo*) to be *alarmed* (9:15; 16:5-6)] *and troubled* [ἀδημονέω, (*ademoneo*) to be in *extreme anguish* (Philemon 2:26)]. Then He told the three, "*My soul is deeply grieved* [περίλυπος, (*perilupos*) *overwhelmed with sorrow*] *to the point of death*" (Mark 6:26). It's interesting that Jesus wanted them to know that. Apparently, being a mature man of God does not include hiding our grief, or how we feel about it.
3. Jesus prayed the phenomenal unanswered prayer, "*Abba* [the Aramaic word for *Father*]! *Father* [the Greek word for *Father*]! *All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.*" Notice (1) The foundation of Jesus' prayer was the fact that all things are possible for God. That is, of course, to say all possible things are possible. [God cannot sin, be unholy, inconsistent, absurd, etc.] What Jesus asked was *possible*, meaning that it was possible for God to change His mind. As with Moses' request, *the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people* (Exodus 32:14). What God does not do is change His predetermined plan. So if God changed His mind, that change of mind would also be in His plan. In Moses' case, it was, in Jesus', it wasn't. (2) Jesus clearly did not want to do this. Jesus did not die serenely as often pictured. He died in agony, absorbing the wrath of God as a substitute for the sins of the world (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus' obedience did not include His desire to go to the cross, but His desire to obey God the Father. (3) Jesus' request was couched in the *will* [θέλω (*thelo*)] *want* or *desire* of God. Jesus's obedience was not just to keep a command of God, but also to satisfy the desires of God.
4. Jesus commanded the three to, "*Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation.*" It appears that the temptation was to sleep. This means that something usually good, which is a normal healthy part of life, can be a temptation to disobey God. [For example, conveying information can become gossip, eating good food can become gluttony.] And as is the case with so many of our sins, *the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Also notice, after they fell asleep three times, Jesus said, "*Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come.*" After a certain point, the opportunity is lost and the option for obedience is no longer available.

Verses 43-52 The Arrest on the Mount of Olives

Apparently, the Jewish authorities wanted to arrest and try Jesus at night so they could avoid the crowd of people who might object. The idea seemed to be to get it all over with before most people knew about it (which Jesus pointed out in verse 49). Judas was helpful because he knew they would be in the Garden of Gethsemane, and he could make a positive identification, so the soldiers would not arrest the wrong person in the dark. The kiss of Judas could have been on Jesus' cheek or on His hand. Mark does not say who wielded the sword. But John's gospel tells us it was Peter and that he cut off the ear of one named Malchus, a servant of the high priest (John 18:10). Apparently, Peter aimed at his head, but Malchus moved just enough for Peter to cut off his ear. Only Luke records Jesus healing the ear (Luke 22:51).

Verses 53-65 The Trial Before the High Priest

They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together. This is the meeting before Caiaphas (high priest from A.D. 18-36) and at least a majority of the 71-man Sanhedrin. Mark makes no mention of the preliminary hearing before Annas



(John 18:12-14, 19-23), who had been high priest from A.D. 7-14 but had been deposed by Valerius Gratus, Pilate's predecessor. Caiaphas, Annas's son-in-law, held the office; but some of the Jews regarded Annas as the true high priest. The meeting took place in the palace of Caiaphas in an upstairs room (verse 66).

The false accusations against Jesus were unconvincing. But then Caiaphas asked, "*Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?*" And Jesus said, "*I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.*" This is clearly Jesus claiming to be deity and the Son of God, which was understood as such by Caiaphas. *Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy."* Jesus' words were either blasphemy, or they were the truth. The Mosaic Law prescribed death by stoning for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:15-16). The tearing of one's clothes was originally a sign of great grief (Genesis 37:29; 2 Kings 18:37; Judges 14:19; 2 Maccabees 4:38). But it became an official requirement of the Talmud when the high priest heard blasphemy. Jesus was not, as some liberals have suggested, misunderstood. He was killed because He told the truth and was clearly understood.

Verses 66-72 Peter's Denial

While Jesus was being tried and mistreated, Peter was warming himself by a fire in the palace courtyard. The fact that Peter was there at all indicates that he loved Jesus and intended to follow Him. But a servant girl (probably the "girl at the door," mentioned in John 18:17) recognized Peter. What is interesting about this girl is she represents a hatred for Jesus outside of the religious authorities. Peter denied her charge and retreated into the archway that led to the street. The girl followed him and repeated the accusation. After his second denial, Peter's accent identified him as a Galilean so a third accusation came from *the bystanders*. At this point, Peter *began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!"* When the rooster crowed Peter *began to weep*, indicating his remorse. Question: Is there any sin we cannot be forgiven of if we repent and believe in Christ? For example, some believers in the early church denied fellowship to those who repented after denying Christ while being persecuted. Well, Peter denied Jesus three times, yet he was used to start the church. The point is to *repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away* (Acts 3:19).



Applications from Chapter 14

1. **Serving Jesus for the sake of serving Jesus is better than serving the poor for the sake of serving the poor.** Helping the poor is valuable from a motive of compassion. But when the woman in Bethany used expensive oil to anoint Jesus' head, she did something more valuable than feeding the poor. That's because Jesus is more important than the poor.
2. **Being distressed, troubled, grieved and expressing it, is not sinful.** Jesus was distressed, troubled, and grieved, and He wanted His three closest disciples to know about it. We often have to endure suffering, but we do not have to be joyful about it. Sometimes the proper response is to express agony.
3. **You don't have to want to do what you have to do.** There is nothing wrong with not wanting to do what God command us to do, as long as we do it. The question will be, as it was for Jesus, whether we desire obeying God more than we dislike doing what He asks us to do.

Questions from Chapter 14

1. Jesus and the 12 ate the Passover in a
 - A. Guest room
 - B. Upper room
 - C. Furnished room
 - D. A and B
 - E. All of the above
2. Jesus predicted Judas' betrayal
 - A. During the Passover meal
 - B. On the streets of Jerusalem
 - C. On the Mount of Olives
3. Jesus predicted Peter's denial
 - A. During the Passover meal
 - B. On the streets of Jerusalem
 - C. On the Mount of Olives

Answers: 1. E (14:14-15). 2. A. 3. A.

Chapter 15

There are six paragraphs in Mark 15: Jesus questioned by Pilate, the call to release Barabbas and crucify Jesus, mocking Jesus in the Praetorium, the crucifixion of Jesus at Golgotha, the death of Jesus, and the burial of Jesus.



Verses 1-5 Jesus Questioned by Pilate

Early in the morning, the Sanhedrin reached the decision they had predetermined to make, that Jesus was a blasphemer and should be put to death. But since they did not have the authority for capital punishment, they brought Him to Pilate, who asked Jesus, “*Are You the King of the Jews?*” That was treason, since it challenged the authority of Caesar. What is interesting is they are now accusing Him of being what He disappointed the crowds for failing to be, namely, a political insurgent.



Line One: TIBERIEUM,,
Line Two: (PON) TIUS
Line Three: (PRAEF) ECTUS IUDA (EAE)

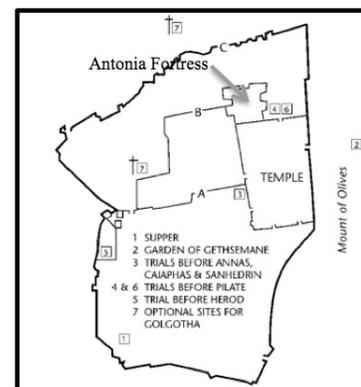
Pilate was the Roman prefect, or governor, of Judea appointed by Tiberius in A.D. 26. Pilate was in charge of the army of occupation that kept the taxes flowing to Rome. He also had the power of capital punishment and appointed the Jewish high priests. He lived in Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast but traveled to Jerusalem on special occasions, such as the Passover. Today’s liberals believed Pilate was a fictitious character the apostles made up, until a limestone block was discovered in June 1961 by Italian archaeologists Dr. Antonio Frova while excavating in the area of Caesarea’s ancient theatre. The stone records the name of Tiberius Caesar, then Pontius Pilate and his title as Prefect of Judea. When Pilate asked Jesus if He was king of the Jews, Jesus answered, *σὺ λέγεις (su legeis)* “*you say.*” This could be translated, “It is as *you say,*” or “*You are saying it.*” At any

rate, it was seen as an affirmation because *the chief priests began to accuse Him harshly...but Jesus made no further answer.*

Verses 6-15 The Call to Release Barabbas and Crucify Jesus

Since there is no other record of the custom to release a prisoner during Passover, we assume it was Pilate’s idea. These would probably be political prisoners, and it is not clear how the people would make the selection. Pilate, knowing the *chief priests had handed Him over because of envy*, assumed the people would want him to release Jesus. *But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas for them instead.* This probably would not have happened in Galilee, but we do not see much sympathy for Jesus among the people in Jerusalem. *Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.* Ryrie tells us that scourging is “flogged by means of a leather whip that had pieces of bone or metal imbedded in its thongs. It was used by the Romans only on murderers and traitors.”

Jerusalem – Jesus’ last day



Verses 16-20 Mocking Jesus in the Praetorium

The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium). This is probably in the Fortress of Antonia (Matthew 27:27; John 18:28, 33; 19:9; Acts 23:35). *And they called together the whole Roman cohort.* Cohort is an indistinct term, which could indicate anywhere from 200 to 600 soldiers. Mark lists five ways in which Jesus was tortured before His crucifixion:

1. They scourged Him (from the previous paragraph – verse 15)
2. They mocked Him, *they dressed Him up in purple...they began to acclaim Him, “Hail, King of the Jews”...and kneeling and bowing before Him*
3. *After twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him*
4. *They kept beating His head with a reed*
5. They were *spitting on Him*

Verses 21-32 The Crucifixion of Jesus at Golgotha

The victim usually carried the crossbeam, weighing about 100 pounds, to the place of crucifixion. Jesus started to carry it but was too weak from the flogging. The soldiers randomly chose a man named Simon of Cyrene, an important coastal city of North Africa that had a large Jewish colony (Acts 2:10). Only Mark mentioned Simon’s sons, *Alexander and Rufus*, but it sounds like they were believers known to Mark’s readers (Romans 16:13). At the third hour (9:00 A.M.), the soldiers took Jesus to the place outside but near the city wall (John 19:20) called *Golgotha, which is translated, [from Aramaic] Place of a Skull*. [The term “Calvary” comes from the Latin Vulgate *Calvaria* for “a skull.”] The drink, which Jesus refused, was probably an anesthetic for pain. Usually, a condemned man was stripped (except for a loincloth), both outstretched forearms were nailed and probably tied, to the crossbeam on the ground. The beam was attached to a vertical post and the victim’s feet were nailed to the post. A wooden step partway up the post allowed the victim to support his body until the pain was too great, thus prolonging death for several days. Finally, a victim was too exhausted to push himself up and suffocated. Jesus was crucified between two thieves and was mocked by the crowd.



Verses 33-41 The Death of Jesus

From noon until 3 P.M., *darkness fell over the whole land*, after which Jesus cried out, quoting the first phrase of Psalm 22:1, “*Eloi, Eloi Lama Sabachthani*.” There is a slight difference between Matthew and Mark concerning the first two words, “*My God, My God*.” Matthew transliterates them as “*Eli, Eli*,” from the Hebrew of Psalm 22, whereas Mark records the words as “*Eloi, Eloi*,” which are Aramaic. The next two words “*Lama Sabachthani*” are from Aramaic in both texts. So, either Jesus said it in Aramaic, but Matthew transliterated Psalm 22:1 from Hebrew, or Jesus said “*My God, My God*” in Hebrew, and Mark, or some scribe later, changed it to Aramaic in Mark’s account. Of course, the translation is the same. The last two words “*Lama Sabachthani*” mean “*Why have You forsaken Me*.” [The word *forsaken* can mean *left behind* or *deserted*]. This could reflect the agony of being separated from the Father, having taken on the sin of the world (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13), or He could be quoting Psalm 22:1 as a fulfillment of Scripture – David’s, then 1000-year-old, prediction of the details of Christ’s suffering. Then *Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom*.

Verses 42-47 The Burial of Jesus

Mark mentions three women who came with them from Galilee, *Mary Magdalene, and Mary*, identified only as *the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome* (whose name occurs only in Mark – here and 16:1). Jesus’ mother Mary is not mentioned here in Mark. Next, Mark tells us *Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council ...wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb*. There is no indication from the text that Jesus’ body was wrapped in strips of cloth. It says Joseph brought a *σινδών (sindon) cloth or garment* and wrapped Him in it. The two Marys watched this, noting where He was buried.



Applications from Chapter 15

- 1. God sometimes uses bad guys to do His work.** One interesting thing about the whole process of the death of Christ, is that the bad guys, like the high priest, Pilate, the mockers, and the soldiers who crucified Him, all are being used by God to bring about the event that paid for the sin of the world. The hypocrisy of the Sanhedrin, the cowardice of Pilate, the hatred of the chief priests are all used to bring about the event that saved our souls. Just because God uses someone does not mean they are good guys.
- 2. Trying to please the crowd will never lead to the truth.** *Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.* The religious leadership was afraid of the crowd who liked Jesus, and Pilate was afraid of the crowd who didn't. And both attempts to please the crowd overpowered any quest for truth.
- 3. Biblical prophecy is always fulfilled literally.** David felt an agony that led him to write Psalm 22. Verses 16-18 read, *A band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.* The people who carried this out had no knowledge of these predictions. Notice that David wrote these things with metaphors, and God fulfilled them literally.

Questions from Chapter 15

1. Jesus was tried before Pilate at
 - A. 6 A.M.
 - B. 9 A.M.
 - C. Noon
 - D. 3 P.M.
 - E. 6 P.M.
2. Jesus was crucified at
 - A. 6 A.M.
 - B. 9 A.M.
 - C. Noon
 - D. 3 P.M.
 - E. 6 P.M.
3. Jesus died at
 - A. 6 A.M.
 - B. 9 A.M.
 - C. Noon
 - D. 3 P.M.
 - E. 6 P.M.

Answers: 1. A (approximately). 2. B. 3. D.

Chapter 16

There is only one paragraph in Mark 16, the first eight verses featuring the post resurrection actions of three women: *Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome*. Verses 9-20 are not in the earliest manuscripts. We will examine the discussion about these verses in the Appendix.



Verses 1-8 Three Women Witnessed the Empty Tomb

Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome when the Sabbath was over (literally, *past the time of the Sabbath*) bought [purchased] spices. This would be after 6:00 P.M. or sundown on our Saturday evening, when the Sabbath was officially over and the shops would now be open.

They bought the spices, *so that they might come and anoint* the body the next morning to counteract the odor of decay. Apparently, they did not expect Jesus to raise from the dead. Early the next morning (sunrise on Sunday) the three ladies came to the tomb. But they knew there was a stone across the entrance which was far too big for the three of them to move. When they arrived, *they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. Entering the tomb, they saw [someone who was actually an angel, but looked like] a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.* The angel told them five things:



1. “*Do not be amazed.*” Apparently, they shouldn’t have been *amazed* because of Jesus’ predictions (8:31; 9:31; 10:34).
2. “*You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified,*” showing that the angel was aware of who they were and their purpose for being there.
3. “*He has risen*” [aorist tenses, passive voice = accomplished action in past time]. “*He is not here*” [which was proof of the statement, *He has risen*].
4. The angel pointed out the physical evidence, “*Behold, here is the place where they laid Him.*”
5. The angel gave his only command, “*But go, tell His disciples and [he singled out] Peter (see 1 Corinthians 15:5) He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.*”



Mark said nothing about any of Jesus’ appearances in Jerusalem or Judea. He ends his gospel with the statement, *They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.* I suspect Mark means they didn’t say anything to the people around them or those on the street until they came to the disciples (Matthew 28:8; Luke 24:9).

Verses 9-20 constitute one of the most difficult and most disputed textual problems in the New Testament. The discussion about the genuineness of these verses will be considered in Appendix.

Applications from Chapter 16

1. **Although the role of women is different from men, it should not be underestimated.** The first people to the tomb were women, the first revelation of the resurrection was to women. It was women who delivered the news to the apostles, and it was not an emotional appeal but crucial factual information. Never minimize the impact of women.
2. **Do not be amazed when God does what He said He would do.** The angel at the tomb told the women, “*Do not be amazed.*” Christians today seem to be amazed that the world is turning to a blasphemous global government, an evil global morality, and a global religious idea that says we all worship the same God. But that is exactly what God said would happen (Revelation 17–18). Before Christ’s return, the earth will return to the days before the flood of Noah (Matthew 24:37-38). “*Do not be amazed.*”
3. **The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is a factually substantiated historical event.** The angel at the tomb began the process that was fulfilled by the many appearances of Jesus over a period of forty days after He rose from the dead (Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5). The angel, speaking to the women, pointed to the empty grave and said, “*you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him.*” There was one easy way for the Romans or the Jews to put an end to Christianity—produce the body!

Questions from Chapter 16

1. Mark tells us that the women at the crucifixion included
 - A. Mary the mother of Jesus
 - B. Mary Magdalene
 - C. Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus
2. When the women came to the tomb early Sunday morning,
 - A. It was still dark
 - B. It was just starting to get light
 - C. It was already light
3. The women first saw the angel
 - A. Before they went into the tomb
 - B. As they went into the tomb
 - C. After they went into the tomb

Answers: 1. B. 2. C. 3. C (16:5).

Appendix

A Discussion About the Authenticity of Mark 16:9-20

The question is, “Were these verses part of the gospel or Mark, written by Mark under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, or were they added later by an unidentified writer or writers, not inspired by God? We shall examine both the external and internal evidence.

The External Evidence

1. The two earliest manuscripts (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus from the 300s) omit these verses. This is the greatest evidence against the authenticity of these verses. It is also interesting, however, that the scribes who copied these manuscripts of Mark, left some blank space after verse 8. This suggests that they knew of a longer ending but did not have it in the manuscript they were copying. That could mean that Mark originally wrote a longer ending and it was lost due to physical damage of the original or an early copy, leaving only a manuscript that ended at 16:8.

2. Most all other manuscripts (from the 400s on) support the inclusion of verses 9-20. Early patristic writers—such as Justin Martyr (A.D. 148) and Tatian (A.D. 170), thought these verses should be included, and Irenaeus (died A. D. 202) quoted verse 19 (*Against Heresies* 3. 10. 6). [Verse 19 = *So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.*] So if these verses were added, they were added before the middle of the second century. Mark was written in the A.D. 50s, and Justin Martyr was aware of them in A.D. 148, so if they were added, it was done during the first 100 years after Mark was written. However, Eusebius (in A.D. 325) and Jerome (in A.D. 407) said verses 9-20 were missing from Greek manuscripts known to them. So there were some manuscripts of Mark that made it to the fourth century without verses 9-20. An Armenian manuscript of Mark in the 10th century attributed verses 9-20 to “the presbyter Ariston,” (A.D. 60-130), but this is unsubstantiated.

3. It is more likely to be added than deleted. Scribes may add something they think completes a document, especially if they have it from some other source, but it is very unlikely they would delete something from a text they were copying. The only omissions are mistakes, but no scribe would make the mistake of overlooking 12 verses. If Mark ended his gospel abruptly at verse 8, or if his original ending were lost, then it is easy to see why some early scribe would want to add various statements available from other saying or songs. But if verses 9-20 were part of the original, it is difficult to see why an early scribe would have omitted it.

Internal Evidence

1. There is an abrupt change of the subject from the women of verses 1-8, to Jesus in verse 9. The feminine plural pronoun *they* of verse 8 is followed by the masculine singular participle *He had risen* of verse 9. This abrupt change seems unlikely.

2. Mary Magdalene is introduced in verse 9 as if for the first time. Mary Magdalene is introduced with the descriptive clause *from whom He had cast out seven demons* as if she had not been mentioned before (as she was in 15:40, 47 and 16:1).

3. The words and style of verses 9-20 are different from the rest of the gospel. About 1/3 of the significant Greek words in verses 9-20 do not appear elsewhere in Mark’s gospel. “The

Greek literary style lacks the vivid, lifelike detail so characteristic of Mark's historical narrative" ("Bible Knowledge Commentary").

4. Mark only records predictions that Jesus would appear in Galilee (14:28; 16:7). This would be another abrupt change, inconsistent with the context, since the angel told the women to report that Jesus would appear in Galilee in verse 7. But the appearances in verses 9-20 are in or near Jerusalem.

5. These verses depart from the parallel gospels of Matthew and Luke. The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) all follow a parallel account through Mark 16:8. Then there is a sharp divergence with statements which are either not found elsewhere or are without context.

6. The specifics of verses 14-18 are unlikely. These are examples of those statements that are a departure from the parallel accounts in the Synoptics:

Verse 14, *He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart.* The word here translated *reproached* ὀνειδίζω (*oneidizo*) means "insulted" or "reviled." This kind of rebuke is not mentioned anywhere else and inconsistent with how Jesus treated the disciples.

Verse 15, *Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.* This is inconsistent with the commission given in Matthew 28:18-20, and Acts 1:8. The Great Commission is to make disciples of all nations, not preach to all creation. This verse gets Francis of Assisi out preaching to the birds.

Verse 16, *He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved.* Although the apostles taught baptism as a means of salvation, an expression of faith (Acts 2:38), and baptism as accompanying salvation, an evidence of faith (Acts 16:31), they did not teach it as an additional requirement to faith to *be saved*. But the most likely way to take the statement in verse 15 is that there are two distinct requirements for salvation, *He who has believed and has been baptized*.

Verse 17-18, *These [5] signs will accompany those who have believed: [1] in My name they will cast out demons, [2] they will speak with new tongues; [3] they will pick up serpents, [4] and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; [5] they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.* The future indicative active *will accompany* is **not** read *these may or might accompany* (which would be a subjunctive mood) but that all believers **will** do these things.

Here are three basic problems with these signs: [1] Picking up serpents and drinking deadly poison are never mentioned by any biblical author. Many have foolishly used these as a test for salvation leading to disastrous results. [2] No other gospel, nor the apostles, ever mentioned any of these things as evidence for salvation or sanctification or anything. [3] Tongues speaking was not mentioned in any gospel because it was not part of the life of Christ. It did not occur until after the church began in Acts 2.

The best conclusions seem to be limited to two possibilities:

- (1) Mark's ending to his gospel was lost or destroyed.
- (2) Mark intentionally ended his gospel with verse 8.

Either way, it appears that verses 9-20 were added later, by someone other than Mark. Ryrie's conclusion seems to be a good perspective: "The doubtful genuineness of verses 9-20 makes it unwise to build a doctrine or base an experience on them."