

NOTES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospel According to

Mark

Gene Cunningham

As Jesus Christ prepared to send the disciples for the first time throughout Israel with His message, He included in their instructions this admonition: *"Freely you have received, freely give"* (Matthew 10:8). This six-word summary of grace explains the financial policy of the publications and audio ministries of Basic Training. All audio materials and publications are provided **without charge** to anyone who requests them. For a list of available material, visit our website.



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"Endure hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."
(2 Timothy 2:3)

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Preface

While I was teaching in Myanmar/Burma in March 2019, some of my long-term, advanced students suggested that I go through the New Testament and provide basic notes, which they could then be able print as a study Bible. They specifically asked that I focus on issues that are a major area of confusion in the churches where they work. Therefore, the following commentary will focus on these five primary areas:

1. What is the nature of God's grace and how is it received?
2. What is God's plan of salvation and the clear message of the Gospel?
3. What is the Bible's teaching on the security and assurance of the believer?
4. How is the believer to live the Christian life and be effective in witness/service?
5. What does prophecy say about the last days and the order of end-times events?

Practical Suggestions

These notes are purposely brief in nature. This work is not intended to be a complete commentary. All through the work I have kept in mind those who live in remote areas of our world, who labor to both understand and to teach others the Word of God. They do not have access to Bible school or seminary training. Neither are they able to afford the vast array of books available to pastors and teachers who live in more advanced countries.

I encourage all who utilize these notes to study them with an open Bible. Pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:15–23; 3:14–21) as you study. Read the context of the passage carefully. Look up and compare the references that are provided. Above all, let the Word of God, and not these notes, guide your insight into God's Word. As I always tell my students: "Never take my word for anything; search the Scriptures and prove what is true" (Acts 17:10–12; 1 John 4:1).

Before you begin any study of the Word of God, take a few moments to make sure that you are in fellowship with God, filled by means of the Holy Spirit. Comprehension, like everything else in the Christian life, is a gift that can be appropriated only by faith. The Bible clearly lays out three requirements that must be met before we can expect to understand God's Word. All three require nothing from us but faith.

We must be believers in Jesus Christ (John 3:16).

It is impossible for unbelievers to understand the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Jesus declared to the leading religious leader of His day that apart from spiritual birth man is blind to the things of God. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit ... You must be born again"* (John 3:6).

We must be filled by means of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:12).

Only the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God. As believers we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but when we sin, we break fellowship with God and cease to function in the power of the Spirit. When *"we confess our sins,"* God is always *"faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). The moment we confess, we are restored to fellowship and are again under the control of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, able to learn.

We must approach in faith (Hebrews 11:6).

Only when we approach in humility, with child-like faith, will the Word of God make sense to us (Matt. 18:4; Heb. 11:3). Where we find Scripture at odds with our ideas or our desires, we must submit to the authority of the Word. Intimacy, understanding, and power are reserved for those who are willing to do God's will (John 7:17).

DEDICATION

*“This will be written for the generation to come,
that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord.”*

Psalm 102:18

While it is my hope and prayer that these notes will be helpful to all current students of the Word of God, I send them forth with a special dedication to the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who are yet to come on the scene of world history (Rev. 7:1–8). They will be the heroes of the faith in the coming time of Tribulation following the soon coming Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

To these brothers and sisters of the future, I want you to know you have been thought of, prayed for, and loved—before you even knew your mission. We of the Church Age salute you for the sufferings you will endure and the victories you will win. We bid you to be strong in the Lord, for your victory is sure in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the labor put into these notes by many hands and through many prayers, be a help to you as you boldly proclaim the name of Jesus Christ in a dark and dangerous time!

INTRODUCTION

It is important for us to understand that the authors of each of the Gospels had a particular audience in mind when they wrote. They therefore presented Jesus in a specific way that would appeal to that audience. Matthew wrote to a predominantly Jewish readership. He presents Jesus as the promised Messiah/King in the lineage of Abraham and David. Luke is focused more on the Greek-speaking world, specifically addressed to Theophilus (Luke 1:1–4), and Jesus is presented as the Savior of all mankind, both Jew and Gentile. John has a wider focus than the rest of the Gospels, as he writes to the whole world, presenting Jesus as both Creator (John 1:1–4) and Savior (John 3:16–19).

The Gospel of Mark was apparently written by John Mark (Acts 13:5, 13; 1 Pet. 5:13), from the recollections of Peter. In this sense, it could be referred to as the “Gospel according to Peter, as recorded by Mark.” He writes with the Roman audience in mind. As a result, Jesus is presented as a man of power and action. He emphasizes the mighty deeds of Jesus—demonstrating His power over disease, demons, and death.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

MARK CHAPTER 1

The ministry of John the Baptist; Jesus' ministry begins with the call of disciples and mighty works.

The Coming of John and the Baptism of Jesus

Mark 1:1–11 (Matt. 3:1–17; Luke 3:1–22)

1:1 *“The beginning of the gospel.”* The Gospel is the “good news” about Jesus Christ and His work as Savior. *“Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”* The personal name “Jesus” means “Jehovah saves,” while the title “Christ” means “the anointed One, the Messiah.”

There are five great “beginnings” in the Bible:

1. The beginning of eternity past (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1),
2. The beginning of creation (Gen. 1:1; Matt. 19:4–5; Eph. 3:9; Heb. 1:10),
3. The beginning of Satan's fall (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8),
4. The beginning of Jesus' ministry (Mark 1:1; Luke 1:2), and
5. The beginning of the Church Age (Acts 11:15; 1 John 2:7).

1:2 *“As it is written in ... the prophets.”* Here, Mark quotes Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 to show that the coming of John the Baptist was a fulfillment of prophecy.

1:3 *“Prepare the way of the Lord.”* In Isaiah 40:3, the word “*LORD*” is used to translate “Jehovah.” This proves the deity of Jesus. The same is true of Paul's quote of Joel 2:32 in Romans 10:13.

1:4 *“John came ... preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”* John came to prepare the way of Christ. This baptism signified inner repentance in anticipation of the forgiveness that Christ would bring. This baptism is not the same as Christian baptism, which follows faith in Christ. This is why Paul re-baptized the followers of John in Acts 19:4–5, into Christian baptism. Compare notes on Matthew 3:1–17.

1:5 *“Confessing their sins.”* This was the fruit of true repentance, which acknowledged their need of the Savior (Matt. 3:5–6).

1:6 *“John was clothed with camel's hair.”* The rugged appearance of John would convey that he came in the spirit of Elijah (2 Kings 1:8; Mal. 4:5–6; Matt. 17:9–13; Luke 1:13–17).

1:7 *“There comes One after me.”* This was the central message of John the Baptist: that he was only the forerunner of the Savior. See Isaiah 40:1–8.

1:8 *“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”* This promise is repeated in all the Gospels (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). Jesus declared in Acts 1:5 that this would soon be fulfilled, as it was at Pentecost (Acts 2). The baptism of the Holy Spirit marked the beginning of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–28; Joel 2:28–29). See also notes on Matthew 3:11–12.

1:9 *“Jesus ... was baptized by John.”* Jesus was not baptized for repentance, but to identify Him as the Messiah John proclaimed (John 1:29–34) and to identify with sinners, for whom He would die on the cross. See the seven baptisms listed in notes on Matthew 3:6.

1:10 *“Immediately.”* This word signified quick and obedient service. It is Mark’s favorite word in describing the ministry of Jesus.

1:11 *“You are My beloved Son.”* Three times, the Father declared His pleasure in the Son: here, at His baptism, at the transfiguration (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7), and at the triumphal entry (John 12:28).

Temptations and Early Ministry

Mark 1:12–45 (Matt. 4:1–22; Luke 4:1–15, 31–44)

1:12 *“Immediately the Spirit drove Him.”* The word *“drove”* means “to compel by force,” and is much stronger than that used by the other Gospel writers. The role of the Spirit in the life of Jesus shows how we need to be Spirit-filled (Eph. 5:18), led (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18), and empowered (Eph. 1:19; 3:7, 20; 1 Thess. 1:5).

1:13 *“Tempted by Satan.”* This verse is a summary of Matthew 4:1–11 and Luke 4:1–13. It shows that, from the beginning, Jesus faced not only human opposition, but the full force of the kingdom of Satan.

1:14 *“Jesus came ... preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.”* Again, *“gospel”* simply means “good news.” Jesus did not begin by predicting His death and resurrection, but rather offered to Israel the long-awaited promise of the kingdom, where the Messiah would rule on the Earth.

1:15 *“Repent, and believe in the gospel.”* It must have shocked the Jews to be called to repent, since they believed their heritage from Abraham entitled them to enter the kingdom (Matt. 3:9; John 8:33). Throughout the Bible, faith is the only way of salvation (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3–5; Gal. 3:8–9).

1:16 *“Simon and Andrew.”* They had already been disciples of John (John 1:35–42) and had already met Jesus after His baptism.

1:17 *“I will make you ... fishers of men.”* Jesus calls men to be His disciples, and the work of disciples is to make other disciples (Matt. 28:18–20).

1:18 *“Immediately they left.”* Mark again uses the key word *“immediately”* to show the humble obedience of Simon and Andrew.

1:19–20 *“James ... and John ... went after Him.”* One of the primary ideas in Mark is that, just as Jesus obeyed His heavenly Father, so we are to follow and obey Him.

1:21 *“Immediately ... He entered the synagogue and taught.”* Mark places great emphasis on the teaching ministry of Jesus.

1:22 *“They were astonished at His teaching.”* Where the scribes quoted older, famous rabbis, Jesus’ authority came from Himself. He spoke as the Author of the Scripture (Matt. 7:28–29).

1:24 *“You are—the Holy One of God.”* The demon knew Jesus’ identity, but Jesus silenced him. He did not want testimony from such a source.

1:28 *“His fame spread throughout all the region.”* It was the sudden popularity of Jesus that aroused the envy and hatred of the religious leaders (Matt. 27:18).

1:29 *“They entered the house of Simon.”* Jesus used the house of Simon Peter as His base for the ministry in Galilee.

1:32–34 *“The whole city was gathered ... at the door.”* The news of Jesus healing Peter’s mother-in-law brought all the sick people together. Since the Sabbath ended at sundown, they were free to carry the sick and oppressed to Him. Yet, Jesus’ healing of Peter’s mother-in-law was on the Sabbath. This practice would become a point of great contention with the religious leaders (Matt. 12:10; Mark 3:1–6; Luke 13:10–17; John 5:9, 16).

1:35 *“Having risen a long while before daylight, He went out ... and there He prayed.”* Here, Mark shows us the secret to Jesus’ power and effectiveness. His prayer life was an indication of His dependence upon the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, for both move us to communion with God.

1:37–38 *“Everyone is looking for You ... for this purpose I have come.”* Jesus was not swayed by popularity; He was committed to God’s purpose for Him.

1:40 *“A leper came to Him ... kneeling down.”* According to the Law recorded in Leviticus 13–14, lepers were considered to be unclean, and anyone who touched them would be unclean. Jesus, however, touches the man out of compassion, and he is made whole. This miracle shows not only Jesus’ power to heal, but also to cleanse.

1:44 *“Say nothing to anyone.”* The reason for this command is seen in v. 45. While Jesus was willing to heal, as evidence of who He was (Isa. 61:1–3), He wanted people to come to Him for eternal salvation—not just for healing.

MARK CHAPTER 2

Jesus’ ministry in Capernaum; the call of Matthew/Levi; increasing confrontations with religious leaders.

Jesus Demonstrates His Power to Forgive Sins

Mark 2:1–12 (Matt. 9:2–8; Luke 5:17–26)

2:3 *“He preached the word to them.”* The ministry of Jesus always stressed the importance of the Word of God. We cannot separate the written Word from the Living Word.

2:5 *“Jesus saw their faith ... your sins are forgiven.”* The forgiveness of sin is based on two things: the work of Jesus on the cross to pay the debt of sin, and the faith of those who believe in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

2:7 *“Who can forgive sins but God alone?”* These scribes were correct in saying that only God can forgive sins, but they were wrong in rejecting the truth that Jesus is God in human flesh.

2:10 *“The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins.”* By commanding the man to rise up and walk, Jesus was giving absolute proof of His power to forgive sins. The title *“Son of Man”* is an Old Testament title for the Messiah (Dan. 7:13).

The Call of Matthew/Levi and the Increasing Attacks of the Pharisees

Mark 2:13–28 (Matt. 9:9–17; Luke 5:27–6:5)

2:14 *“He saw Levi ... and He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’”* Levi, also known to us as Matthew (Matt. 9:9; 10:3), is the author of the first Gospel.

2:15 *“He was dining in Levi’s house.”* The house was filled with *“tax collectors and sinners.”* Because everyone hated tax collectors as traitors to Israel, only known sinners would associate with them.

2:17 *“I did not come to call the righteous.”* Jesus did not mean that the scribes and Pharisees were righteous, but because they saw themselves as such, they saw no need for repentance. Those who know they are sinners come to

Him for forgiveness. Repentance signifies that one has a change of mind about their need for Christ, so that they come to Him in faith.

2:18 *“Why do ... Your disciples ... not fast?”* It was not fitting that the disciples fast while in the presence of the Savior. Fasting is personal and voluntary, not done for show (Matt. 6:16–18) and is designed as a discipline of setting aside the need for food to take time for Bible study and prayer. It teaches us to say “no” to the demands of the body and rely on the power of the Spirit.

2:22 *“No one puts new wine into old wineskins.”* Jesus used the practical customs of the day to reveal spiritual truth. The “new wine” represents the New Covenant, which cannot fit into the mold of the Old Covenant of the Law (Rom. 8:1–4; Gal. 3:10–18; Heb. 10:1–10).

2:24 *“Why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”* The Law of Moses permitted the poor and hungry to pluck grain from the fields of others (Deut. 23:24–25). The Law of Moses forbid work on the Sabbath (Exod. 20:8–11; 31:12–17). However, people still ate in their homes. These hypocrites were not arguing on the basis of Moses’ commands, but rather the oral tradition of the scribes, which perverted the Law into a system of slavery.

2:25, 27 *“Have you never read what David did when he was in need.”* Jesus is referring to 1 Samuel 21:1–6. The bread was set aside for the priests only (Lev. 24:5–9). The key phrase is “when he was in need.” Jesus wants to show that the laws of God do not violate the needs of men. *“The Sabbath was made for man.”* That is, it was a provision for all to have a day of rest.

2:28 *“The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”* This was an astounding claim, for only God could claim such authority. Jesus is claiming that He was the God who gave the Sabbath to man.

MARK CHAPTER 3

Jesus again heals on the Sabbath, teaches the people, chooses the twelve disciples, and rebukes the Pharisees.

The Healing on the Sabbath and the Call of the Disciples

Mark 3:1–19 (Matt. 10:1–4; 12:9–21; Luke 6:6–19).

3:2 *“They watched Him closely ... that they might accuse Him.”* The religious leaders, scribes, and Pharisees have no compassion for the crippled man. They only want to find cause to accuse Jesus. *“On the Sabbath.”* The Law of Moses did not forbid either medical practice or healing on the Sabbath. This was a rule of rabbinic tradition, which Jesus constantly opposed (Matt. 15:2–9; Mark 7:1–8). We have the same problem today when pastors and churches impose rules not recorded in Scripture.

3:4 *“Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil?”* Jesus’ question shows that to heal the man would be a good work, but to ignore his suffering, when Jesus had the power to heal, was an act of evil. The Pharisees had no interest in helping the man, but only in keeping their religious rules.

3:5 *“Being grieved by the hardness of their hearts.”* God is always grieved when men harden their hearts (Gen. 6:6; Psalm 95:10; Heb. 3:10). If one continues in this hardening, it is possible to go beyond the point of no return (vv. 28–29). Believers are to live so as not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30).

3:6 *“Pharisees ... plotted with the Herodians.”* While the scribes were teachers of the Law, the Pharisees considered themselves as the true keepers of the Law and loved outward show. Jesus called both “hypocrites” (Matt. 23:13–29). The Herodians were more of a political party, which supported the dynasty of Herod and compromise with Rome. The Pharisees and Herodians were bitter enemies.

3:7 *“But Jesus withdrew with His disciples.”* As the hatred of the leaders against Him grew, Jesus often would depart in order to postpone His arrest and crucifixion until exactly the right time.

3:8 *“A great multitude ... followed Him.”* The areas named here include everything from Galilee in the north to Edom, the birthplace of Herod, in the south of Judah.

3:11 *“You are the Son of God.”* Though the demons knew His identity, Jesus rebuked them because He wanted the people to come to faith through His teaching and works—not the hostile testimony of demons.

3:14 *“Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out.”* True disciples are known by three things:

1. They respond to Jesus’ call,
2. They are close to Him in intimate fellowship, and
3. They are sent out by His authority to reach others. See Matthew 28:18–20.

3:15 *“To have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.”* These twelve were set apart to be apostles. These mighty powers were called by Paul *“the signs of an apostle”* (2 Cor. 12:12). Christ and the apostles’ proof that they were from God was in the signs and miracles they performed (Heb. 2:3–4).

3:16 *“Simon ... He gave the name Peter.”* This new name means “rock” and designated Peter’s leadership of the apostolic band. In the Bible, the giving of a new name signifies a spiritual change in the person’s life, such as Abram (Gen. 17:3–5), Sarai (Gen. 17:15–16), Jacob (Gen. 32:28).

3:21 *“His own people ... said, ‘He is out of His mind.’”* This refers to members of Jesus’ family. Many of them did not believe in Him until after the resurrection (Mark 3:31–35; 6:1–4; John 7:5; Matt. 12:46–50; Luke 8:19–21).

3:22 *“‘He has Beelzebub’ ... the ruler of demons.”* This was a false god worshipped by the people of Ekron (2 Kings 1:2–3). See Matthew 10:25. But the Jews used the term as a title for Satan. This accusation is called “the unpardonable sin” (vv. 28–29), because it shows their hearts were hardened beyond recovery. See Matthew 12:31, Ephesians 4:17–19, and 1 Timothy 4:1–2.

3:23 *“How can Satan cast out Satan?”* Jesus refutes their accusations by showing that no house or kingdom can stand if it is divided against itself.

3:27 *“Unless He first binds the strong man.”* Jesus had entered into the devil’s kingdom to bind him and set his captives free (Isa. 61:1–3; 1 John 3:8, 4:4; Heb. 2:14–18).

3:29 *“He who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit.”* The Holy Spirit of God convicts all men of their need for Jesus Christ (John 16:7–11). When His conviction is repeatedly rejected, the heart becomes hardened to the point of no return. See v. 22 note above.

3:31 *“His brothers and His mother.”* Based on v. 21, they are still trying to take Him away, thinking He is crazy. See the note and passages at v. 21.

3:33 *“Who is My mother, or My brothers?”* Jesus wants to make clear that His spiritual family—those who believe in Him and obey Him—are closer than His own natural family. See v. 35.

MARK CHAPTER 4

Jesus begins teaching in parables; calms the wind and waves.

Jesus Teaches the Multitude in Parables

Mark 4:1–34 (Matt. 13:1–52; Luke 8:4–18; 13:18–19)

4:2 *“He taught them many things in parables.”* Parables are stories taken from daily life but are designed to reveal some deeper spiritual truth. They are also designed to conceal the truth from *“those who are outside”* (v. 11), probably the scribes and Pharisees here, but today, of those who refuse to believe. The word “parable” means “to cast or lay side-by-side,” so that the earthly example reveals a spiritual truth.

4:3 *“A sower went out to sow.”* This parable is designed to show four possible responses to God’s Word. By application, we should ask what kind of hearer are we? See Matthew 13:3–9 and Luke 8:5–8. All who receive God’s Word by faith are born again (John 1:12; Rom. 10:17; Eph. 1:13–14), but not all believers bear the same amount of fruit.

4:9 *“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”* Those who are humble and hungry in spirit (Matt. 5:3, 6) will receive the message in faith. The full understanding comes through continued study and growth.

4:11 *“The mystery of the kingdom of God.”* Jesus brings newly revealed truth to His disciples (see Matt. 13:11). Generally, “mystery” refers to the revelation of New Testament truth, not revealed in the Old Testament. See Romans 16:25–26 and Ephesians 3:1–7.

4:12 *“Seeing they may see and not perceive.”* This quote, from Isaiah 6:9–10, anticipates that those who claim to have spiritual insight already are unteachable and unwilling to learn. For example, see Matthew 15:14; 23:16–26; John 9:40–41. This is very similar to Jesus saying that the righteous have no need of repentance (Matt. 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32). What He means is that those who claim to be righteous see no need of repentance, but those who know they are sinners do. See Luke 18:10–14.

4:20 *“Those who hear ... and bear fruit.”* The goal of Bible teaching is not just to learn, but also to live by the truths we learn. As we live in fellowship with God (John 15:1–16; 1 John 1:1–7), the Spirit of God within us bears the fruit (Gal. 5:22–23; Eph. 5:9–10; Heb. 13:15; James 3:17–18).

4:21 *“A lamp ... set on a lampstand.”* Just as a lamp reveals what is hidden in the darkness, so the Word of God reveals what is hidden in the heart.

4:24 *“To you who hear, more will be given.”* Those who receive by faith what they are able to understand will receive greater spiritual insight and understanding. Every truth we learn opens the door to greater truth.

4:27 *“He himself does not know how.”* This parable from vv. 26–29 occurs only in Mark’s Gospel. God’s Word, faithfully sown, will in time surely bring fruit (1 Cor. 3:6–7; 1 Pet. 1:23–25; 2 Pet. 3:18). We should not grow weary in serving God, for He is faithful to bring fruit.

4:30–32 *“The kingdom of God ... is like a mustard seed.”* Though much smaller than the seeds of other grains, the mustard seed grows so large that birds make their nests in it. There was a fragrance in the mustard plant of the Middle East that attracted birds to use it for nesting. Even so, the kingdom began very small (Jesus and eleven disciples), but the fragrance of the Gospel has attracted multitudes to find shelter in it.

The Wind and Waves Obey Jesus

Mark 4:35–41 (Luke 8:22–25)

4:35 *“Let us cross over.”* Jesus does not call us to easy lives. If we follow Him, He will often lead us into the storms of life.

4:38 *“He was ... asleep on a pillow.”* He was no doubt wearied from dealing with so many people. So often in our own storms, it seems that Jesus is sleeping. Yet, if we are with Him, we can be in no danger. *“Do You not care?”* Even David felt this same doubt (Psalm 44:23–24). It is part of our spiritual growth for God to let us pass through such times. (Rom. 5:3–5; James 1:2–4, 12).

4:40 *“How is it that you have no faith?”* Here, Jesus shows that fear and faith cannot exist together. Either one will prevail, or the other. David knew this and faced his fears with faith (Psalm 56:3).

4:41 *“Who can this be?”* The disciples are learning that Jesus is not only a true man, but He is also the God who controls nature. Only the Son of God could command the wind and waves (Mark 1:1, 27).

MARK CHAPTER 5

Jesus displays His power over demons, disease, and death. The Gospel of Mark focuses on Jesus’ miracles more than any other Gospel.

Jesus’ Power Over Demons

Mark 5:1–20 (Matt. 8:28–34; Luke 8:26–39)

5:1 *“The country of the Gadarenes.”* This was a predominantly Gentile area on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. In this area were ten cities, thus it was called *“Decapolis.”* (v. 20). In Matthew 8:28, it is called *“the country of the Gergesenes.”*

5:2 *“There met Him ... a man.”* In the Matthew account, two men are mentioned (Matt. 8:28). Mark and Luke mention only this man, apparently the only one who believed in Jesus. *“An unclean spirit.”* He was demon possessed (v. 15). See Mark 1:23 and Luke 4:33. In Mark 5, Jesus comes into contact with three people declared *“unclean”* by the Law of Moses (Leviticus 11–18). This demon-possessed man, the woman with the issue of blood (see note on 5:25), and the dead girl (5:41). According to the Law, to touch any of them would make one unclean. Instead, by His power, Jesus cleanses each of them. The power of Jesus to cleanse from all defilement is being emphasized.

5:3–5 Here, we see five evidences of demon possession: *“dwelling among the tombs”* (an affinity with death), *“chains had been pulled apart by him”* (supernatural strength), *“neither could anyone tame him”* (violent, uncontrolled nature), *“night and day ... crying out”* (a tormented soul), and *“cutting himself”* (self-destructive activity).

5:6 *“He ran and worshiped Him.”* This is the volitional action of the man himself, before the demon begins to speak. The first step in deliverance from demonic possession is the desire of the individual to be delivered by Jesus Christ.

5:7 *“He cried out with a loud voice.”* This is now the demon speaking, seeking to resist the man’s desire to come to Jesus. *“Jesus, Son of the Most High God.”* The demons know and fear the Lord Jesus. *“Do not torment me.”* Demons know they will one day be cast into judgment.

5:9 *“What is your name? ... ‘Legion.’”* A Roman legion was 6,000 soldiers! An army of demons were dwelling in this poor man.

5:10 *“He begged Him earnestly.”* Demons seem to be territorial and have a need to indwell men or creatures. When a demon is cast out, it is like being in a “waterless wasteland” for the demon (Luke 11:24).

5:12 *“Send us into the swine.”* If they cannot indwell the man, they desire to indwell the pigs rather than being dispossessed of a dwelling place. Swine were declared an unclean animal in the Old Testament (Lev. 11:7–8; Deut. 14:8).

5:13 *“Jesus gave them permission.”* The Lordship and authority of Jesus over all creation is being demonstrated here. The insanity they caused in the man now infected the pigs, *“the herd ... drowned in the sea.”* Even pigs can’t stand being possessed by demons!

5:15 *“Sitting and clothed and in his right mind.”* His deliverance from the demons had the effect of making him calm, modest, and sane. *“They were afraid.”* The power of Jesus to transform lives is more frightening to some people than demonic possession.

5:17 *“They began to plead with Him to depart.”* When demons claim a territory, it has a darkening effect on the souls of all who dwell there—unless they have the light of Christ. See John 8:12 and 1 Peter 2:9. Many places in the world today prefer to have demon-possessed people in control rather than to permit the light of Christ to shine in the land (Psalm 107:10–11; Isa. 29:15; John 3:19).

5:18 *“Begged Him that he might be with Him.”* What love and gratitude he must have felt for the One who delivered him!

5:19–20 *“Tell them what great things the Lord has done for you.”* God’s plan for this man was that he be a witness among his own people. As a result, the man went throughout the *“Decapolis”* (ten cities) and proclaimed the love and power of Jesus to deliver. This man’s witness actually prepared for Jesus’ later ministry in the same area (Mark 7:31).

Jesus Displays His Power over Disease and Death

Mark 5:21–43 (Matt. 9:18–26; Luke 8:41–56)

5:21 *“A great multitude gathered to Him.”* This was the multitude from around Capernaum (Mark 3:7, 20, 32; 4:1, 36). Although the multitude followed Him to see His mighty works, most people of this area rejected Him (Matt. 11:23–24; Luke 10:15–16).

5:22–28 Both *“Jairus”* and the *“woman”* show that those who want to receive power and blessing from Christ must come to Him in faith. Jairus believed his daughter would live if Jesus would lay His hands on her. The woman believed that just to touch His garment was sufficient to heal her. All of God’s dealings with man are based on His unmerited grace and our unconditional faith, however frail.

5:25 *“Flow of blood.”* This uncontrolled menstrual bleeding would have made this woman perpetually unclean according to the Law of Moses (Lev. 15:25–33). Again, the power of Jesus not only heals, but also purifies.

5:28 *“I shall be made well.”* In the original Greek, she says, “I will be saved.” Though she likely meant “saved from my affliction,” in v. 34, Jesus says in the Greek, “your faith has saved you,” and refers to eternal salvation.

5:35–36 *“Do not be afraid; only believe.”* Neither disease nor death present a problem to the power of Jesus. The answer to all our need is to overcome fear with faith in His mercy. Jesus’ words give the answer: *“Do not be afraid,*

only believe.” Faith is an admission of personal helplessness and of total dependence upon the object of faith—the Lord Jesus Christ.

5:37 “Peter, James, and John.” These three were permitted to accompany Him at this miraculous restoration of life, as well as at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1; Mark 9:2), and at Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37; Mark 14:33). They were being trained for leadership.

5:38 “Those who wept and wailed loudly.” These were most likely professional mourners who were paid to mourn the dead.

5:39 “The child is not dead, but sleeping.” Sleep is often used as a picture of those who will be raised to new life (1 Thess. 4:13–14; 1 Cor. 11:30, 15:51). Jesus knew He would raise her up to life. See also Jesus’ words about Lazarus (John 11:4, 11).

5:41 “He took the child by the hand.” According to the law of Moses, anyone who touched a dead body was ceremonially unclean (Num. 19:11–13). However, such is the power of Jesus’ life, that His touch makes the dead to live, and the unclean to be pure.

5:43 “He commanded them strictly that no one should know it.” Jesus knew the greater His fame grew, the more the religious leaders would try to kill Him. His time to go to the cross had not yet come. The multitude had seen many miracles, and still did not believe in Him.

MARK CHAPTER 6

In this chapter, Jesus is rejected in Nazareth, sends out the twelve; John is beheaded; five thousand are fed; Jesus walks on water.

Jesus is Rejected in Nazareth

Mark 6:1–6 (Matt. 13:53–58; Luke 4:16–30)

6:1 “His own country.” This refers to the area around Nazareth—His hometown.

6:2 “Wisdom ... mighty works.” They could not deny His power but rejected His identity as Messiah/Savior.

6:3 “Is this not the carpenter?” Joseph had apparently died by this time. Jesus had taken over the work of Joseph. **“Brother of James ... Judas.”** After the virgin birth of Christ, Joseph and Mary had other children (Matt. 1:24–25). **“James”** and **“Judas”** did not believe until after the resurrection (John 7:5) when Jesus appeared to James (1 Cor. 15:7). Then, His brothers believed in Him (Acts 1:14). James became the leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:6, 13; Gal. 1:19) and wrote the book of James. This Judas (not Judas Iscariot) wrote the book of Jude (Jude 1).

6:4 “A prophet is not without honor.” This is because of familiarity and envy. To see one of their number exalted and honored can drive friends and family to hatred and violence (Luke 4:29).

6:6 “He marveled because of their unbelief.” Only two things ever amazed Jesus. The first was the unbelief of His own people; the second was the faith of the Roman centurion (Matt. 8:10).

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

Mark 6:7–13 (Matt. 10:1–42; Luke 9:1–6)

6:7 “He called the twelve ... and gave them power.” An apostle must be personally called by Christ and vested with his own authority. True apostles could reproduce the signs Jesus did (Acts 2:43; Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:12). In

this sense, there are no true apostles today. In many countries, missionaries are called apostles, because they have been sent out to witness about Jesus Christ.

6:8–9 *“Take nothing for the journey.”* The disciples were being trained to trust God to provide for them. See Matthew 10:5–13.

6:10–11 *“Shake off the dust under your feet.”* Those who received the disciples would be blessed. For those who rejected them, this was a sign of their rejection by God. Like *“Sodom and Gomorrah,”* they would be held accountable and bear their judgment (Matt. 10:14–15).

6:12 *“So they ... preached that people should repent.”* Repentance requires a change of mind, resulting in a change of action. Repentance was crucial in the message to the Jews (Matt. 3:2), because they thought that their relationship to Abraham earned them entrance into the kingdom (Matt. 3:9; John 8:39). They could not come to faith in Christ until they “changed their minds” about this issue.

John the Baptist Beheaded

Mark 6:14–29 (Matt. 14:1–12; Luke 9:7–9)

6:14–29 *“King Herod heard of Him.”* This section is a break from Mark’s story—a parenthesis to explain both Herod’s response to news of Jesus, and how he had murdered John the Baptist.

6:14 *“King Herod.”* This was Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, who sought to kill the Christ-child (Matt. 2:1–18).

6:15 *“It is Elijah.”* The multitudes had many theories about the identity of Jesus (see Matt. 16:14; Mark 8:28).

6:18 *“It is not lawful.”* Both *“Herod”* and *“Herodias”* had gotten divorced so that they could marry each other. Herodias had been married to Philip, Herod Antipas’ half-brother. This remarriage was wrong on many counts (Lev. 18:16; 20:21). Herod’s marriage to Herodias would have been considered an act of incest.

6:22 *“Herodias’ daughter.”* This was Salome. In response to her seductive dance, Herod promised her *“whatever you ask.”* At the urging of her mother Herodias, she asked for the head of John the Baptist.

Jesus Feeds Over Five Thousand

Mark 6:30–44 (Matt. 14:13–21; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–14)

6:30 *“The apostles gathered to Jesus.”* This is the first use of *“apostles”* in Mark. The word “apostle” was originally a military title speaking of one who was sent out and commissioned for a specific purpose. In the New Testament, it always has the idea of being sent out with full authority and power from Jesus Christ. *“And told Him all things.”* They gave a full report of their ministry.

6:31 *“Come aside ... and rest a while.”* Ministry to the needs of people is demanding and draining. Jesus recognized the disciples’ need for rest in quiet surroundings.

6:34 *“Jesus ... was moved with compassion.”* As in Matthew 9:36, the plight of the multitude moved Jesus not only to compassion, but to meet their needs by teaching them the Word of God.

6:37 *“You give them something to eat.”* Here, Jesus is teaching the disciples that they can meet the great needs of men only by relying on His divine supply. *“Two hundred denarii.”* This was the equivalent of two hundred days’ wages for a common laborer.

6:38 *“How many loaves to you have?”* The provision was so small and the needs so great! Jesus is teaching us that if we give the little we have into His hands, He is able to multiply it to be sufficient for the need.

6:39–40 *“On the green grass ... in ranks.”* These are statements of an eyewitness. The Gospel of Mark is actually a record of Peter’s experience as it was related to Mark.

6:41 *“He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves.”* In communion with the heavenly Father, Jesus multiplied the bread and fish to feed the multitude. As He kept breaking, the disciples kept serving until all were filled.

6:43 *“They took up twelve baskets.”* God’s grace is always extravagant, meeting the need and then some (2 Kings 4:1–7). The disciples could have carried what was left over for supplies on the road. Seeking and doing the will of God always insures provision for our own need (Matt. 6:33).

6:44 *“Five thousand men.”* This did not include women and children. The total number could have been as many as ten thousand. It is here that Jesus taught the multitude on *“the bread of life”* (John 6:22–71).

Jesus Walks on Water and Heals Multitudes

Mark 6:45–56 (Matt. 14:22–36; John 6:15–21)

6:46 *“He departed to the mountain to pray.”* The prayer life of Jesus is repeatedly emphasized in the Gospels. His deep communion with the Father was the secret to the power of His life (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16).

6:48 *“About the fourth watch of the night.”* This was from 3 a.m. until 6 a.m. *“Walking on the sea.”* Jesus wanted to teach the disciples His power over nature. Mark does not record Peter walking to meet Jesus. See Matthew 14:29–33. *“Would have passed them by.”* He was awaiting their response in seeking Him. He did the same with the two on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:28).

6:50 *“Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”* The phrase, *“It is I”* could be translated “I AM,” the name God revealed to Moses (Exod. 3:14). Jesus revealed His deity to them.

6:52 *“Their heart was hardened.”* God often follows His deliverances with a test of faith. What the disciples saw in the feeding of the five thousand should have led them to recognize His power over all things. How often, like the disciples, we forget God’s past provisions and deliverances, and give in to fear. When we reject or deny the truth that God has revealed to us, we harden our heart against Him. It is good, when facing trials and afflictions, to remember the faithfulness of God to us in the past.

6:56 *“That they might just touch the hem of His garment.”* Apparently, the faith of the woman in Mark 5:27–34 had become widely known (Matt. 14:34–36). The faith of one person often results in having an effect on a multitude of people.

MARK CHAPTER 7

Increasing disputes with Jewish leaders; the Syro-Phoenician woman’s faith; healing the deaf and dumb man.

Disputing with the Religious Leaders

Mark 7:1–23 (Matt. 15:1–15:20)

7:1 *“The Pharisees and some of the scribes.”* Normally, these two groups were at odds with each other, but their hatred of Jesus united them. As it became clearer that Jesus opposed their man-made religion, their united attack on

Him intensified. (Mark 3:6, 21–22). **“Having come from Jerusalem.”** They made a long journey just to seek fault and make false charges against Jesus.

7:2–5 “Defiled, that is, unwashed hands.” These standards, explained in verses 3–4, were not part of the Law of Moses. Rather, they were oral traditions passed down by many rabbis of the past. These **“tradition[s] of the elders”** were commands added to the Law by zealous teachers, each thinking their greatness depended on how many regulations and rules they could add to Jewish religion. They are like many in Christianity today who impose rules and regulations of conduct not found in the Bible.

7:6–8 “Well did Isaiah prophecy of you hypocrites ... teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” Jesus rebukes them by quoting Isaiah 29:13, a prophecy that foresaw their apostasy from pure faith and obedience to the Word of God. The term “hypocrite” was reserved by Jesus for the most corrupt of religious leaders. See Matthew 23:13–29. Many church leaders today, holding to man-made rules, fall into the same category.

7:9–13 “You reject the commandment of God.” These religious leaders emphasized tradition but ignored God’s Word. Moses commanded us to honor father and mother (Exod. 20:12; 21:17; Deut. 5:16). The scribes taught that if a son declared his wealth to be a gift to God or dedicated for God’s use (the meaning of **“Corban”**), he did not need to care for his aged parents. The hypocrisy was that the dedicated wealth remained in the possession of the son.

7:13 “Making the word of God of no effect.” The oral law of the Jews was contrary to both the words and the intent of the Law of Moses. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), Jesus shows the true meaning and intent of the Mosaic Law. **“Many such things you do.”** The whole religion of the Pharisees and scribes was corrupted. This is why John the Baptist came, calling the nation to repentance from these **“dead works”** (Heb. 6:1; 9:14).

7:14–16 “Nothing that enters a man ... can defile him.” True spiritual defilement can only come from within, in **“the thoughts and intents of the heart”** (Heb. 4:12). This is why Isaiah said, **“Their heart is far from Me.”** (v. 6; Isa. 29:13). Paul later tells us (Rom. 14:17) that **“The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking [or food and drink] but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”**

7:17–19 “Are you thus without understanding also?” Jesus rebukes the disciples for not understanding His teaching. The phrase, **“purifying all foods”** seems to mean that the eating of foods declared **“unclean”** by Moses (Leviticus 11; Deut. 14:13–21) was not what defiled the eater, but rather the heart of disobedience to God’s commands.

7:21–23 “For from within, out of the heart ... these evil things ... defile a man.” Jesus lists the true sins of the heart that cause spiritual defilement before God. How many sermons have we heard today that scrutinize the practices of people who are never mentioned in Scripture, and yet how few ever preach on these things!

The Faith of the Syro-Phoenician Woman

Mark 7:24–30 (Matt. 15:21–28)

7:24 “Tyre and Sidon.” This was Gentile country, the furthest Jesus ever travelled outside Israel. Jesus was seeking seclusion and rest for Him and the disciples, but **“He could not be hidden.”** The **“light of the world”** could not fail to shine out in the darkness (Matt. 5:14; John 8:12; 9:5; 12:36; 2 Cor. 4:6–7; Eph. 5:8–10; 1 John 1:7).

7:26 “The woman was ... a Syro-Phoenician by birth.” She was a Syrian, born in Phoenicia. This is the same area where Elijah went to the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8–24).

7:27 “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.” Jesus is not insulting this woman—He is testing her faith. The **“children”** refers to the Jews (Matt. 15:24), to whom the Gospel was to go first (Rom. 1:16).

Although many Jews referred to Gentiles as “dogs” (1 Sam. 17:43; 2 Sam. 16:9), the term Jesus used was a term of affection, used for little household dogs. Likely, He was smiling when He said this.

7:28 *“Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs ... eat from the children’s crumbs.”* This woman understood Jesus’ words, and responded in humble faith. She, like a little dog, did not want to take the children’s food, but only to receive a crumb from Him.

Her use of the term “*Lord*” is significant. In Matthew 15:22, she calls Him “*Son of David*,” which shows that she recognized Him as the promised Messiah. Because of her “*great faith*” (Matt. 15:28), not only was her daughter delivered from the demon, but the woman also entered into the kingdom of God.

Jesus Heals a Deaf and Mute Man

Mark 7:31–37 (Matt. 15:29–31)

7:32–35 *“Then they brought to Him one who was deaf.”* This is one of two miracles recorded only in the Gospel of Mark. The other is in Mark 8:22–26.

7:33–34 *“He took him aside ... He spat ... and said to him, ‘Ephphatha’ ... ‘be opened.’”* Jesus could have simply said, “*Be opened*,” and it would have been done. Perhaps His actions were a way of communicating to the deaf-mute what He was about to do. The word “*Ephphatha*” is Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, which Mark interprets for his Roman/Gentile readers.

7:36 *“He commanded them ... tell no one.”* Jesus often gave this command because He knew the danger of publicity in a hostile world. Furthermore, miracles often drew crowds of people who only seek for signs—but not truth. Many missions and ministries today do all they can to publicize their work, where it would be better for them to be more covert in their actions.

7:37 *“He has done all things well ... the deaf hear and the mute speak.”* These were the signs that were prophesied to accompany the coming of the Messiah (Isa. 35:4–6; 61:1–3). This Gentile multitude appears to be saying that He has fulfilled all that Scripture said the Messiah would do.

MARK CHAPTER 8

Jesus feeds four thousand; warns against the Pharisees teaching; heals a blind man; is identified as the Christ/Messiah by Peter; foretells His death and resurrection.

Feeding the Four Thousand

Mark 8:1–10 (Matt. 15:32–39)

8:2 *“I have compassion on the multitude.”* As the “*good shepherd*” (John 10:11), the Lord Jesus cares for the needs of His flock. This multitude, on the east side of the Sea of Galilee, were a mixed group of both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus Christ loves and cares for all people and their needs (Matt. 9:36), but His greatest concern is for the eternal salvation of each one.

8:4 *“How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?”* This question of doubt came from the disciples, who had recently witnessed His feeding of over 5,000 men, women, and children (Mark 6:30–44). This same mentality existed in the Exodus generation, even after they witnessed the plagues, the Passover, and the parting of the Red Sea (Exod. 14:11; 16:2–3).

8:5 *“How many loaves do you have? ... Seven.”* It is worth pointing out that both times Jesus fed the multitude, He had seven pieces of food (*“five [loaves] and two fish”* (Mark 6:38). In Scripture, seven is used as a figure of divine completeness and fulfillment. Though the number “seven” is emphasized *“They also had a few small fish”* (v. 7).

8:7 *“Having blessed them ... so they ate and were filled.”* What Jesus gives to each one of us has been blessed by Him for our use. What we choose to do with His gifts will demonstrate either our gratitude or ingratitude, our faith or unbelief.

8:9 *“About four thousand.”* The parallel passage in Matthew 15:32–39 declares that this number did not include women and children.

8:10 *“The region of Dalmanutha.”* Jesus and the disciples have now crossed over again to the west side of the Sea of Galilee, near Magdala, as indicated in Matthew 15:39, and near Bethsaida (v. 22).

Jesus Warns the Disciples About False Teaching

Mark 8:11–21 (Matt. 16:5–12)

8:12 *“Why does this generation seek a sign?”* Jesus’ miraculous works were not done as a spectacle, but to minister to people. Jesus declared that those who seek signs for their own sake were *“an evil and adulterous generation”* (Matt. 12:39; 16:4).

8:15 *“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees ... of Herod.”* Jesus is speaking of both religious and political corruption. Just as leaven permeates the dough, so false teaching can slowly come to influence even disciples (Matt. 16:12; 1 Cor. 5:6). The leaven of the Pharisees consisted of hypocrisy and negating the Word of God through tradition (Mark 7:3–13; Luke 12:1); the leaven of Herod was rationalism and secularism without faith. The leaven of Herod was the exaltation of human rule and law above that of God (compare Acts 4:19; 5:29) This evil corruption was infecting all of Israel at this time.

8:17 *“Do you not yet perceive nor understand?”* Jesus rebukes the disciples, for after all they had witnessed, they still doubted His power to provide for them. We should each consider how this rebuke applies to our own lack of faith at times. *“Heart still hardened?”* The Gospel of Mark highlights the doubting and hardness of heart of “the Twelve” more than any other Gospel. This is possibly because Peter himself was relating these experiences to Mark to record.

The Healing of the Blind Man at Bethsaida

Mark 8:22–26

8:24 *“I see men like trees, walking.”* This incident is used by Mark to illustrate the disciples’ dullness of hearing (Heb. 5:11–14), and of their gradual perception of the true light of truth. Jesus could have just spoken the word, and the blind man would see (Mark 10:52). However, especially when dealing with the blind, Jesus would often touch their eyes (Matt. 9:29; 20:34). Restoring sight to the blind was one of the signs the prophets associated with the Messiah (Isa. 35:4–5; Matt. 11:5; Luke 7:22). Yet the Pharisees, who kept asking for a sign (Mark 8:11), saw Him heal the blind (Luke 7:21; John 9:1–34) and still refused to believe in Him.

Peter’s Confession and Jesus’ Prediction of His Death and Resurrection

Mark 8:27–33 (Matt. 16:13–23; Luke 9:18–22)

8:27 *“Caesarea Philippi.”* This was located at the base of Mount Hermon, where Jewish legend held that the fallen angels had come to Earth to corrupt mankind (Gen. 6:1–2; 2 Pet. 2:4–5; Jude 6). This area was called “the gates of hell,” and many idolatrous carvings have been found in the rock walls there. *“Who do men say that I am?”* Both here and in Mark 6:14–18, we see that there were many popular ideas about Christ’s identity. Unbelieving men are

happy to give Him any identity or title: “Prophet,” “Reformer,” “Teacher,” but refuse to acknowledge that He is indeed the promised Christ/Messiah, and that He is God who has come in human flesh (Phil. 2:5–9).

8:29 *“Who do you say that I am?”* This is always the question that separates believers from unbelievers. *“You are the Christ.”* According to the Old Testament, there could be only one Christ/Messiah/Savior. Jesus had to fulfill all the Old Testament prophecies about Him: that He would be God and Man in one Person (Psalms 2:7–12; 110:1–4; Isa. 42:1–4), would die for all men, and be resurrected (Job 19:25–27; Isaiah 53; Zech. 12:10–11). Jesus wanted the disciples to be able to link His identity to the prophecy He was about to make concerning His death and resurrection.

8:31 *“And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must ... be killed, and ... after three days rise again.”* Jesus is now openly explaining to His disciples His mission of redemption. Many in Israel at the time had an idea of the Messiah as a conquering King—but not as a suffering Savior. *“By the elders and chief priests and scribes.”* This shows that He is referring to the Jewish Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court composed of 71 men.

8:33 *“Get behind Me Satan!”* One minute, Peter is *“blessed”* for his insight (Matt. 16:17) and the next, he is in line with Satan. No doubt Satan implanted this idea of resistance in Peter’s mind—a seeming concern for Jesus’ welfare—that would have thwarted God’s plan of redemption.

The Demands of Discipleship

Mark 8:34–38 (Matt. 16:24–27; Luke 9:23–26)

8:34 *“Whoever desires to come after Me.”* The word “disciple” means both a learner and a follower. Jesus is challenging His disciples, who are already believers and learners, to take the next step of growth—fully committed discipleship.

Discipleship (vv. 34–38)

1. Only those who have believed in Jesus Christ can be true disciples. Peter identifies Jesus as God in Matthew 16:16, where he says, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”* Even though Judas was among the disciples, Scripture tells us that he never believed in Jesus’ true identity or mission (John 6:70–71; 13:10–11, 18–19).
2. The first requirement of discipleship is *“deny himself.”* This means the surrender of self-will and personal plans for life. Total, unconditional surrender is the daily concern of the disciple: *“Not as I will, but as You will ... Your will be done”* (Matt. 26:39, 42).
3. The second requirement is to *“take up his cross.”* This means a surrender to God’s plan for our life and a willingness to suffer to see that purpose through. It is a willingness to bear shame, reproach, and suffering for His sake (Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 3:10–12; 1 Pet. 2:21; 4:1–2, 12–16).
4. Once this path of discipleship is understood and committed to, all that is left is to *“follow Me.”* Jesus Christ, now seated at the Father’s right hand, will guide and sustain us by the Holy Spirit He has given us (John 14:25–26; 15:26–27; 16:7–11). The literal rendering of Romans 8:14 is, *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are [mature] sons of God.”*

8:35 *“Whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.”* Here, Jesus makes a contrast between those who choose to live for self and those who renounce self for His sake. Even though a believer, if one lives for self, in the end, his works will go up in smoke at the Bema/Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:10–15). *“He himself will be saved, yet so as through fire”* (1 Cor. 3:15), but his life will have meant nothing—and like the world he loved,

it will pass away (1 John 2:15–17). By contrast, the believer who lives for Christ and bears His reproach will receive great reward (Matt. 5:10–12; James 1:12).

8:37 *“What will a man give in exchange for his soul?”* The word “soul” is used here, in the typical idiom of the day, to mean “life.” The point is this: Is it worth living a self-centered life now, in exchange for the loss that will be suffered at the Bema Seat—the Judgment Seat of Christ? Loss of salvation is not the issue here, but the loss of potential eternal reward is!

8:38 *“When He comes in the glory of His Father.”* Jesus is focusing the disciples on His return and our accountability to Him. When He comes, many believers will be ashamed of their selfish lifestyle. Rather, we should live so as to be confident in His presence (1 John 2:28–3:3).

MARK CHAPTER 9

The Transfiguration; demon possessed boy; Jesus foretells His death and resurrection; principles of discipleship

The Transfiguration

Mark 9:1–29 (Matt. 16:28–17:1–13; Luke 9:28–42)

9:1 *“Till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”* Jesus is speaking of what Peter, James, and John were about to see in His transfiguration.

9:2 *“Now after six days ... He was transfigured before them.”* This is the glory and power He spoke of in v. 1. Both John and Peter later referred to this occasion (John 1:14; 2 Pet. 1:16–18) as the impression it left on them remained many years later. The word “transfigured” means an outward transformation consistent with His own inner glory (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6; 1 Tim. 6:16).

9:4 *“And Elijah appeared to them with Moses.”* In Jewish thought, Moses represented the Law, and Elijah represented the prophets (Luke 24:27, 44). Also, both were included in prophecy relating to Jesus’ Second Coming (Mal. 4:4–6) in the last prophecy of the Old Testament. In Luke 9:31, we are told they spoke to Him of His coming death or “decease [departure].” The word Luke uses here is “exodus” in the original Greek text and includes the ideas of both death and resurrection.

9:5 *“Let us make three tabernacles.”* In saying this, Peter was making Jesus, Moses, and Elijah equals, which shows that he did not understand the meaning of what he had just seen. He was possibly thinking of the prophecies that said the nations would celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem in the kingdom (Zech. 14:16).

9:7 *“This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!”* God the Father spoke to them, showing that Jesus is incomparable to all other men. He is the only begotten Son from Heaven. The cloud reminds us of God’s glory at Sinai (Exod. 19:9–11).

9:9–10 *“Questioning what the rising from the dead meant.”* Though Jesus had told them plainly that He must die and rise again, the disciples still did not understand.

9:11–12 *“Indeed, Elijah is coming first.”* The disciples were no doubt thinking of Malachi 4:5–6, and Jesus declares that Elijah must come before His Second Coming. The Jewish rabbis did not distinguish between the First and Second Coming of the Christ. This is why they asked John the Baptist if he was Elijah (John 1:21). *“The Son of man ... must suffer many things.”* Prophecies of the suffering Messiah (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53) did not reconcile in their minds with prophecies of His triumphant coming to rule the world (Psalms 2 and 110).

9:13 *“Elijah has also come.”* Here, Jesus is referring to John (Matt. 17:13; Luke 1:13–17).

Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy

Mark 9:14–29 (Matt. 17:14–21; Luke 9:37–42)

9:14 *“He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them.”* The descent from the mountain and the contention over the demon-possessed boy, showed that until Jesus comes again, the world will be filled with the sorrow and suffering caused by the fall of Adam (Rom. 5:12).

9:17 *“Teacher, I brought You my son.”* The poor father had come seeking Jesus. Finding only the disciples, he sought to have them cast out the demon, but they could not. Jesus had previously given them power to do this (Mark 6:7–13; Luke 10:17). Their failure here was due to neglect of spiritual disciplines: prayer and fasting.

9:19 *“O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you?”* Jesus identifies the powerlessness of the disciples due to their lack of faith. His question indicates that He will soon be gone, and then what will they do? Jesus is trying to teach them that faith is not a one-time event, but a lifestyle of spiritual discipline and fellowship with the Father (John 14:21–23; 15:5–17).

9:22–23 *“If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.”* In response to the father’s plea, *“if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”* Jesus makes it clear the issue is not His power to heal, but rather the need of faith in the Father (Matt. 17:20).

9:24 *“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”* This poor father’s cry expresses the need of all of us, to go *“from faith to faith”* (Rom. 1:17).

9:29 *“Prayer and fasting.”* These represent continual dedication and discipline in the spiritual life, which the disciples apparently had neglected. Every gift and power that God gives to us requires continual nurturing and strengthening.

Jesus Again Predicts His Death and Resurrection and Gives Instruction on Discipleship

Mark 9:30–50 (Matt. 17:22–23; Luke 9:43–50)

9:30–32 *“The Son of Man is being delivered into the hands of men.”* This is the second time Jesus spoke to His disciples about His coming death and resurrection (Mark 8:31).

9:33 *“What was it you disputed among yourselves? ... who would be the greatest.”* The disciples desired spiritual greatness, but they did not understand that suffering must precede promotion—the cross comes before the crown (Matt. 20:28; Mark 8:34; 10:45). Jesus often spoke about eternal reward and promotion, which would be given to those who were faithful (Matt. 19:28–30; 25:21, 23).

9:35 *“If anyone desires to be first.”* A desire for greatness in the kingdom is not in itself bad. However, to achieve this goal, one must seek to be the least, the last, and the servant of others (Matt. 20:26–27; Luke 22:26–27).

9:36–37 *“Then He took a little child.”* In the ancient world, children were often neglected, abused, or ignored. Jesus always gave special attention to children as the weakest and most helpless among men (Matt. 18:1–5; 19:13–14; Mark 10:13–15). He used little children as an example of the humility required of disciples.

9:38–40 *“Do not forbid him.”* John’s desire to hinder the work of this unknown disciple shows a concern for superiority and control. *“For he who is not against us is on our side.”* The fact that the disciple did his work in the name of Jesus shows that he gave glory to Christ.

9:41 *“He will by no means lose his reward.”* The Lord declares that the smallest service in His name will be rewarded in the kingdom. The promise of eternal reward, above and beyond eternal life, was often taught by Jesus (Matt. 5:12; 6:4, 6, 18; 10:41–42; Luke 6:23, 35).

9:42 *“One of these little ones who believe in Me.”* Jesus is speaking of little children who trust in Him. The Gospel message is so simple that even a little child can understand it and believe in Him for eternal life. To offend one of these little believers will result in severe judgment. The *“millstone ... hung around his neck”* speaks of severe and final judgment of those who reject the Gospel.

9:43–48 *“Cut it off ... pluck it out.”* Jesus is using extreme examples to show that, if it were possible for one to defeat sin by self-maiming, it would be better than to end up in Hell. However, the main point is that if we destroy every member that causes us to sin, we would destroy the whole body. Only faith in Christ is able to put us to death and raise us to new life (Rom. 6:3–6).

9:44, 46, 48 *“Where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.”* Jesus is quoting Isaiah 66:24. The word translated *“hell”* in v. 43 is Gehenna, a valley on the south side of Jerusalem where human sacrifices were practiced in Old Testament times, in worship to the heathen gods, Baal and Molech. This valley, with its constantly ascending smoke, became a symbol of Hell (Jer. 7:31; 19:5–6; 32:35). The picture Jesus gives of the eternal state of the lost is most terrifying!

9:49 *“For everyone will be seasoned with fire ... seasoned with salt.”* In ancient Israel, sacrifices offered to God included salt (Lev. 2:13). Salt gives flavor, it preserves, and it purifies. Salt represents the purifying effects of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. Indeed, everyone will be seasoned with fire:

1. Believers suffer the fire of trials as an offering to God in this life (Rom. 12:1; Phil. 1:29–30; Heb. 13:5–6; James 1:2, 12; 1 Pet. 2:5; 4:12–13).
2. Our works will also be judged by fire at the Bema/“*Judgment Seat of Christ*” (1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:9–11)—all of our *“fire”* will have only a purifying effect.
3. However, for the unsaved, it will be an eternal fire of judgment in Hell, where they will be preserved forever (see note in previous paragraph).

9:50 *“Have salt in yourselves ... peace with one another.”* Those who believe in Jesus Christ should act as salt in society (Matt. 5:13; Luke 14:34–35), having a purifying and preservative effect. This requires that we show love to one another (John 13:34–35), even with fellow believers who differ with us on doctrine and practice.

MARK CHAPTER 10

Jesus teaches on marriage and divorce; blesses the children; confronts the rich young ruler; predicts His death and resurrection; teaches the disciples to be servants; heals blind Bartimaeus.

Jesus Teaches on Marriage and Divorce

Mark 10:1–12 (Matt. 5:31–32; 19:1–9; Luke 16:18)

10:1 *“As He was accustomed, He taught them again.”* The most dominant aspect of Jesus’ ministry was teaching—not healing. This becomes most evident by reading red letter editions of the Gospels, which have the words of Jesus in red.

10:2 *“The Pharisees came and asked Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’ testing Him.”* Their question was not genuine. They were hoping that He might contradict Moses (Deut. 24:1–4) or rebuke Herod as John the Baptist had done (Mark 6:14–18). Jesus’ answer deals not only with the question itself, but also with their evil intent.

10:4 *“Moses permitted ... a certificate of divorce.”* This still refers to Deuteronomy 24:1–4, under Jewish law, only a man could initiate a divorce. Moses protected the wives, because the husband had to write out his reasons for seeking divorce, and it had to be attested to by two or three witnesses—a principle that runs throughout Scripture (Exod. 20:16; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28).

10:5–6 *“Because of the hardness of your heart.”* Jesus declared that Moses’ provision was to limit and constrain the previous practice, whereby a man simply dismissed his wife and sent her away (Gen. 21:9–14). *“But from the beginning of the creation.”* Here, the Lord goes to the original intention of marriage in the plan of God (Gen. 2:21–25).

10:8–9 *“The two shall become one flesh ... what God has joined together.”* God designed marriage to be a permanent union between the man and woman.

10:11–12 *“Whoever divorces his wife ... commits adultery.”* Both divorce and adultery were violations of God’s original purpose for marriage. Jesus had already taught that adultery involved more than just physical unfaithfulness (Matt. 5:27–28). *“If a woman divorces her husband.”* This was included because Mark is writing to a Greco-Roman audience, where it was much easier for a woman to initiate the divorce.

Jesus Teaches the Value of Little Children Mark 10:13–16 (Matt. 19:13–15; Luke 18:15–17)

10:13–14 *“Let the little children come to Me.”* Jesus *“was greatly displeased”* by the disciples’ attempt to block the mothers and children from coming to Him. Little children, still innocent and sensitive, respond quickly to the love of Jesus Christ. *“Of such is the kingdom of heaven.”* As in Matthew 18:3, our Lord declares that salvation is received in simple, humble, child-like faith. From this, it is clear that the Gospel message should be presented to even small children from an early age, as they are able to receive it.

10:15 *“Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child.”* Little children know that they are insignificant, helpless, and dependent. There is no other way to enter into God’s kingdom than to receive eternal life as a free, undeserved gift that we cannot earn or deserve in any way.

Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler Mark 10:17–22 (Matt. 19:16–22; Luke 18:18–23)

10:17 *“Good Teacher, what shall I do?”* Jesus had just made it clear that eternal life could only be received as a free gift (v. 15). Mark now contrasts the typical Jewish attitude that entrance into God’s kingdom must be earned (Gal. 3:10–14). *“That I may inherit eternal life.”* Eternal inheritance belongs only to those who are sons of God (Gal. 3:7–9, 16–18, 29; 4:6–7; 1 Pet. 1:4–5).

10:18 *“No one is good but One, that is, God.”* Jesus is claiming to be God in the flesh and gives the young ruler a chance to affirm this truth. At the same time, He is declaring that the young ruler is not good and, therefore, cannot earn eternal life (Rom. 3:10–20).

10:19 *“You know the commandments.”* Jesus is quoting the Law (Exod. 20:12–16; Deut. 5:16–20), specifically the parts that speak of outward actions. He is not saying that doing these things will gain eternal life. Rather, He is seeking to show the young ruler that he also is a sinner (Rom. 3:23).

10:20 *“Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.”* This young man has a high opinion of himself, but Jesus is about to expose him as a lawbreaker and a liar.

10:21 *“Jesus, looking at him, loved him.”* This man had zeal without knowledge (Rom. 10:1–4), but nothing stops the love of Christ for those He came to save (Luke 19:10). *“One thing you lack.”* By demanding that he sell his

possessions, Jesus is not saying this is how to be saved. Rather, He is indicating that this young man is breaking the tenth commandment (Exod. 20:17) and, therefore, he has broken all the Law (James 2:8–13). His wealth was the barrier keeping him from coming to Jesus Christ in simple faith. The Apostle Paul learned the lesson Jesus is teaching here (Phil. 3:3–9, “*have no confidence in the flesh*”). Could this young ruler have been Saul of Tarsus?

10:22 “*But he was sad ... for he had great possessions.*” What an amazing condition: rich yet sad! Nothing in this world can fill the empty soul of any man or woman or child except the reality of knowing Jesus Christ as personal Savior. No one can trust in Jesus Christ while, at the same time, trusting in either riches or good works.

The Gift of Eternal Life Versus the Reward of Faithful Service

Mark 10:23–31 (Matt. 19:23–30; Luke 18:24–30)

Eternal Life is a Free Gift from God

10:23–27 “*With men it is impossible ... for with God all things are possible.*” Jesus declares that salvation is impossible for men to attain by any means other than faith. Faith is an acknowledgement of utter helplessness and, therefore, total dependence upon God, who alone can save us. By sending Christ to die for each of us on the cross, God the Father made the impossible possible, by simple, child-like faith. When Jesus said, “*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle,*” some suggest that this refers to a small gate in the wall of Jerusalem that a camel could only enter by crawling through. This is a statement of human arrogance, which declares again that if we try really hard, we can enter eternal life through our works. Jesus is referring to a literal needle—it would be absolutely impossible for a camel to crawl through its eye.

Eternal Reward is Something Gained through Faithfulness

10:28 “*See, we have left all and followed You.*” Peter and the disciples had done what the young ruler was unable to do, because they had first believed in Jesus. Their faith gave them eternal life (Rom. 6:23), and their faithfulness as disciples had earned them eternal reward. These two things must not be confused!

10:29 “*For My sake and the gospel’s.*” This again makes it clear that they first received the Gospel by faith, then they went out to serve the Lord they loved.

10:30 “*Receive a hundredfold now in this time ... with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.*” God blesses faithful service in this life and will reward it in eternity. However, this service comes with the price of persecution, which in itself will also be rewarded (Matt. 5:10–12). A hundredfold is a ten-thousand-percent return.

10:31 “*Many who are first will be last, and the last first.*” Those who are prominent and praised in this life will come behind those unknowns who suffer and serve without praise or publicity. See Jesus’ parable in Matthew 20:1–16.

Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection a Third Time

Mark 10:32–34 (Matt. 20:17–19; Luke 18:31–34)

10:32 “*Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And ... afraid.*” Here, we see the fulfillment of Isaiah 50:7, “*For the Lord GOD will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face like a flint.*” In the context, Isaiah is speaking of the coming abuse at the crucifixion. His determination in the face of the hatred of the religious leaders amazed and frightened His disciples.

10:33–34 “*The Son of Man will be delivered.*” In these two verses, Jesus predicts the betrayal by Judas (“*betrayed to the chief priests*”), the actions of the Jewish leaders (“*they will condemn Him to death*”), and the involvement of Pilate (“*deliver Him to the Gentiles*”), because only Rome could carry out the death sentence. Jesus then predicts

His scourging and abuse by the soldiers, and His ultimate victory in the resurrection on the third day. See also Mark 8:31 and 9:31. Yet, the disciples still did not understand what He was telling them.

Jesus Illustrates How the Last Will Be First, and the Least Will Be Greatest

Mark 10:35–45 (Matt. 20:20–28)

10:35–37 *“Then James and John ... came to Him ... said to Him, ‘Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.’”* In Matthew 20:20–21, we read that their mother made this same request. There is no contradiction here, for if they urged her to make the request, she was representing them. Jesus willingly embraces the ultimate servanthood going to the cross, and James and John are seeking their own personal greatness and glory. The disciples thought that the kingdom was about to begin (Luke 19:11).

10:38 *“Are you able to drink the cup ... and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”* Jesus referred to His crucifixion as both a cup of judgment to drink (Matt. 20:22; 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 18:11; 1 Cor. 11:25) and as a baptism (Luke 12:50). Both of these figures picture His submission to the will of the heavenly Father.

10:39 *“You will indeed drink the cup that I drink.”* Here, Jesus was predicting the persecutions they both would face. See Acts 12:2; 1 Peter 4:12–13, and Revelation 1:9.

10:43 *“Whoever desires to become great ... shall be your servant.”* This again explains why *“the last shall be first”* (v. 31; Mark 9:34–35). Greatness in the kingdom demands submission and service to fellow believers in this life.

10:45 *“For even the Son of man [came] ... to give His life a ransom for many.”* The ransom was the price paid to free slaves (Matt. 20:28). Jesus Christ died on the cross for all mankind (Isa. 53:3–6, 10–12; 2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9, 14–15; 1 John 2:2), but only the *“many”* who believe in Him receive the benefits of the cross.

Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus

Mark 10:46–52 (Matt. 20:29–34; Luke 18:35–43)

10:46 *“Blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus.”* The prefix *“Bar”* means “the son of.” *“Timaeus”* was his father’s name. In Matthew 20:30, two blind men are mentioned. Mark and Luke choose to highlight only one of them.

10:47–48 *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”* The title, *“Son of David,”* was used to refer to the promised Messiah (2 Sam. 7:8–16). This shows that this blind man had heard of Jesus and believed He was the Christ and Savior.

10:51 *“Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.”* The title, *“Rabboni,”* means “My Teacher,” and is a term of both great respect and also of deep affection.

10:52 *“Your faith has made you well.”* This phrase often by Jesus, in the original Greek, actually means, “Your faith has saved you” (Matt. 9:22; Luke 17:19). Both his physical healing and eternal life were given to him in response to his faith.

MARK CHAPTER 11

Jesus’ Triumphal entry; the withered fig tree; cleansing the temple; teaching on forgiveness, prayer, and His authority.

Note: From this point on, the Gospel of Mark focuses—fully one-third of the book—on the events surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection.

Jesus' Triumphal Entry

Mark 11:1–11 (Matt. 21:1–11; Luke 19:28–40; John 12:12–19)

11:1 *“When they came near ... to Bethphage and Bethany.”* These villages are about two miles east of Jerusalem. From there, the road goes over the Mount of Olives and into Jerusalem.

11:2–6 *“Go into the village.”* Jesus may have arranged in advance for the owner to have the donkey/colt (v. 1; Matt. 21:1) tied and ready on this day. Otherwise, this is evidence of Jesus' omniscience, knowing in advance what would occur on this day. The fact that he told the disciples to tell the owner, *“The Lord has need of it,”* seems to indicate that this was pre-arranged.

11:7–11 *“Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD.”* The word *“hosanna”* means “Lord, save us now.” These words and events were foretold by the prophets (Psalm 118:25–26; Zech. 9:9). Though Matthew mentions both a donkey and her colt (Matt. 21:7), Mark and Luke mention only the colt. *“He went out to Bethany.”* Jesus may have stayed at the house of Martha and Mary, or some other disciple, in order to escape the crowds and the hostility of the rulers.

The Fig Tree Cursed

Mark 11:12–14 (Matt. 21:18–19)

11:12–14 *“Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.”* There is a lesson in Jesus' actions, as seen later in vv. 20–24. Though Mark tells us *“for it was not the season for figs,”* the fact that the tree had leaves indicated that the early buds of the fruit, which are edible, should have been there. To have leaves without buds meant the tree was barren.

The Cleansing of the Temple

Mark 11:15–19 (Matt. 21:12–17; Luke 19:45–48; John 2:13–22)

11:15 *“Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold.”* Jesus was furious that the Temple, which was intended for prayer and worship, had become merely a business center.

11:17 *“My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.”* Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 to declare that they (v. 15) had perverted God's purpose for the Temple. From a *“house of prayer,”* it had become a *“den of thieves,”* for the religious leaders overcharged for sacrificial animals, exchanged foreign money at a profit, and rejected the animals the poor had brought from their own flocks. Far too many of today's churches and ministries have become merely money-making schemes!

11:18 *“The scribes and chief priests ... sought how they might destroy Him.”* The religious leaders feared His exposure of their greed and corruption, as well as His growing popularity with the people. During Passover, there would have been huge multitudes—not only from around Israel, but many foreign nations as well (Acts 2:5–11).

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

Mark 11:20–26 (Matt. 21:20–22)

11:22 *“Have faith in God.”* The first lesson of Jesus' power in cursing the fig tree is the power of faith. Faith's power lies not in faith itself, but rather in the Object of our faith—the Lord God Almighty. True faith in God recognizes our helplessness but relies on His faithfulness. The fig tree—a symbol of Israel—would bear no fruit and, therefore, was cursed and withered *“immediately”* (Matt. 21:19), and *“from the roots”* (Mark 11:20), that is, from the leaders of Israel, who rejected Christ as King. For a later lesson from the fig tree, see the notes on Matthew 24:32–35, where Jesus says that the budding of the fig tree (Israel) will be a sign of His return.

11:24 *“Whatever things you ask ... believe that you receive them.”* True prayer in faith is made in Jesus’ name in obedience to His Word (John 14:13–15), and in keeping with His revealed will (1 John 5:14–15). Such a prayer will be heard and answered.

11:25 *“And whenever you stand praying ... forgive.”* Jesus often taught that praying, while refusing to forgive others, was a hindrance to effective prayer (Matt. 6:12–15; 1 Pet. 3:7).

The Leaders Question Jesus’ Authority Mark 11:27–33 (Matt. 21:23–27; Luke 20:1–8)

11:28 *“By what authority are You doing these things?”* These phony religious hypocrites have already said His authority came from Satan (Mark 3:22) and are determined to kill Him (Mark 11:18). This question is designed to give more reason to accuse Him.

11:30 *“The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?”* By asking them this question, Jesus exposes their hypocrisy. Jesus said of John the Baptist that he was the greatest of the prophets (Matt. 11:9–11; Mark 1:7–8). Yet the religious leaders rejected his ministry, or they would have received Jesus as *“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29).

11:31 *“And they reasoned among themselves.”* They knew precisely what Jesus meant by His question. They could not say *“from heaven”* because this would convict them of rejecting God’s prophet. If they said, *“from earth,”* meaning of human origin, the people would revolt.

11:33 *“We do not know ... Neither will I tell you.”* Those who reject the initial light of truth are unworthy of being given more light. God reveals Jesus Christ to those who begin by receiving the light of creation (Rom. 1:18–23), then conscience (Rom. 2:14–15), and finally His Word (Heb. 4:12–13). If we cannot receive the smallest flicker of light, how can we receive the full light of God (John 1:4–5, 9; 3:19–21)?

MARK CHAPTER 12

Jesus teaches in parables; the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes all question Him; Jesus identifies Himself as the Son of David; the widow’s two mites.

The Parable of the Evil Vinedressers Mark 12:1–12 (Matt. 21:33–46; Luke 20:9–19)

12:1 *“Then He began to speak to them in parables.”* The background for this parable is found in Isaiah 5:1–7. Jesus is speaking here to the chief priests, scribes, and elders from Mark 11:27. They are the “wicked vinedressers” in His parable. In Matthew’s account (Matt. 21:33–46), Jesus tells a second parable—the parable of the wedding feast.

12:2–5 *“Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers.”* What occurs in the story in these verses is a summary of how the prophets were treated in Old Testament times by the forerunners of these very same religious leaders (Matt. 23:29–39).

12:6 *“Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him.”* Here, Jesus represents Himself as the Beloved Son of the Father in Heaven, sent into certain death at the hands of the evil religious leaders.

12:7 *“Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.”* Jesus, in a masterful way, reveals the inner thinking of Israel’s leaders. They do not want the promised King to be over them, because they craved complete power over the people. This is another illustration of the leaven of Herod (Mark 8:15).

12:8 *“They took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard.”* This action of casting him out shows their desire to completely disown him. The author of Hebrews uses this same figure/illustration to speak of our need to be willing to be disowned and rejected for identifying with Jesus Christ (Heb. 13:11–14).

12:9 *“Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do?”* Jesus asks the religious leaders to form a conclusion from this story. In Matthew 21:41, we read their own conclusion, which matches what Jesus says. *“He will come and destroy the vinedressers.”* This is a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, which would occur about 40 years later, in 70 A.D. *“And give the vineyard to others.”* This is a prophecy of the spiritual “inheritance” of Israel being given to the Gentiles in the coming the Church—a new spiritual entity. This also fulfills the prophecy of Noah (Gen. 9:26–27) about Japheth (the Gentile nations) dwelling in the tents of Shem (Israel). Here, the Hebrew word “*dwelt*” is *shakan*, which means “to take up permanent residence.”

12:10–11 *“Have you not even read the Scripture?”* Jesus ridicules the ignorance of the religious leaders, who prided themselves on their assumed mastery of the Bible. *“The stone which the builders rejected.”* Jesus Himself was the cornerstone rejected by Israel’s foolish “builders” (Psalm 118:22–23; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7–8). He would also be the “stone ... cut out without hands” (Dan. 2:34–35) that would destroy all the kingdoms of this Earth.

12:12 *“They knew He had spoken the parable against them.”* In their spiritual blindness and hardness of heart, they were incapable of humbling themselves when confronted by the truth. Their impenitent hearts could only respond by seeking to destroy Him, fulfilling the very image in the parable of the wicked vinedressers. The people of Jerusalem were beginning to realize the murderous intent of their religious leaders (John 7:25).

The Pharisees and Herodians Unite Against Jesus

Mark 12:13–17 (Matt. 22:15–22; Luke 20:20–26)

12:13 *“Then they sent to Him.”* The chief priests, scribes, and elders (Mark 11:27) now plot to send the Pharisees and Herodians to question Him. The Pharisees were strict observers of every meticulous point in the Law, while the Herodians were in support of Rome. They were natural enemies, but they united in hatred of Jesus. If Jesus said to pay the tax to Caesar, the Pharisees would accuse Him of being a traitor to Israel. If He said they should not pay, the Herodians could accuse Him of treason against Rome.

12:15 *“Why do you test Me?”* The Lord knew their question was not honest, but a plot to catch Him using His own words. *“A denarius.”* This was the typical wage for one day of work for a common laborer.

12:16 *“Whose image and inscription is this?”* This would have been the image of Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1), and the inscription would ascribe to him divine status. The Jews hated these coins because they violated both the first and second commandments (Exod. 20:1–6).

12:17 *“Render to Caesar ... and to God.”* Just as the coin bore the image of Caesar, man was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26; James 3:9). Human obligations never overrule our responsibility to God (Acts 4:19; 5:29; Rom. 13:1–10). *“They marveled at Him.”* His divine wisdom and insight were too great to be trapped by their schemes.

Now the Sadducees Join in Attacking Jesus

Mark 12:18–27 (Matt. 22:23–33; Luke 20:27–40)

12:18–23 *“Then some Sadducees ... came to Him.”* By comparing Mark 11:27, 12:13, and 12:18, we can see that the hatred of the religious leaders united all these groups—normally hostile to each other—in their united attacks against Jesus. The Sadducees were from the priestly families. They denied the eternal nature of the soul and the resurrection of the body. Their question is based on Moses’ provision for widows by the brother of the deceased

husband (Gen. 38:6–11; Deut. 25:5–10; Ruth 4:1–10). Again, they thought they could put the Son of God in a theological bind, but His answer refuted both their deceptive trap and their faulty theology.

12:27 *“He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.”* Here, Jesus absolutely declares that believers live forever:

1. Jesus said the faulty thinking of the Sadducees was because *“you do not know the scriptures nor the power of God”* (v. 24). Lack of understanding God’s Word, and failure to believe it, deprives anyone from knowing God’s power.
2. Believers in eternity will be *“like the angels in heaven”* (v. 25), only in the sense that they will not marry.
3. Believers’ resurrection bodies will be like the resurrected body of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:1–7; Phil. 3:20–21; 1 John 3:2–3).
4. Believers will be greater than angels, because we will judge them (1 Cor. 6:3) and will reign and rule with Christ (Rev. 20:6; 22:3–5).

An Honest Scribe Questions Jesus

Mark 12:28–34 (Matt. 22:34–40; Luke 10:25–28)

12:28 *“Then one of the scribes ... asked Him, ‘Which is the first commandment of all?’”* This scribe asks Jesus to declare the most important of all the commandments. (The scribes recognized 613 commandments in the Old Testament).

12:29 *“Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.”* This quote from Deuteronomy 6:4–5 formed a prayer that faithful Jews prayed daily. It is called “the Great Shema,” because the word “hear” in Hebrew is *shema*.

12:30–31 *“You shall love the LORD your God ... You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* Jesus responds by giving both the first and the second greatest commands (Deut. 6:4–5; 10:12; 30:6; Lev. 19:18). Because both these commands are fulfilled by love, Paul declares *“Love is the fulfillment of the law”* (Rom. 13:9–10; see Matt. 7:12).

12:32–34 *“You are not far from the kingdom of God.”* Jesus recognized that this scribe was not an enemy and was truly seeking the truth. The scribe was not far from the kingdom for two reasons: first, because he was in the presence of the King; second, his genuine search for the truth needed only to recognize and believe in that King (Gal. 3:23–24).

David’s Greater Son

Mark 12:35–40 (Matt. 22:41–46; Luke 20:41–47)

12:35 *“The scribes say that the Christ [Messiah] is the Son of David.”* Jesus is not denying the truth that the Christ (He Himself) was the Son of David. He simply wants to prove that He is more than just a man, He is God in the flesh.

12:36 *“The LORD said to my Lord.”* Here, Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1, a Messianic Psalm. In the Hebrew, “The LORD” is *Yahweh*, and “my Lord” is *Adonai*, another term for God. After repeated attacks from the religious leaders, Jesus asked them a question they could not answer; therefore, He silenced them.

12:37 *“The common people heard Him gladly.”* Though His ministry created jealousy and hatred among the rulers, the simple people loved to hear His teaching.

12:38–40 *“Beware of the scribes ... these will receive greater condemnation.”* The teachers of the Law failed to follow the diligent and humble example set by Ezra (Ezra 7:10). Instead, they sought glory from men and money for their services. Because of their greater calling, they would receive greater judgment (Matt. 23:12–29; James 3:1).

An Example of True Giving
Mark 12:41–44 (Luke 21:1–4)

12:41 *“Now Jesus sat ... and saw how people put money into the treasury.”* From early times, a chest was kept in the Temple, where people could put their offerings (2 Kings 12:9–10).

12:42 *“Then one poor widow ... threw in two mites.”* The monetary value of these coins was almost negligible, like a couple of pennies.

12:44 *“She out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”* God does not measure our giving or service by human standards. He measures them by the love and sacrifice involved in our giving.

MARK CHAPTER 13

Jesus teaches on the signs of His Second Coming.

The Olivet Discourse
Mark 13 (Matthew 24–25; Luke 21)

During His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke three great sermons, what we call discourses. Each of these was prophetic in nature, dealing with three different periods of time:

1. The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5–7; Luke 6:20–49
This message deals with the coming kingdom on Earth, and the character and conditions that will be required by the King.
2. The Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 21
This message speaks of the turbulent conditions that will prevail just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, when He will establish His kingdom.
3. The Upper Room Discourse, John 13–17
This message is dedicated to the coming Church Age, which would begin at Pentecost and continue until the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

The Olivet Discourse is directed to Israel and deals with five great truths the Jewish people need to know about the future of their nation:

The Coming Destruction of the Temple
Mark 13:1–2 (Matt. 24:1–2; Luke 21:5–6)

13:1–2 *“Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here.”* This Temple took 46 years to build (John 2:20) and was one of the greatest architectural feats of the ancient world. *“Not one stone shall be left upon another.”* Although the Temple would be destroyed in 70 A.D., many walls and buildings remain. This is a prophecy of what will happen in the Tribulation, after the Temple is rebuilt.

World Conditions Prior to Jesus' Second Coming

Mark 13:3–13 (Matt. 24:3–14; Luke 21:7–19)

13:3 *“Peter, James, John, and Andrew.”* Only Mark gives us the names of these four disciples who questioned Jesus.

13:4 *“Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign?”* Jesus does not tell them when, but He gives the signs of the times in which these events will occur.

13:5 *“Take heed that no one deceives you.”* The first warning is against religious deceivers. Many will come claiming to be the Christ. The “signs of the times” include religious deception (vv. 5–6), national and international wars (vv. 7–8a), “*earthquakes,*” “*famines,*” and many trials / “*sorrows*” (v. 8b). There will be persecutions against all believers and betrayal by loved ones (vv. 9–13).

13:13 *“He who endures to the end shall be saved.”* This verse is not conditioning our eternal salvation or our endurance. Rather, it is saying that those who endure through the Tribulation will be delivered to go into the kingdom (vv. 19–20).

The Great Tribulation

Mark 13:14–23 (Matt. 24:15–28; Luke 21:20–24)

13:14 *“But when you see the abomination of desolation ... let those who are in Judea flee.”* This refers to the prophecy of Daniel regarding the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) standing in the rebuilt Temple and declaring himself to be God (2 Thess. 2:3–4). This will occur in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation period.

13:19 *“For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of creation.”* The last three-and-one-half years of the Tribulation are called “*great tribulation*” in Matthew 24:21.

13:20 *“Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved.”* So severe will be the rebellion of mankind and the wrath of God at that time, that all mankind would be destroyed if the Lord Jesus did not come to end the carnage. *“For the elect’s sake.”* This refers to believing Israel—His chosen people.

13:21–23 *“False christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”* Many, even today, think that any sign or miracle is surely from God. But, here, Jesus warns that Satan also has power to work miracles for the purpose of deceiving even believers unless they “*take heed.*” To be forewarned is to be forearmed—if we respond in faith and obedience.

The Return of Jesus Christ

Mark 13:24–27 (Matt. 24:29–31; Luke 21:25–28)

13:24–25 *“After that tribulation, the sun will be darkened.”* The darkening of the sun and moon will be the signs that immediately precede the coming of Jesus Christ back to this Earth. *“The powers in the heavens will be shaken.”* This refers not only to natural disturbance in the heavens, but also to the shaking of Satan’s kingdom (Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12:7–12).

13:26 *“Then they will see the Son of Man coming.”* This refers to Daniel’s prophecy (Dan. 7:13–14) where He receives the kingdom from God the Father. He will then share His kingdom with those who have believed in Him (Isa. 53:12; Dan. 7:27; Rev. 20:4; 22:12), where each believer will be rewarded with authority in keeping with our faithful service during this life (1 Cor. 3:10–15).

13:27 *“He will send His angels, and gather together His elect.”* This will be a “rapture” of all the saints left on the Earth at the end of the Tribulation. These are the ones who “endured” to the end and are therefore “saved” (Mark 13:13) from death, to enter into His kingdom.

The Parable of the Fig Tree and Its Meaning Mark 13:28–37 (Matt. 24:32–44; Luke 21:29–36)

13:28 *“Now learn the parable from the fig tree.”* Jesus is referring to the fig tree, which He had cursed (Mark 11:12–14, 20–21). This fig tree represented Israel, which had the appearance of fruit, but not the reality. As a result, Israel was cursed in its present state of unbelief. Only by faith and regeneration (new birth) could the tree begin to bear fruit again.

13:29 *“When you see these things happening.”* He is referring to the warning signs in vv. 6–14.

13:30 *“This generation will by no means pass away.”* The generation witnessing all these things will see the return of the Lord. While we see some of these things in our present time, we do not yet see all of them. The creation of the nation of Israel and the return back to her original homeland in 1948 is certainly an indication of these end-times events.

13:31 *“My words will by no means pass away.”* Though this world will pass away (1 John 2:15–17; 2 Pet. 3:10), the Word of God will endure forever (Isa. 40:6–8; 1 Pet. 1:24–25). Whatever time we spend living for this world will also pass away. But all the time we “redeem” by faithful living for eternity, will last forever (Eph. 5:15–17; Col. 4:5–6).

13:32 *“Of that day and hour no one knows.”* Jesus, in His humanity, limited even His own knowledge (Phil. 2:5–8) about certain things. Jewish believers living in the time of the Tribulation should not try to fix the day of His coming (Matt. 24:36), but instead should strive to be ready (Matt. 24:44).

13:33–37 *“Take heed, watch and pray ... I say to all: Watch!”* Jesus’ emphasis to believers living in the end times, and this applies to us as well, is to be vigilant, to watch, pray, and to attend to our own work (v. 34) so as to be ready to meet Him with purity and confidence when He comes (1 John 2:28–3:3).

MARK CHAPTER 14

The religious leaders and Judas form an alliance; Jesus is anointed in Bethany; Jesus celebrates the Passover with the disciples; the Lord’s Supper; Gethsemane; Jesus arrested and Peter’s denial.

The Plot to Kill Jesus Mark 14:1–2 (Matt. 26:1–5; Luke 22:1–2; John 11:45–53)

14:1 *“After two days it was the Passover.”* This feast was in the spring (March/April), the first of the seven feasts of Israel (Lev. 23:4–6). This feast was a memorial of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt and was followed by the seven days of Unleavened Bread (Exod. 12:1–15).

14:2 *“The chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him ... and put Him to death.”* The religious leaders are now fully committed to the murder of Jesus. Because they feared the people, they said, *“Not during the feast.”*

The Anointing of Jesus at Bethany

Mark 14:3–9 (Matt. 26:6–13; John 12:1–8)

14:3 *“At the house of Simon the leper.”* This was most likely one of the lepers Jesus had healed (Mark 1:40–42). *“A woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard.”* This woman was Mary of Bethany (John 11:2; 12:1–3).

14:4–5 *“Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii.”* It was Judas who made this objection (John 12:4–6). He was a thief and wanted to pilfer some of the money for himself. Three hundred denarii was nearly one-year’s wages.

14:6–8 *“Let her alone ... She has done a good work ... She has done what she could ... to anoint My body for burial.”* Apparently, Mary of Bethany was the only disciple who understood what was about to happen (John 12:7). Mary was, perhaps, His most dedicated student (Luke 10:38–42).

14:9 *“Wherever this gospel is preached ... what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.”* The Scripture says, *“Those who honor Me I will honor”* (1 Sam. 2:30b). Here, Jesus is honored by Mary, and she will be forever honored by Him. The same will be true for all who honor Him with their lives (Psalm 91:15; Prov. 21:21; John 12:26).

Judas Betrays Jesus

Mark 14:10–11 (Matt. 26:14–16; Luke 22:3–6; John 13:18–30)

14:10–11 *“Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve.”* Judas had shared life with Jesus and the other disciples for three years. Yet, he never trusted in Jesus as the Christ (John 6:64; 13:10–11, 21–26). *“Went to the chief priests ... They were glad, and promised to give him money.”* This appealed to Judas’ greed for money. The agreed-upon amount was thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:14–15). This was the price of a slave (Exod. 21:32) and was foretold by the prophet Zechariah (Zech. 11:12–13).

Jesus Celebrates the Passover; Institutes the Lord’s Supper

Mark 14:12–26 (Matt. 26:17–30; Luke 22:7–23; John 13:21–30; 1 Cor. 11:23–26)

14:12 *“Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb.”* The Passover was a memorial to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, when they put the blood of the lamb on their doors (Exod. 12:1–14) so that the angel of death would “pass over” their homes, leaving them safe. The Passover spoke of redemption and was followed by seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which spoke of purification following redemption (Exod. 12:15–20; Lev. 23:4–8).

14:13–14 *“He sent out two of His disciples.”* These were Peter and John (Luke 22:8). *“A man ... carrying a pitcher of water.”* Though Jesus had most likely made preparations ahead of time to use this house, the coincidence of the man carrying the water just as Peter and John arrived showed His foreknowledge. *“Where is the guest room?”* This was most likely the house of John Mark’s parents—the same place where the disciples met on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:12–14; 2:1).

14:17 *“In the evening He came with the twelve.”* The Jewish day began at sundown and ran until the next sundown. Thus, Jesus and the disciples ate of the Passover lamb, and Jesus (our “Passover”) was crucified the same day (1 Cor. 5:7).

14:18–19 *“Jesus said ... ‘one of you ... will betray Me.’”* Jesus knew in advance that Judas had never believed in Him as Messiah/Savior (John 6:64, 70–71). *“Is it I?”* Each of the disciples, knowing their own sinfulness, feared that they might be the betrayer. Judas never asked this question until after the others, to hide his own guilt (Matt. 26:22, 25).

14:20–21 *“It is one of the twelve ... It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.”* Both Matthew and John identify the traitor as Judas (Matt. 26:25; John 13:26). Mark does not call him by name. Though Judas’ betrayal was predicted in prophecy (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18–19; Acts 2:22–23), his actions were taken by his own choice. His eternal judgment would make it better for him if he had never been born.

14:22–24 *“Take, eat; this is My body ... This is the blood of the new covenant.”* In this simple action, Jesus transformed the Passover into the Lord’s Supper. This marked a transition from the Old Covenant of Moses, to the New Covenant of Jesus Christ (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–27). The elements of bread and wine became the symbols of Christ’s work on the cross and a picture of faith in Him, by which we come to partake in His flesh and His blood (John 6:35, 47–48, 54–57).

14:25 *“I will no longer drink ... until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”* The Lord’s Supper not only reminds us of the cross of Christ, but also looks forward to the inauguration of His kingdom on this Earth (1 Cor. 11:23–26). The first event in the kingdom will be the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:5–9).

Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial

Mark 14:27–31 (Matt. 26:31–35; Luke 22:31–34; John 13:36–38)

14:27 *“I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.”* This prophecy, from Zechariah 13:7, foretold the actions of the disciples in deserting Jesus.

14:28 *“But, after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”* Jesus predicts His resurrection, as well as the reunion and restoration of the disciples. Their actions were the result of fear (Mark 16:8), but Judas’ betrayal was done in unbelief (John 6:64).

14:30 *“You will deny Me three times.”* Only Mark, who wrote at Peter’s direction, mentions the two rooster crows (Mark 14:68, 72). Peter would have remembered this night very clearly.

14:31 *“If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!”* Peter’s devotion to Jesus was genuine, but his assumption of strength and courage was inflated (v. 38).

The Prayer and Preparation in Gethsemane

Mark 14:32–42 (Matt. 26:36–46; Luke 22:39–46)

14:32 *“Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane.”* The name means, “oil press,”—a place where olives were crushed for their oil. Jesus was about to be crushed to provide us eternal life, and the anointing oil of the Holy Spirit. *“Sit here while I pray.”* Jesus’ preparation for the agony ahead was prayer; He also sought the prayer support of the disciples—especially Peter, James, and John (Matt. 26:36–37).

14:33–34 *“He began to be troubled and deeply distressed ... exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.”* Jesus was not simply fearing physical suffering or death (Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:4), rather, He feared His coming contact with the sins of the world (Isa. 53:5–8; 1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 1:3; 2:9; 10:12). Jesus remained silent under all His physical torture (Isa. 53:7), yet when our sins were poured out on Him, He screamed in agony (Matt. 27:45–46; Mark 15:33–34).

14:36 *“Abba, Father ... Not what I will, but what You will.”* Jesus’ use of “Abba” was never used by the Jews in praying. It speaks of His intimacy and child-like trust of the heavenly Father. Paul shows that we who are believers can use this same familiar and intimate term in our praying (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

14:37–38 *“Simon, are you sleeping?”* Though Peter had just boasted of his loyalty (v. 29), he wasn’t even able to watch and pray with his Savior. *“The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* Jesus recognizes the conflict between the flesh and the spirit in the spiritual life (Rom. 7:18, 21–23; 8:3–8; Gal. 5:16–17).

14:40–41 *“He found them asleep again ... are you still sleeping and resting?”* This passage not only shows how easily our good intentions so often fail, but how Jesus is gracious and merciful—even when we fail repeatedly. Jesus often declared that the key to victory over sin and temptation was to *“watch and pray.”* The disciples slept when they should have prayed and were unprepared for what was about to happen. Jesus, however, who had poured out His heart to the Father, now goes with boldness and courage to face His crucifixion. *“Rise, let us be going ... My betrayer is at hand.”*

Jesus Arrested in Gethsemane

Mark 14:43–52 (Matt. 26:47–56; Luke 22:47–53; John 18:1–11)

14:43 *“And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas ... with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came.”* John tells us Judas came with a detachment of troops (John 18:3, 12). This was made up of about 600 Roman soldiers, along with Jewish religious leaders (Luke 22:52).

14:45 *“‘Rabbi, Rabbi!’ and kissed Him.”* Luke tells us Jesus responded to Judas’ hypocrisy by asking, *“Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”* (Luke 22:48). See Proverbs 27:6.

14:47 *“One of those ... drew his sword and struck.”* Mark does not identify Peter here, neither does Matthew (Matt. 26:51) or Luke (Luke 22:49–50). Only John tells us this was Peter (John 18:10–11).

14:48–49 *“Have you come out, as against a robber?”* Jesus’ meekness (power under control) and gentleness are a rebuke to the religious leaders. The word *“robber”* is used of Barabbas (John 18:40), and also Jesus would be crucified between two robbers (Mark 15:27). *“I was daily with you in the temple teaching.”* Jesus shows that He had nothing to hide at any time. *“But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.”* Again, we see that Jesus’ courageous composure came from His complete surrender to the Word and will of God.

14:50–51 *“Then they all forsook Him and fled ... a certain young man.”* All the disciples failed here. With them was a *“certain young man,”* most likely Mark’s way of referring to himself, the author of this Gospel. Remember that the Last Supper was probably held at his home. (see note on vv. 13–14 above).

Jesus Before the Jewish Sanhedrin (High Court)

Mark 14:53–65 (Matt. 26:57–68; Luke 22:54, 63–71; John 18:12–14, 19–24)

14:53 *“And they led Jesus away to the high priest.”* This high priest was Caiaphas (John 18:13–14, 24). All the *“chief priests, the elders, and the scribes”* were already gathered. According to Jewish law, it was illegal to hold a court in the night.

14:55–59 *“Many bore false witness against Him.”* According to the Law of Moses, no person could be convicted without at least two or three witnesses (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1). Not only was this night trial a violation of their law, but their witnesses also broke the ninth commandment (Exod. 20:16). *“I will destroy this temple ... I will build another.”* Here, the false witnesses distorted His words from John 2:19–22, where He first spoke of His bodily resurrection.

14:60–61 *“‘Do You answer nothing?’ But He kept silent.”* This was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7. *“Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”* Here, the high priest directly asks if He is the promised Messiah. He also reveals that he knew the Messiah would be the uniquely born Son of God. Jesus had not allowed even His disciples to declare this truth yet (Matt. 16:20).

14:62 *“I am.”* This very response is a declaration of His deity, using the name God gave to Moses at the burning bush (Exod. 3:14). Jesus uses this term for Himself repeatedly in the Gospel of John (John 4:26; 6:35, 48, 8:12, 28; 9:5; 10:9, 11, 14; 11:25; 13:19; 15:1; 18:5–6, 8). *“You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power.”* This is a reference to His resurrection glory at the Father’s right hand (Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55–56; Rom. 8:34; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 10:12; 12:2). Caiaphas would see this when he stands before Christ at the judgment (John 5:21–29).

14:64 *“You have heard the blasphemy ... And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.”* This charge of blasphemy against Jesus was false because He was truly God in human flesh. Any other man who made this claim would be rightly condemned. But the religious leaders refused to believe Him—that He was the promised Messiah.

14:65 *“Then some began to spit on Him ... and to beat Him ... and the officers struck Him.”* All of these actions were forbidden in a Jewish court of law. Yet, these very actions fulfilled prophecy (Isa. 50:6; 52:14).

The Three Denials of Peter

Mark 14:66–72 (Matt. 26:69–75; Luke 22:54–62; John 18:15–18, 25–27)

14:68–70 *“But he denied it ... and a rooster crowed ... he denied it again.”* Jesus’ prophecy of Peter’s denial is sadly playing out, just as the dawn is breaking.

14:71–72 *“Then he began to curse and swear ... a second time the rooster crowed.”* Peter’s betrayal of his Lord was complete. We must remember that we have all betrayed Him in various ways. Because Peter is a believer, he will be restored both to fellowship and usefulness after Jesus’ resurrection (John 21:15–17). Remember the foot-washing in John 13:10 and confession of sin in 1 John 1:9. Our many failures illustrate the truth of the corruption of our own sin nature (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 7:18).

14:72 *“And when he thought about it, he wept.”* Luke tells us that after his third denial, the Lord Jesus turned and looked at Peter, and *“Peter went out and wept bitterly”* (Luke 22:61–62). Anyone who has known the shame of personal defeat has some idea of just how broken Peter must have been.

MARK CHAPTER 15

Jesus is condemned, mocked, crucified, and buried.

Jesus Taken Before Pilate

Mark 15:1–15 (Matt. 27:1–2, 11–26; Luke 23:1–5, 13–25; John 18:28–40)

15:1 *“Immediately ... the chief priests ... bound Jesus ... and delivered Him to Pilate.”* Roman law prohibited the Jewish court from carrying out the death penalty. Therefore, the religious leaders took Jesus to Pilate. Only Pilate could confirm their charges.

15:2 *“Are You the King of the Jews?”* The religious leaders changed their charge from blasphemy (Mark 14:63–64), to claiming to be a king, which would offend Roman law, as they had no king but Caesar. Jesus would be seen as a traitor to Rome. *“It is as you say.”* Jesus admitted His identity as Messiah/King, though Pilate would not likely know the full meaning of this title.

15:3–5 *“He answered nothing.”* Again, this was a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7. See Mark 14:60–61.

15:9 *“Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?”* When the multitude asked Pilate to follow custom and release a prisoner, he assumed they wanted him to release Jesus.

15:10 *“For he knew ... because of envy.”* Envy, a resentment and hostility against those who do or have what we cannot attain, is the deadliest emotion known to mankind. Jesus was hated because of their (religious leaders) envy of His success with the multitudes. Envy always creates strife and murder (Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 5:21; James 3:14, 16). Remember, Joseph was envied by his brothers (Gen. 37:11; Acts 7:9), as well, Paul was persecuted out of envy (Acts 13:45; 17:5).

15:11 *“The chief priests stirred up the crowd ... release Barabbas.”* This man was a revolutionary and a murderer. Interestingly, his name means “son of the Father.” In keeping with His mission, Jesus died in place of the criminal.

15:13 *“Crucify Him.”* The crowd, urged on by the priests (v. 11), demanded that Jesus be crucified. No doubt, some in this crowd had only a few days before greeted Him with joy at His triumphal entry.

15:15 *“Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd ... delivered Jesus.”* Like many leaders, Pilate was more concerned with popularity than justice. *“Scourged.”* Mentioned only three times in the New Testament (Matt. 27:26; John 19:1, and here), scourging was a brutal flogging with whips made of many strips of leather tipped with metal or bone. Extreme scourging often exposed the ribs and intestines.

The Soldiers Mockery and Abuse

Mark 15:16–20 (Matt. 27:27–31; John 19:1–4)

15:16 *“Then the soldiers led Him away ... and they called together the whole garrison.”* Perhaps as many as several hundred or more soldiers were in the immediate garrison. See Acts 23:23. A full cohort was 600 men.

15:17–20 *“They clothed Him with purple ... a crown of thorns ... spat on Him ... worshiped Him.”* They made fun of the true glory of the Lord Jesus, who is *“King of kings, and Lord of lords”* (Rev. 17:14; 19:16). Jesus fully paid the penalty of sin, which was sorrow, cursing, thorns, and death (Gen. 3:16–19).

The Crucifixion of the King

Mark 15:21–32 (Matt. 27:32–44; Luke 23:26–43; John 19:17–27)

15:21 *“Then they compelled ... Simon ... to bear His cross.”* Due to the extreme scourging He had endured, Jesus was already weak from blood loss and unable to carry His cross. *“Rufus”* may be the one mentioned by Paul in Romans 16:13.

15:22 *“Golgotha ... Place of a Skull.”* In Latin, this is called Calvary and was outside the city walls (John 19:20; Heb. 13:12–13).

15:23 *“Wine mingled with myrrh.”* This was a kind of drug commonly given to victims of crucifixion to dull the agony. Jesus refused it to fully drink the cup of judgment the Father had ordained for Him (Matt. 20:22; Mark 10:38; John 18:11).

15:24 *“When they crucified Him, they divided His garments.”* This was a direct fulfillment of Psalm 22:16–18, which was written a thousand years before the time of Christ.

15:25 *“The third hour.”* This was 9 a.m. according to Jewish custom. Jesus died the ninth hour (v. 34), which was 3 p.m. His time on the cross was consistent with the morning and evening offerings of the lamb, according to the law of Moses (Exod. 29:39).

15:26 *“The King of the Jews.”* It was customary to place the crime of the victim over their head. Pilate identified, unknowingly, that Jesus’ “crime” was His true identity. This inscription was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin

(John 19:19–20)—the main languages of the ancient world. This was the first proclamation to all the world of Jesus Christ as King.

15:27–28 *“With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left.”* These two are representative of all mankind, for one chose to believe in Him, and the other did not (Matt. 27:44; Luke 23:39–43). See also Matthew 25:31–33. *“And He was numbered with the transgressors.”* Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, in dying with and for sinners (Isa. 53:9–12).

15:29–32 *“And those who passed by blasphemed Him ... and the chief priests.”* As Jesus died on the cross, the final insult of this world was the scorn and mockery of sinners for whom He was dying. *“Save Yourself, and come down ... that we may see and believe.”* These religious hypocrites had seen many signs. Even if Jesus had come down off the cross, they would have rejected Him. It was for them—and for us all—that Jesus *“endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Heb. 12:2).

The Death and Burial of the Savior

Mark 15:33–47 (Matt. 27:45–61; Luke 23:44–56; John 19:28–42)

15:33–34 *“The sixth hour ... Jesus cried out ... My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”* The sixth hour was 12 noon. The darkness conveyed God’s judgment on sin, and Jesus’ total isolation. The wages of sin are not only physical, but also spiritual death (Rom. 5:12; 6:23; Ezek. 18:4, 20), which means separation from God. Jesus was fully judged for the sins of the world (2 Cor. 5:19, 21; Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 2:2), and was separated from His heavenly Father for three hours. This is what Jesus feared when He was in the Garden (Mark 14:33–34). Here, Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1.

15:35–37 *“He is calling for Elijah!”* The bystanders misunderstood Jesus’ cry, possibly because of their ignorance of the Scriptures. *“Sour wine.”* See Psalm 69:21. *“Jesus cried out with a loud voice.”* This was His cry of victory, *“It is finished!”* (John 19:30), meaning the plan of redemption for mankind was completed.

15:38 *“The veil of the temple was torn.”* This veil was very thick and tall. Only God could tear it *“from top to bottom.”* This amazing event demonstrated three things: First, that the way into the presence of God was now open to all (Heb. 4:16; 10:19–21); second, that the temple worship was no longer valid (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19) because the new covenant was inaugurated (Heb. 8:7–13); and finally, it was a sign of the coming judgment on unbelieving Israel (Matt. 24:1–3; Luke 19:41–44).

15:39 *“Truly this Man was the Son of God.”* This Roman centurion, like the crucified thief, was convinced that Jesus was the promised King—the Savior of the world (John 20:30–31).

15:40 *“There were also women looking on from afar.”* Believing women played an important role in the ministry of Jesus (Mark 14:3–9). *“Mary Magdalene* [Luke 8:2], *Mary the mother of James* [He was one of the disciples, Matt. 10:3], *Salome* [the mother of James and John, Matt. 10:2; 27:56],” These three women were not only present at the crucifixion but also went to the empty tomb (Mark 16:1).

15:41 *“And many other women.”* The disciples, with the exception of John, had all fled. But these women disciples were steadfast to the end. What a comfort it must have been to our Savior to look down and see these women, and His mother and John (John 19:25–27)!

15:42 *“It was the Preparation Day ... before the Sabbath.”* This *“Sabbath”* was not the usual Saturday Sabbath—it was a *“high Sabbath”* as part of the Passover feast (Exod. 12:16; Lev. 23:6–7; John 19:31). It was the *“holy convocation”* on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

15:43 “*Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member.*” Joseph was a secret believer (John 19:38), as was Nicodemus (John 19:39), and was probably not present when Jesus was condemned.

15:44–45 “*Pilate marveled that He was already dead.*” Once Jesus’ work of redemption was finished, He voluntarily released His spirit (Luke 23:46). See also John 10:18. The other thieves had to have their legs broken, so they would die quickly. Jesus’ bones were not broken, as a fulfillment of Scripture (Exod. 12:46; Psalm 34:20; Zech.12:10; John 19:31–37).

15:46 “*Then he bought fine linen ... and wrapped Him ... and he laid Him in a tomb.*” Joseph’s actions fulfilled prophecy (Isa. 53:9). Nicodemus also came and anointed the body (John 19:39–42).

MARK CHAPTER 16

The Resurrection; Mary Magdalene sees Him; Jesus’ appearances to the disciples.

The Resurrection of the Son of God

Mark 16:1–8 (Matt. 28:1–8; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–10)

16:1–2 “*The Sabbath.*” This was Saturday, so these events occurred very early on Sunday morning. It is worth noting that two of the Levitical offerings were to be offered on “*the day after the Sabbath,*” and both related to the “*firstfruits*” (Lev. 23:10–11, 15–17). Paul tells us that Jesus Christ, who rose on Sunday, is “*the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep ... Christ the firstfruits*” (1 Cor. 15:20, 23). “*Mary Magdalene ... Mary ... Salome.*” These were the same women who watched the crucifixion (Mark 15:40).

16:3–4 “*Who will roll away the stone?*” These stones were like a big, round wheel. Once rolled into place, they were very difficult to move. “*The stone had been rolled away.*” Though the Romans had placed a seal and a Roman guard unit to watch the tomb (Matt. 27:62–66), the seal was broken, and the guard unit had fled from the angel who rolled away the stone (Matt. 28:1–4). The angel did not roll the stone away to let Jesus out, but to let the women in.

16:5 “*A young man clothed in a long white robe.*” This was an angel (John 20:11–12).

16:6 “*He is risen!*” This was the first announcement of the greatest news the world has ever heard. These three words proclaim the victory of our faith. The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves His true identity and confirms to the world that the power of sin and death has been defeated (Hos. 6:2; Rom. 4:23–25; Col. 2:13–15; 1 Cor. 15:3–4, 55–57). To receive the benefit of His resurrection—eternal life—all one needs to do is to believe in Him (John 3:15–16; Acts 16:31; Rom. 4:23–25).

16:7 “*But go, tell His disciples—and Peter.*” What a gracious comfort this must have been to Peter, who had probably spent the three days and nights in an agony of grief and shame! “*He is going before you into Galilee.*” Jesus had told them beforehand that He would meet them there (Mark 14:28).

16:8 “*So they went out ... and fled ... for they trembled ... And they said nothing.*” Only Mark tells us of this initial hesitation of the women to pass on the message of the angel. After a delay, they went and told the disciples (Matt. 28:8–10; John 20:11–18).

Jesus Appears First to Mary Magdalene, Then to Other Disciples

Mark 16:9–14 (Matt. 28:9–10, 16–17; Luke 24:36–44; John 20:11–20)

16:9 “*He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.*” What a privilege for this woman, from whom Jesus cast “*seven demons*” (Luke 8:2). Truly, in God’s plan, the last shall be first (Matt. 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31).

16:10–11 *“They did not believe.”* Jesus had told the disciples, at least three times, that He would be crucified and then rise again on the third day (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34). Their unbelief was inexcusable. Observe that three times from vv. 11–14 it is stated that *“They did not believe.”* This is critical to understand what Jesus says to them in vv. 16–18.

16:12–13 *“After that, He appeared in another form to two of them.”* Jesus concealed His identity so as to move and talk with them for a time (Luke 24:13–35). *“They did not believe them either.”*

16:14 *“He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart.”* The disciples’ grief and sorrow over the crucifixion had hardened their hearts to the good news of His resurrection. This strong rebuke—just before giving them their commission—may have also been preparation for them in seeking to reach hardened and unbelieving men. In John 20:29, Jesus declares that the faith of those who have never seen Him, or His mighty works is greater than that of the disciples.

The Great Commission and Christ’s Ascension

Mark 16:15–20 (Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:45–53; John 20:21; Acts 1:9–11)

16:15–16 *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel.”* This is often referred to as the Great Commission. The word *“gospel”* simply means “good news.” *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved.”* This verse does not make baptism a requirement for salvation. Faith brings eternal life, and baptism is the public confession of that faith. Nowhere in the Gospel of John, Romans, or Galatians is baptism an issue in salvation (Matt. 28:19; Acts 8:26–40; 16:31–34). “Baptism” is the first step in discipleship for one who has believed—for someone who has decided to follow Jesus. *“He who does not believe will be condemned.”* Unbelief is the only barrier to entering eternal life, just as believing is the only means of entering eternal life. See John 3:16–19.

16:17 *“These signs will follow those who believe.”* Jesus is not making this promise to all believers, but only to the disciples/apostles who He had rebuked for their unbelief. If they went out in unbelief, they would have no power. See Matthew 17:20–21 and Mark 9:29. These signs were to give evidence of their apostleship (Acts 28:3–6; 2 Cor. 12:12).

16:19 *“He ... sat down at the right hand of God.”* This was in fulfillment of Psalm 110:1. The right hand signifies the place of power and authority (Psalm 110:1, 5; Matt. 28:18; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 8:1).

16:20 *“And they went out ... the Lord working ... and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.”* Again, this shows that the promise in vv. 16–18 is not to all believers, but only to those designated by Jesus Christ as apostles. The author of the book of Hebrews says that the Word of the Lord was *“... confirmed to us by those who heard Him [apostles], God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles ...”* (Heb. 2:3–4).