

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 1

Sometimes the Gospel of Mark is related as the Gospel of a Servant. Jesus was prophesied to be the Servant of God (Isa. 53), and one aspect of being a servant is that a servant moves immediately to serve. The term “immediately” is used more in this Gospel than anywhere else in the Bible. Mark records less of Jesus’ words and more of His works. We will see more times where He casts out demons and performs miracles.

### 1. JOHN THE BAPTIST (1-8)

The Gospel begins with the message of John the Baptist. There is much said about this important man, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, he was prophesied in Isaiah 40:3 to be one who would prepare the way of the Messiah; in Malachi 3 and 4 (incidentally, the last words of the Old Testament) we are told that he would come in the spirit of Elijah. In the New Testament, Jesus would tell us that he was the greatest man to be born of a woman (Matthew 11:7-11). Luke 1 reveals that he was a relative of Jesus, born in a supernatural way much like Samson and Samuel.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** John’s baptism was one of repentance for the children of Israel. It was this action that accomplished their return to God. His second purpose was the revelation of the identity of the Messiah (John 1:31). His baptism is NOT the baptism of Christ, which is into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6), and therefore is not a baptism for men today. This is why today there is only ONE baptism (Ephesians 4:5).

### 2. BAPTISM OF JESUS (9-11)

When Jesus came to John, John (knowing ONLY of Jesus reputation in the flesh) at first was reluctant to baptize Him. But because it was necessary for Jesus’ identification as the Messiah, it occurred, and the Holy Spirit and the Father both testified to His identity at that moment. This became the testimony of John the Baptist.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Jesus was NOT baptized for repentance, but for that other purpose, to identify Him as the Messiah.

### **3. TEMPTATION OF JESUS (12-13)**

Jesus was afterwards sent into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. Although He was led by the Spirit, Jesus was not tempted by God, as God cannot tempt me (James 1). Matthew 4 records that Jesus faced three temptations in the wilderness. Once concluded, Jesus was able to begin His ministry.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** According to Hebrews 4:15, Jesus was tempted in all ways as we are, but without sin. Consider that in facing three types of temptation, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, He was tempted by “all that is of the world” (1 John 2:16).

### **4. CALLING OF DISCIPLES (14-20)**

Once John was arrested Jesus began preaching His message: The Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. He then began to draw His particular disciples (who would become His apostles). The first here is Andrew, who had been a disciple of John (John 1). With him was his brother Simon, nicknamed “Peter” (in Aramaic “Cephas”) when they met (John 1). Then soon after came James and John, fishermen who were likely cousins of Jesus.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** The Apostles are the Ambassadors of Jesus. Their important work was to establish the authority of the church (Ephesians 2:20) by preparing the New Testament.

### **5. JESUS CASTS OUT DEMONS AND HEALS PEOPLE (21-45)**

Jesus’ ministry began with power. The miracles that He did were ones that the Prophets had said the Messiah would do. Repeatedly we are shown that Jesus had total power over all parts of the spiritual world. By Healing he established the authority of a message, and by casting out demons established the source of authority.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** There are not many miracles performed in the Old Testament, and there are no records of any demons possessing or being cast out. This work was unique to the time of Christ, and we are told in various ways in the New Testament that it was to prove the authenticity of the message of Christ. Having been proven (Jude 3), we no longer need these works to be performed.

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 2

Sometimes the Gospel of Mark is related as the Gospel of a Servant. Jesus was prophesied to be the Servant of God (Isa. 53), and one aspect of being a servant is that a servant moves immediately to serve. The term “immediately” is used more in this Gospel than anywhere else in the Bible. Mark records less of Jesus’ words and more of His works. We will see more times where He casts out demons and performs miracles.

### **1. THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES (1-12)**

Mark 1 taught us that Jesus performed many miracles, so many that He was swamped when He traveled. Here in this passage we see why: to demonstrate that He had the power to forgive sins. Miracles are not for the sake of what they seem to do, but to demonstrate that the person speaking has the authority of God. Anyone could claim that sins are forgiven, but only someone from God could then heal someone miraculously. As another note, this claim (to forgive sins) is rightly identified as something only God can do. Thus it is inferred that Jesus is God.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** We do not see miracles performed today. This is because the message from God has been delivered, and they are no longer necessary.

### **2. THE CALLING OF LEVI (14-17)**

One of the key characteristics of the apostles called by Jesus is that they came to Him instantly. None of them waited or asked to be permitted to do other things (Luke 9:62), but instead forsook all for Jesus. As a tax collector, Levi (called Matthew in the other Gospel accounts) had purchased his tax booth, and was considered a traitor by many of his countrymen. It seems an odd choice, especially since another of the Apostles was Simon the Zealot, a member of a political group opposed to all things Roman, especially tax collectors. When Levi was called, he brought Jesus to his home and brought all of his tax collector friends. When others saw this, Jesus made the point that His message is for people who know they are spiritually sick, not those who think that they are okay.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** To be a follower of Jesus we need to be ready to give up everything, and to do so immediately.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Anyone who thinks that they are “fine” before God cannot be saved; all have sinned (Romans 3:23) and need a savior, but only a few can see that.

### **3. THE NEW COVENANT (18-22)**

There is a debate here about the disciples (followers) of John the Baptist, the Pharisees and Jesus. Some fast, while Jesus and His disciples seemed to eat often. Jesus makes a point that (1) there will come a time for them to fast too, and (2) no one puts old things into new things. This second point is meant to suggest that John’s disciples and the Pharisees are of the Old Covenant, and Jesus’ disciples are of the New Covenant.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** We are not to bring things from the Old Testament into the New Testament.

### **4. ACCUSATION OF BREAKING THE SABBATH (23-28)**

The Jewish law of the Sabbath (Exodus 20) was that it was a day of rest, and no work was to be done. The accusation here is that they are breaking that law, although it does not seem that this (picking food to eat) is actually the purpose and intent of the law. Instead of making that point, Jesus points out that David broke the law when he was starving, and that it was not seen as a breaking of the law. Then Jesus makes the case that the Sabbath was made for man, not vice-versa. Finally, He states that He, as the Christ, is the Lord of the Sabbath, and therefore could not break it as He created it.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** The Sabbath is a matter of the Old Testament, and not for Christians today.

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 3

What is more impressive? Someone who can talk the talk, or someone who can walk the walk? Throughout all time, it has been more impressive to act rather than to just speak. Jesus has a lot of important things to teach about salvation and the kingdom of heaven. But He knows that He needs to do things that demonstrate He speaks with authority, *“for the kingdom of God is not in word but in power”* (1 Corinthians 4:20).

### 1. A MIRACLE ON THE SABBATH (1-6)

Jesus has demonstrated that He can heal anyone in any manner. He does not need to call to God for help because He IS God; the power to heal is His. This miracle is particularly delightful because Jesus puts His opponents on trial by asking them if they think He should heal; it is marvelous because Jesus is making them acknowledge He has complete power in the situation.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Being hard hearted is pretty common. It means that we won't listen to what Jesus has to say. We need to be on the lookout within ourselves to avoid this deadly heart condition.

### 2. THE TWELVE APOSTLES (7-19)

This is one of several lists of the 12 apostles. We notice that sometimes their names are different, and that some of them have nicknames. See the attached chart on the apostles to get a sense of who they are.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Jesus purchased and established His church, but the apostles put it together (much like David and Solomon building the temple). There are not 12 churches headed by 12 apostles. As well, the apostles did not have successors, except for one of whom it was pointed out that he (Judas) would fall.

### 3. JESUS VERSES THE DEMONS (20-30)

We have discussed before that demonic possession seems to be a big part of the Gospel according to Mark. There are no demons cast out before the first century, and it does not seem to be continued today either. This passage may explain why that is. When the Jews accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub (A Philistine demon god that the Jews sometimes equated with Satan),

Jesus makes the point that His power CANNOT come from demons, since He is using it to war with demons.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Jesus' power to cast out demons was to establish that His miraculous power was from God, not Satan. Thus it is no longer necessary for God to permit demons to possess people. Therefore we do not see that they do.

#### **4. JESUS MOTHER AND BROTHERS (31-35)**

At the close of the chapter Jesus' mother and brothers make an appearance. The Bible tells us that Jesus had four brothers and at least two sisters. Two of his brothers (James and Jude) became leaders in the church later. However, at this time none of his brother believed in Him (John 7:5). Jesus makes a powerful statement to tell us that the adoption by God requires obedience.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Catholic tradition teaches Mary was a perpetual virgin. However, this is clearly not the case, as seen here.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Many believe that we simple need to believe in Jesus to become children of God. Jesus states here "*whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister*". Not just believing, but faith and works.

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 4

Jesus was a masterful teacher. One of the ways we are told He taught was in parables; in Mark 4:33-34 we are told that all of Jesus' teaching to the public was done in parables. Parables are stories with spiritual implications. As Jesus used them, parables are a way of making a distinction between those who want to know more, and those who just see Christ as something pleasant to hear (Ezekiel 33:31-32). These parables are about the Kingdom, which Jesus has come to establish.

### **1. TEACHING IN PARABLES (10-13, 33-34)**

Jumping to a point after the first parable, Jesus elaborates as to the point of parables. The great number of people in this world will hear the word and then keep on in the same way. Jesus is NOT saying that they are intentionally confusing, but is revealing the need to seek to understand (Matthew 7:7) and to study to show we are approved (2 Timothy 2:15).

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9. We need to understand that God wants all men everywhere to repent (2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4), but God also needs to harden the hearts of those who reject Him so that the distinction is clear.

### **2. PARABLE OF THE SOILS (1-9, 14-20)**

This parable is of great importance for multiple reasons. First, it is used as the key to understanding parables in general. We are meant to see truth about God in simple things. Second, this parable teaches us important things about the kingdom of heaven. The story revealed is simple. Of four people who hear the word, three respond, two grow up, and one remains faithful to the end.

First, it teaches us that it does not matter how good the sower is; it is the seed that does all the work (James 1:21). Second, we need to see that falling away is more common than remaining faithful. Third, we need to see that being fruitful will certainly happen if we do the right things (2 Peter 1:5-8)

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Jesus was clear on what things cause men to fall away. First, if we fail to grow, we will fall soon after becoming Christians. Second, if we do not remove worldly obstacles from our lives we will be choked out.

### **3. THE LIGHT AND THE BASKET (21-23)**

This is a simple parable that was taught in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. There Jesus said that we are the light to the world. In another sense, the word is the light. But if we hide it, we are worthless in casting light.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Do not be a Christian who cannot be seen to be a Christian. Do the works of a Christian; we are Christians in deed, not word.

### **4. MEASURES (24-25)**

This seems similar to a teaching in Luke 19:26. Jesus speaks here about the blessing of bringing the word into our lives, but also the obligations of being aware of God's will.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** If someone knows what God desires of them but chooses not to do it, God's wrath is great (James 4:17).

### **5. THE HARVEST (26-29)**

Here again is a seed image. In this case, Jesus is establishing that the kingdom comes in pieces (i.e. John, Jesus, the Apostles, the New Testament, the end).

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** We should know that all that remains now is the harvest.

### **6. THE MUSTARD SEED (30-32)**

The seed of the kingdom is compared to the tiny mustard seed. From it comes an enormous tree. From a simple book now comes the hope of eternal life.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** We ought to consider how a seed is like the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23). It is not living until it is watered. We too are not alive in Christ until we are watered (Acts 2:38).

### **7. JESUS CALMS THE SEA (35-41)**

In crossing the sea a great storm comes. Jesus calms the storm and rebukes the disciples for their lack of faith. How could a storm destroy Him?

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** The disciples realize that this means Jesus IS God

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 5

We have already seen that one of the most important works Jesus did was to cast out demons. In Mark 3 we saw that this demonstrated that Jesus worked miracles by the power of God, not Satan. In Mark 5 we see again Jesus casting out the most powerful demon(s) in Scripture. As well we see Jesus work the most powerful of miracles, raising the dead.

### 1. CASTING OUT LEGION (1-20)

The demons that possessed the man of the tombs caused great destruction. It is one of the times we see demons doing what may be supernatural works (breaking chains, or Acts 16 – soothsaying). As always, we see demons reverent to Jesus as God (James 2:19). In this case, they petition (and are permitted) to enter nearby swine, who subsequently kill themselves.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Clearly this man was a great terror on the community, but when it cost them their swine, they asked Jesus to leave. It is a powerful testimony that many people want God to fix their problems, but when the consequences of that solution mean the end of unclean things, they ask Jesus to leave. .

### 2. WOMAN WITH THE HEMORRAGE (25-34)

Jumping ahead, we see Jesus in verse 34 going to aid a local ruler when a woman reaches out and touches Him. The unusual statement is that Jesus perceived the power departing Him. He confronts the woman (not because He does not know who did it, but seems to be giving her the chance to confess). She admits her thinking, and it is not only not condemned, but praised.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** First, consider that in our sins today, we think we have some type of privacy. But God knows exactly what we have done in our lives (Heb. 4:13). He permits us time to repent of our own volition, but there is a day coming when all sins will be exposed (Eph. 5:13), and those things unconfessed will be our condemnation.

Second, those who are children of God often pray and petition God for things that we may not be certain are His will. Yet for those who have faith, we have hope that even these things might be heard.

### **3. RAISING THE DEAD (20-24, 35-43)**

There are only a few times in Scripture this miracle occurred. It happened in the Old Testament (Elijah and Elisha raised people from the dead). The rarity of this (and it being by Elijah and Elisha) testifies in particular to the notoriety of this work. Jesus would raise three people total; the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11), Lazarus (John 11), and here. The miracle here is particularly touching, as Jesus seems to keep it secret. He only permits the family to come in, and just a few of His disciples. It shows the wicked hearts of people that they would mock Him, and His compassion on the family.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** In John 11, Jesus makes the case that His power to raise the dead is a testimony to His identity; He IS the resurrection and the life. One day all who belong to Him will be raised to join Him (while those not His are raised to their eternal condemnation).

The greatest hope of Christianity is a resurrection of eternal life with God. Again, the great point here is that ONLY those who are in Christ have this hope. All men will be raised on the last day. Those who are with Christ have a great reward in this day.

*"Do not marvel t this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment"*

John 5:28-29

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 6

The central part of Mark is the work Jesus does as the great Servant of God. In Chapter 6 we see Jesus rejected by family, sending out His apostles, the fate of God's other servant John, Jesus doing a great work before all the people, and a miracle that demonstrates that Jesus is God.

### 1. JESUS IN HIS HOMETOWN (1-6)

While Jesus is in his hometown, his family arrives (Jesus has four brothers and two sisters) and it is clear that they reject Him. This may correspond to Luke 4. It also tells us that Jesus was a carpenter by profession.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Jesus taught that many will need to be rejected by and reject family in order to be His disciple (Luke 12:53). Our love for Jesus and the kingdom must be greater than our love for our families; Jesus loved us in that way, and called us His family (Matt. 12:50).

### 2. SENDING OUT THE TWELVE (7-13)

Jesus sent out the disciples in pairs to get Israel ready to receive Him. This is not the great commission, but one to Israel only.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** None of the Apostles had prestige or preeminence over another. They worked in pairs, something that would continue after the Kingdom came, as Jesus said "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst" (Matt. 18:19-20).

### 3. FATE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (14-29)

The Bible teaches that John was the greatest man to live (Matt. 11:11) aside from Jesus. When Jesus came, his work was finished. We see here his fate, to be murdered by Herod.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** First, we ought to consider the reaction that some have to the conviction of sin. In Acts 2:37 the people were pricked to the heart by their sins and asked what they could do. Here, we see Herodias' hate over being

convicted push her to murder. We need to consider the right response when we are convicted of sin, for *“all fall short of the glory of God”*.

Second, this is an important teaching on God’s law of marriage and divorce. In Mark 10 Jesus will teach further on this, but here it is established that there is a law, universal, that God does not permit divorce and remarriage.

#### **4. FEEDING OF THE 5,000 (30-44)**

This miracle occurs twice. In John 6 we see that the people followed Jesus over the death of John. It is an important miracle, because the OT prophets spoke about the Messiah feeding them (Isa. 55:2). Of course, this was a reference to physical bread, but a spiritual food for spiritual life (His words, John 6:63). There is evidence that it is this miracle above most that resonated with the people.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Today we are sustained by the Bread of Life, the Word of God. Everything we need (2 Tim. 3:16-17) is provided by it.

#### **5. WALKING ON WATER (45-56)**

This is not the only time the disciples are in a boat and experience a storm (Mark 4:37). However, this time Jesus is not with them. Their terror is increased when they see that Jesus is walking on the water towards them (they think it is a ghost). In Matthew’s account, Peter walked out of the boat to him, but sank due to his lack of faith.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** First, as in Mark 4, this miracle demonstrates that Jesus, as Creator of all things (John 1:2) can subject the laws of nature to Himself. It is also a bit of a parable to us to consider that if we belong to Christ, our security in the storms of life does not matter if He is physically with us or not, and our doubts are not limited to this too.

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 7

We are in the middle of the time Jesus spent teaching His doctrines. This chapter begins with a confrontation of the Pharisees, and reaches to the ideas of how we see the purpose and intent of God's instructions. We then see Jesus perform miracles among the Gentile nation of Phoenicia, demonstrating that He is not just the Savior of the Jews but for all mankind.

### 1. THE DANGER OF TRADITIONS (1-13)

There were many rules in the Old Testament about clean and unclean things (see Leviticus 11-13). They pertain to things to be eaten, worn and done. Unclean is not exactly "sinful" in the Old Testament, but it meant that you could not perform certain things before God. The Jewish leaders of the time of Jesus had added many practices to the ideas of clean and unclean.

Jesus is not upset with their observation of the Law of Moses nor even their tradition, but that they (1) teach that their tradition as a matter of God's law and (2) they actually neglect God's law. They made their own rules and told people that these were God's rules, while at the same time working to find loopholes in the Law of Moses in order to avoid doing what it said.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** There are two types of traditions: those we personally have, and spiritual/religion traditions. So long as our personal traditions are not sinful nor cause others to stumble, they are acceptable (Romans 14). In regards to spiritual traditions, they are only acceptable if they are an *authorized tradition*; this means that we are doing something with God's permission (God's authority). People could avoid this if we (1) sought to be obedient from the heart and (2) spoke where the Bible spoke and remained silent where it is silent.

Jesus was particularly angry because the Pharisees made up their own commandments before God, and yet did not obey the actual commandments of God. Too often, unspiritual people believe that Jesus was upset over the attention to the Law of Moses that they observed; the sin of the Pharisees was not being too attentive to the Law of Moses, but making their own law and ignoring the intent and purpose of the law of Moses.

## **2. THE SOURCE OF DEFILEMENT (14-23)**

Jesus tells a parable about defilement; He said that it is not what goes into a man that defiles him (like food, etc), but what comes out. It seems that Jesus' followers were confused about what He was trying to teach. Jesus clarified it to tell them that food does not make us clean or unclean (and Mark decidedly tells us here that Jesus, in that moment, declared all food to be clean – Romans 14:14). Instead, Jesus is talking about words; our words (and deeds) are what make us unclean.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Although being unclean in the Law of Moses was not a sin, it is a description of sin in the law of Christ (2 Cor. 6:17, Heb. 10:22). James 3 tells us that sins with our mouth (lying, cursing, vulgarity, blasphemy, gossip or evil speaking) condemn us before God.

## **3. THE GENTILE'S FAITH (24-30)**

In this remarkable story a Canaanite woman begs Jesus to heal her son. When Jesus tells her His work is first to the Jews (Mat. 10:6), the woman mentions a parable that little dogs under the table get scraps from the children. Jesus tells the woman that because of this answer her child is healed.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** This is a strange event. Jesus was not being cruel, but clear in His point. But what was remarkable was that this woman was not offended to be told that she was not one of the chosen of Israel; instead, she humbles herself to declare that she is like a dog under the table, and entitled to the scraps. This humility is the remarkable thing that brought healing to her home. We ought to be humble in our petitions to God. It is the humble heart to which God will respond (Isa. 57:15).

## **4. HEALING THE DEAF (31-37)**

This is the first time a deaf person is healed in Mark. It is interesting to consider that by this time, Jesus has healed countless people (including the dead). Yet the people remark on this point in particular. Perhaps it is because this is a *Messianic Miracle*; it is a miracle that (like blindness in John 9) the prophets said would come with the Christ (Isa. 29:18, 35:5, 42:19, 43:8), and had never happened before.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Yet again a miracle that demonstrated that Jesus was the prophetic Christ. But in lieu of Exodus 4:11, also demonstrating that Jesus was God.

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 8

Back in Mark 6 Jesus feed five thousand people. Jesus repeats this miracle in Mark 8, as well as to teach on the problem with seeking miracles. Jesus additional miracles again demonstrate his power. Finally, we see Peter both making a great confession and a great blunder within moments.

### 1. FEEDING OF FOUR THOUSAND (1-10)

There is little difference as to the feeding of four thousand here and five thousand in chapter six. Perhaps we might consider that Jesus has a different purpose in reveling things. Here we see this as a counter to the Pharisees and the disciples misunderstanding of the purpose and point of the signs Jesus performed.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** We need to see that Jesus is able to recreate with ease the miracles that He performs, and that none of His works were “one and done”. Great or small, none are difficult for Him, even involving thousands of people.

### 2. NO SIGN SHALL BE GIVEN (11-13)

Immediately after working this remarkable miracle, Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees and petitioned for a sign. Jesus’ reply is to declare that no sign will be given to them. In Matthew’s account it is added “*but the sign of Jonah...the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*” (Matt. 12:39-40).

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** It is important to understand that miracles are NOT meant to increase our faith, but to verify the authenticity of a message. In other words, the miracles of Scriptures are fundamentally for the purpose of certifying the people delivering the Gospel (John 20:30-31, 2 Cor. 12:12). God does not provide miracles today, as He has no new message to deliver to us, and we need to understand that Jesus is suggesting that demanding God give us miracles to believe is to participate in worldliness.

### 3. THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES (14-21)

It is interesting that after this there is an anecdote about Jesus’ and the bread. We are told that the disciples has forgotten to bring bread, and then Jesus warns them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. They misunderstand this, believing it to be a rebuke for their forgotten food. Jesus rebukes them for their misunderstanding. He reminds them that twice now He has fashioned food where there is none; why would physical food be the concern?

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Leaven is used many times to denote sin or false doctrine (1 Cor. 5:6-8, Gal. 5:9). The idea is two-fold; first, sin itself contaminates the whole person much like leaven (or yeast) “*infects*” the entire ball of dough. Second, the idea is that false doctrines (like those of the Pharisees) can easily spread to all types of thinking. We know that the

Pharisees had a love of money (Luke 16:14); the results of this problem spread too much of their religious teaching.

#### **4. HEALING THE BLIND (22-26)**

This is the first time a blind person is healed in Mark. As with the deaf man in chapter 7, this is a *Messianic Miracle*; it is a miracle that the prophets said would come with the Christ (Isa. 29:18, 35:5, 42:19, 43:8), and had not happened before.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Yet again a miracle that demonstrated that Jesus was the prophetic Christ. Considering Exodus 4:11, it also demonstrates Jesus was God.

#### **5. WHO IS JESUS (27-30)**

While outside of Israel, Jesus asks His disciples whom people say He is. They point to John the Baptist, Elijah, and others. Jesus asks them what they think, and Peter answers for them: You are the Christ. This is the "*Great Confession*" of our faith (1 Tim. 6:12) that we are required to make towards our salvation (Rom. 10:9).

#### **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

This is the first time that this confession was made. Nathaniel made it first in John 1, and it was made many times by others afterwards. In Matthew's account Peter and the apostles for whom he spoke were offered "*the keys of the kingdom*", which is the apostolic authority of the apostles (see Matthew 18:16-18). There is no indication of a supremacy of Peter from this passage.

#### **6. PETER'S SIN (31-33)**

Immediately after this confession Jesus changes His message to discuss His upcoming death. Peter rebukes Jesus, but is himself rebuked by Jesus.

#### **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

Peter may have had good intentions in his rebuke, but he was not being mindful of the things of God. Often we deny God with good intentions; it does not mean we are free to do so. We need to do God's things God's way.

#### **7. TAKE UP YOUR CROSS (34-38)**

In some ways this was Jesus most unusual statement. The cross was an instrument of death that was only for extreme criminals. Yet here Jesus tells His disciples to "take it up".

#### **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

Christians are people who have put on the death of Christ, and look to their own deaths for their rewards. We die to the world, and live in Christ (Galatians 3:20). Jesus adds to this the danger of being ashamed of Him and His cross.

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 9

Mark 9 marks a transition in the life of Christ. Until now the record has been about the works of Jesus, identifying Him as the Messiah of prophecy. With the transfiguration, we are now counting down until His death on the cross.

### 1. TRANSFIGURATION (1-9)

The transfiguration of Jesus is a significant event. Jesus meets Moses and Elijah, who speak to Him about His coming death in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). The location is not mentioned, but we do know that in the past, Elijah and Moses both met God before on Mt. Sinai. This event is so significant that at the end of Peter's life he points to this event as the reason he believes (2 Pet. 1:17). It is also one of the three times God the Father speaks from heaven (Mark 1:11 and John 12:28).

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** The significance of this event is that it establishes without a doubt that Jesus is superior in authority and covenant to the Law of Moses, that is, the Old Testament. The men who appeared personify the Law and the Prophets. Thus, God the Father declared that we are to listen to the law of Christ, NOT the Old Testament.

### 2. COMING OF ELIJAH (10-13)

After meeting Elijah, this prompts some questions from the Apostles. The prophet Malachi said that Elijah would return (Malachi 4:5). Jesus makes it clear to them that Elijah's return was not the one they had witnessed on the mountain, but that it was the spirit or type of Elijah that John the Baptist manifested among the people. In other words, John the Baptist was a type of Elijah (not Elijah per se, but one like him, John 1:21).

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** There are multiple promises of men returning from the Old Testament. Moses said a prophet like him would come (Deut. 18:15); David was spoken of returning (Ezek. 34:24), as was Elijah. This was not teaching a reincarnation, but telling us that one like these men would come. Jesus was the Son of David, the great Prophet.

### 3. CASTING OUT THE DIFFICULT SPIRIT (14-29)

This unusual event records a spirit that could not be cast out by the disciples of Jesus. Jesus makes it clear that this was due to an absence of faith, as well as a more difficult spirit. The poignant expression of the father, "help my unbelief", is particularly touching, as it is a man who is in desperation for a remedy, and is being told that he lacks faith. It seems his plea to God is satisfying to Christ, who heals the boy and explains to the disciples why it was difficult.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Some might be tempted to believe that faith is the only determination for the working of miracles. We need to be clear that first of all, the working of miracles has ceased (Matt. 9:6, 1 Cor. 13:8). Demons no longer inhabit human flesh to take control of it, as that too was done for the purpose of demonstrating Jesus' authority (Mark 3:26).

#### **4. PREDICTION OF DEATH (30-32)**

Now that the transfiguration has occurred, giving a type of certification to the life and working of Christ, Jesus begins to focus on His impending death.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** We need to be certain of two things. First, men killed Jesus; it was not a suicide. Second, Jesus permitted it to happen, knowing what they would do. It was not a derailment of the divine scheme, but a fulfillment.

#### **5. WHO IS GREATEST (33-37)**

One of the common arguments among the disciples was that of a hierarchy of importance. This issue is visited many times (again in Mark 10:43). Jesus would also condemn the leaders of the Jews for their love of preeminence in religion (Matt. 23).

#### **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

Many religions and denominations today still pursue preeminence. They love titles (Pastor, Father, Reverend), ornamental clothing (clerical robes, collars) and being called by titles of authority. Jesus was absolutely opposed to this, and condemned those who seek these things. Instead, Jesus taught that all believers are equal, being brothers and sisters in Him (Matt. 12:50).

#### **6. TEACHING ON HELL (38-50)**

One of the unique features of Mark's account of the life of Jesus is emphasis on Jesus teaching on Hell. The word "*hell*" is translated from the Hebrew word "*Gehenna*", which was a smoldering refuse area just outside Jerusalem that had been used for human sacrifices in the past (Jer. 7:31). Jesus compared the destination of the wicked with that place, adding that it was an eternal condition. It is also referred to as a lake of fire (Rev. 20:15) and outer darkness (Jude 13). It should not be confused with "*Hades*" or "*Sheol*", which is the place, authority or condition of death. Jesus went to Hades (Acts 2:31).

#### **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

Hell is easily the least popular doctrine of Christ, but it is absolutely clear that it is real. It is the final place of the wicked after judgment. None are there now, but many will be after Jesus returns. God is fair, having done all that He can to keep men from going there by sending His Son to pay for sin, and by delivering the Gospel.

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 10

We saw Mark 9 change the directions in recording the life of Jesus. No longer is the focus the power of Jesus, but now it is the teachings of Jesus. Mark 10 records Jesus' hard(est) teachings: marriage and money. He also warns His apostles not to seek out worldly fame.

### **1. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE (1-12)**

In the Old Testament there were rules for divorce (Deut. 24). Jesus points out that God's law from the beginning did not intend for this, and that His law would not either. The law is straightforward: one cannot divorce their spouse and marry another (in Matthew, an exception is given if one spouse is unfaithful). If they do marry another, it is not marriage, but adultery. Thus Jesus' law replaced the law of Moses.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** There are a number of significant implications from this teaching. First, we live in a society where many of us are divorced. Jesus' teaching says that many may have to remain single if they want to be a Christian. Even more difficult, if someone has remarried in an unauthorized manner, they may have to separate from that spouse. Second, in this teaching Jesus defines marriage as ONE MAN and ONE WOMAN for life. This means that relationships of multiple spouses (polygamy) or same-gender marriages (homosexuality) are not marriages before God.

### **2. VALUE OF CHILDREN (13-16)**

When a group of children are brought to Jesus, His disciples attempt to make them leave. But Jesus rebukes His disciples and states that the Kingdom belongs to children and those like children.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** There are two important points here. First, Jesus is telling us what characteristics we need to have to go to heaven. Children are trusting, innocent and willing to listen. Second, we also see that Jesus is indicating that children are without sin. Many falsely teach that we are all tainted with sin from birth. This false doctrine is called Original Sin.

### **3. THE RICH YOUNG RULER (17-31)**

This is the second hard teaching Jesus presents after teaching on marriage. Here a man who has kept God's law all his life wants to know what he still must do. Jesus tells him to give up all he has to the poor, but this causes the man to leave crushed in spirit because of his riches (the different accounts indicate he is young, rich and a ruler). Jesus disciples are shocked at this teaching, and point out that they have left their belongings. Jesus assures them that a reward is waiting for them.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** While it may seem that Jesus is telling us we need to take a vow of poverty to follow Him, we can see many examples of wealthy Christians elsewhere who were faithful with their possession (Barnabas, John Mark, Lydia). Jesus is directly teaching THIS man that his wealth is an obstacle he needed to overcome. Many have things that they put in front of God; wealth, hobbies, or other things (or people). We cannot have ANYTHING before God (Matt. 6:24).

A second point is that when Jesus tells him what laws a Christian should keep, the Sabbath commandment is absent from it. Nowhere in the New Testament are we told that Christians are to keep the Sabbath. This means that the Ten Commandments are NOT the law of Christ.

#### **4. TEACHING ON HIS DEATH (32-34)**

Once more Jesus specifically tells the disciples about His upcoming death. The subsequent conversation indicates that they failed to believe or understand this.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** The disciples often overlooked clear, simple teaching. We too must be on guard to avoid overlooking clear, simple teachings.

#### **5. WHO IS GREATEST (35-45)**

This is now the second time this debate has occurred. This time it is Jesus' cousins James and John (compare John 19:25 w/ Matt. 27:56 and Mark 15:40).

#### **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

As pointed out last chapter, preeminence is a failing of many religions today, where the love of titles and ceremonial honors is present.

#### **6. HEALING OF BARTIMAEUS (46-52)**

As Jesus comes to Jericho a blind man pleads with Him to be healed. By calling Jesus "Son of David" he is declaring that Jesus is the Messiah. This act of faith is critical to the restoration of his sight.

#### **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

The identity of Jesus has many different facets. He is called "Son of Man", "Son of God", and here, "Son of David". Each one points to some important point. In this case, being the Son of David meant that Jesus was heir to the throne (and the promises, 2 Sam. 7:12-14).

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 11

Mark 10:32 began Jesus final journey to Jerusalem to His death. He made it abundantly clear to His disciples what was going to happen to Him. Chapter 11 tells how He enters Jerusalem on Sunday and the next few days of His Jerusalem walk. .

### 1. TRIUMPHAL ENTRY (1-10)

Jesus has gone to Jerusalem numerous times in the past, but has done so secretly (e.g. John 7:10). The triumphal entry is different; He is entering Jerusalem as a king and a messiah, as the chosen one of God. His entry was both prophetic and providential, and heralded by the people.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Jesus seldom identified Himself as the messiah; instead, He relied on others to identify Him as such. This proclamation by the people reflects what the last three years had been accomplishing: identifying to all Jesus of Nazareth.

### 2. CLEANSING THE TEMPLE (13-19)

The temple was the center of the worship of Israel, as proscribed by the law of Moses and later by David and Solomon. It was overseen by the priests, who were members of the Sadducee sect. There were rules made by them (such as no coinage with pagan images) that necessitates money exchanges, as well as profiting by selling sacrifices (including doves, the sacrifice of the poor man).

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Many expected Jesus to purge Israel of the Gentile overlord (the Romans). So it would come as a shock that the purge was not the Romans, but among the Jews, which was what John had predicted (Matt. 3:7-10).

### 3. THE FIG TREE (12-14, 20-26)

This event is spread out in the chapter; the first day Jesus curses the tree, and then the next it is noted that it has died. The apostles marvel at this, and Jesus uses it as an opportunity to teach on the power of faith, prayer and forgiveness. Later Jesus references this event as symbolic of the destruction of Jerusalem (Mark 13:38).

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Perhaps the most practical matter in this teaching is the importance of forgiveness. Jesus makes it clear that our faith is presented in our prayers, and our prayers are effective (in part) due to our willingness to forgive.

#### **4. THE QUESTION OF AUTHORITY (27-33)**

After Jesus has cleansed the temple, He is challenged by those who saw themselves as the overseer of worship as to the authority by which He worked. Rather than answering them clearly, He challenges them by asking them about the baptism of John: was it by the authority of God or men? The question presents a prickly situation, as they know they refused to listen.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** First, it is important to understand the significance of the distinction of the authority of men verses that of God. Doctrine cannot be from men, but must come from God.

Second, we might consider too the idea that there are times where we are not to bother engaging with those who refuse to accept the authority of God. Consider Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:6 and not casting our pearl before swine; if someone refuses to accept the concept of authority, we may not be successful in convicting them by reason.

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 12

Mark 12 continues Jesus' spiritual confrontations in Jerusalem with the leadership of the Jews who have rejected Him. We see Him deal with the Chief Priests, elders and scribes of Israel in the parable of the vineyard; then the Pharisees and the Herodians in the taxation trap, and finally the Sadducees in the resurrection dilemma.

### 1. PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD (1-12)

Jesus describes the authority of God in the covenant of Moses as being like a vineyard which the owner (God) leaves under the care of vinedressers (the Jewish leaders). When the Master sends His representatives, they slay them. The ultimate emissary is His Son (Jesus), whom they kill to take His inheritance. Then Jesus points to prophecy to declare that this event (the rejection of the heir) was prophesied.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** This parable is clear in its meaning. Israel's purpose was to bear fruit to God, but it has failed. God would destroy that nation and create a new one (the Church). There was no surprise to God that this happened; Psalm 118 had prophesied it a thousand years before. God's purpose for the nation of Israel ended two thousand years ago. Now His authority belongs to the church.

### 2. TAXATION TRAP (13-17)

A simple question belays a terrible trap. "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar" seems unanswerable; one answer is punishable to Romans and one would offend all of the people. Jesus sees the trap and sees their error; He makes it clear that we are to honor all whom God declares we are to honor.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Christians are commanded to submit to all rulers and to pay taxes to them (Romans 13:7). This includes when nations are using those things (taxes, authority, etc.) for evil purposes.

### 3. THE SADDUCEES AND THE RESURRECTION (18-28)

Another trap. This time the Sadducees (who only believe the first five books of the OT and do not believe in a resurrection) ask Jesus what they think is a clever question; if there is a resurrection, to whom would a woman married seven times be married? Jesus makes it clear their error is their lack of knowledge; there is no marriage in the resurrection. Then He points to their own beliefs and asks how Abraham, Isaac and Jacob yet live according to Scripture. To this they have no answer.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Many people have a very carnal image of the nature of the resurrection. Those who do not believe ridicule such nonsense. .

#### **4. THE GREATEST COMMANDMENTS (29-34)**

Jesus' persuasive answers has caused one of His opponents to waiver. He decides to give Jesus a genuine question: what is the greatest commandment. Jesus point to the greatest commandment (to Love God) and then to the second greatest (to Love One Another). The scribe is impressed, pointing out that these things are more important than all of the ceremony of the law. Jesus makes it clear that this man is not far from His kingdom

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** These two rules are the foundation of the Law of Christ (Galatians 6:2, Romans 13:8, James 2:8).

#### **4. JESUS TRAPS HIS CRITICS (35-40)**

While His enemies are reeling Jesus presses the assault. He asks them what should be a simple question: How is it that David called the Messiah (who would be his descendant) his Lord? They do not know the answer, and this is the last embarrassment they will tolerate. They will now turn to murder to silence Jesus.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** The answer to this riddle is only found in Christ. Jesus, as God, existed before David, and yet as a man was His descendant. This marvelous paradox is part of the mystery of Godliness (1 Tim. 3:16).

#### **4. THE WIDOW'S MITES (41-44)**

As the disciples walk the temple they see the offerings going to the temple (there were many reasons for making the offering, so it is not certain what this was for). Following the argument on taxes, Jesus observes that her tiny amount was in fact the greatest offering, because it represented a 100% gift.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** This conversation comes immediately after the talk about taxes, and it is possible the temple tax is what was in mind. First, when it comes to giving, it is not the amount that matters, but the commitment. Second, Jesus teaching reflects how trivial it is to talk about what little we owe others in lieu of what we owe to God. This NOT a teaching on giving to the church (the collection of 1 Cor. 16:1-2) but on our general disposition to God, and how that cannot be measured by human eyes.

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 13

At the end of Jesus ministry, Matthew, Mark and Luke all record the same teaching, sometimes called the "Olivet Discourse". It is a chapter that is often misused by false teachers who teach false doctrines. But the chapter is fairly straightforward, with a couple of areas of confusion. This chapter pertains mostly to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in the year 70AD by the Roman army. Jesus is saying this around 30AD, about 40 years before it happens.

### 1. THE QUESTION (1-4)

Jesus and His disciples are viewing the temple when Jesus proclaims this: "*Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down.*" His disciples do not seem shocked, perhaps because this was part of the prophetic work of the Messiah: to declare the day of God's vengeance on Jerusalem (Isaiah 62:3). They then ask Him on the Mount of Olives about it. The disciples are asking (1) when will the temple be destroyed and (2) what signs will there be that it is about to happen?

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Fundamentally, most are confused by this text because they fail to see that there is a specific question here. They also fail to understand how significant the destruction of the temple (and Jerusalem) was in history, especially to the Jews. For them, it represented the end of the world.

### 2. THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT SIGNS (5-12)

Jesus begins by describing things that are NOT signs of these events. False teachers, wars, earthquakes etc. will occur, but they are NOT signs of these events. Jesus also says that the apostles will be persecuted for their faith. Before these things can happen the Gospel must be preached (by the Apostles) to the world.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Jesus is plainly stating that natural catastrophes are not to be seen as signs of anything. As well, the Apostles tell us later that in their lifetimes they fulfilled this commission: Colossians 1:6, 23, Romans 10:18. "To all the world" refers to the two parts of the world: the Jews and the Gentiles. To preach to both groups represent the whole of the earth.

### 3. THE SIGNS: ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION, TRIBULATION AND ANTICHRISTS (14-23)

At verse 14 Jesus relates the signs that the doom is eminent. First is the Abomination of Desolation, a term used by Daniel 9:27 regarding a defilement of the temple. Some see Jesus' warning as pertaining to some new defilement. But Luke elaborates without the prophetic imagery by telling us that this desolation is in fact a foreign army surrounding Jerusalem (Luke 21:20).

Jesus then prophesies a great tribulation (tribulation mean "suffering event"). He warns His followers to flee Jerusalem, or face the greatest suffering in history (Luke 21:24 warns that they must flee or they will be taken captive by the Gentiles who are going to trample Jerusalem). When

John wrote the book of Revelation he stated that he was living in the midst of the tribulation (Revelation 1:9).

Jesus then warns about false Christs who would appear at that time. In John's writings the term "*antichrists*" is used. John states in 1 John 2: "*even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour*". All these things are the signs that the Christians of the time needed to know to flee.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Many misapply these warnings to modern times and events; however, these things (tribulation, antichrists, abomination of desolations) all occurred immediately before the temple was destroyed in 70AD.

#### **4. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE AND THE PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS (24-27)**

This is perhaps the most confusing part of the prophecy due to the figurative, prophetic language used by Jesus. It must be seen in light of all of the prophecies of the old testament about God's wrath destroying a nation (usually with another nation). Examples of this language are in Zephaniah 1:5, Joel 2:2, Amos 5:18. As well, the reference to the coming in the clouds is NOT referring to Jesus final coming (although Jesus will return in the sky in the last day, Acts 1:11).

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Jesus prophecy would deliver all who believed it; they would flee Jerusalem, and thereby be saved. Luke 21:28 describes it more practically: "*But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*"

#### **5. THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE (28-30)**

Jesus makes it clear with one final parable: just like one can see fruit coming on a tree, so could one see the coming destruction of Jerusalem. But He also makes one final clarifying statement: All of these things would occur within the lives of this generation.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Jesus could not have more plainly declared that the events in Mark 13:1-29 occurred 1900 years ago, and that this is not a prophecy for us today.

#### **4. THE DAY HEAVEN AND EARTH PASS AWAY (31-37)**

Jesus now changes gear in a big way. He mentioned the passing away of the heavens and the earth (the entire creation, Genesis 1:1). This is the Last Day, the Day of Judgment, the Day of Resurrection. He tells us very plainly that "But of that day or hour no one knows". He provide a parable that describes a master who comes home without warning to test his servants.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Once again, the clarity of Jesus' teaching is contrasted with the misunderstandings of the world. There is absolutely no sign to warn us about the last day of the planet earth. Anyone who tells us that there are signs we live in the final days now are false teachers.

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 14:1-52

The last week is coming to a close. The Jewish Feast of the Passover (and The Feast of Unleavened Bread) has arrived. Chapter 14:1-11 take place a few days before, letting us know that Jesus knows that He is soon to die. Then we move into the Passover feast, where Jesus will institute the Lord's Supper, then to the Garden of Gethsemane where He will be betrayed. We will stop at verse 52, immediately before the first of five trials.

### 1. THE PLOT AND THE ANOINTING (1-11)

The chapter begins with a simple note to the attitude of Jesus enemies. Throughout the week they have been challenged in their own places, and are determined to see Jesus die. But they are determined not to do this before the Passover.

Then we move to Bethany, where a woman (in John 12 it is Mary, Lazarus' sister) anoints Jesus head (and feet) with an expensive perfume. Jesus disciples find this wasteful (as it might have been given to the poor), but Jesus explains that this is an anointing for one who is about to die. John reports that Judas was particularly offended (he was the treasurer and apparently stole from their treasury) and chooses this time to arrange Jesus' betrayal.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** We need to ask ourselves what things we are prepared to offer to Jesus. We no longer have a system of sacrifices for our sins, but we still should sacrifice things to God (Hebrews 13:16 *And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased*). Our sacrifices testify to others our love for God.

### 2. THE PASSOVER CONVERSATION (12-21)

Jesus has His disciples make the arrangements for the Passover in a most unusual way. This may be the only time He has held the Passover dinner with them. In the midst of the dinner Jesus makes the declaration that one of the twelve is going to betray Him. However, He does not openly name this one, but instead signals that person when they reach into a bowl of sop. In John's gospel account it is this moment when Judas leaves to betray Jesus.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Jesus knew all along that He would be betrayed. In John 6:70-71 Jesus said, "*Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?*" Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him. Yet Jesus never treated Judas any differently than the other disciples.

### 3. THE LORD'S SUPPER IS INSTITUTED (22-26)

In these brief verses Jesus created (from the Passover emblems of unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine) the core act of worship for the New Testament church. First, He told us that the bread is (symbolic of) His body, offered as a sacrifice for our sins. Then He tells us that the fruit of the vine is (symbolic of) His blood, which is the purchase price of the New Testament/Covenant (Acts 20:28).

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** The Lord's Supper (also called Communion and Breaking Bread) is the central act of worship for the church that Jesus purchased. There are three important parts of communion: the emblems, the day and the people with who it is taken. In this passage we are told that the emblems of communion are unleavened bread and fruit of the vine. In Acts 20:7 we are told that we take communion every first day of the week. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-34 we are told that we must take it with other Christians who are the local church. This is a sacred act which people who are Christians MUST partake in an appropriate manner. 1 Corinthians 11:27,29 *Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord..... For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.* (KJV)

#### **4. JESUS PREDICTS BEING FORSAKEN (27-31)**

Jesus and His disciples leave for the Mount of Olives. On the way, Jesus predicts that in just a few hours all of His disciples will leave Him, fulfilling prophecy. He also predicts His resurrection. Peter refutes this, declaring that he will not forsake Jesus. Jesus precisely predicts that Peter will deny Him not once, but three times before the night is over.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Peter's denial is an important part of the Gospel account. It reveals that even the most dedicate of disciples can fall away. ANYONE can fall away. We need to be on guard lest we fall away too

#### **5. JESUS PRAYS IN THE GARDEN (32-42)**

Jesus prays three times in the garden that He might be spared this terrible event. As He prays, His disciples fall asleep.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** We ought not to consider that Jesus was unwilling to do what was commanded. Let us instead consider that this sees that He did not desire to die, but desired to do what was right. This moment is summed up in Hebrews 5:7-8 *In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.*

#### **6. JESUS IS ARRESTED (43-52)**

Judas brings soldiers from the priests to arrest Jesus. He betrays Jesus with a kiss, and Jesus points out the ridiculous nature of this scene; soldiers were sent as though Jesus was a dangerous and elusive criminal. At this moment Jesus surrenders, and perhaps seeing that Jesus is not only not willing to fight, but has simply surrendered, His disciples flee. There is an anecdote of a young man fleeing and leaving his clothing; most presume that this is Mark himself.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Up until the end Jesus had control of the situation, and yet was willing to let others lead Him away.

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 14:53-15:15

In our last study we stopped at the arrest of Jesus. This now begins the portion of the Gospel which discusses the trial of Jesus. There are multiple critical points to be understood. First, remember that the Jews did not wish for Jesus to die during the Passover feast; the reason is that they feared the people. If they are going to murder Jesus, they need to have a plausible deniability. Second, they need Jesus to die in such a manner as to confirm that He was cursed by God and not by them.

Both of these issues are solvable in one manner: a Roman crucifixion. If the Romans are the ones to kill Jesus, then there is a separation between the actual murder and themselves. This is the plausible deniability. Second, if Jesus is crucified, this is in both Roman AND Jewish law the ultimate sign of a degenerate (Galatians 3:13, Deuteronomy 21:23). This is why there is suddenly a push for the crucifixion.

### 1. THE TRIAL BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST (53-65)

In the rush to capture Jesus the Jewish leaders (the High Priests, the Priests, and the Sanhedrin) failed to actually have a case against Him. They must work quickly to locate (false) witnesses to press their case for a capital offense. In John's Gospel an additional trial is related, as Jesus is first taken to Annas the Priest for trial, and then a second trial before Caiaphas the High Priest. During this trial false witnesses are produced, but of such of such a quality that they contradicted one another (claiming He had blasphemed the Temple). Finally, the High Priest brings Jesus under oath (Matthew 26:63, Leviticus 5:1), and Jesus answers the question: He is the Christ, the Son of God. The priests declare the trial settled and now push him to a penalty before the Romans.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Jesus' trial was completely illegal. The rules of Sanhedrin required any capital case to (1) be during daytime, (2) have verified witnesses, and (3) a 24 hour wait for judgment for (4) stoning. The prophet Isaiah related how the Messiah would not have a fair trial (Isaiah 53:8).

### 2. PETER'S DENIAL (66-72)

Peter's denial is recorded in all four accounts. Putting them together, we learn additional facts. First, Jesus had predicted this denial earlier. Second, Peter denied Jesus by his words, then with an oath, and finally with a curse. We learn that after the third denial Jesus looked out and saw Peter, and Peter saw Jesus. He then fled in tears.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** First, consider this as a lesson in the danger of following Jesus at a distance. Second, consider that Peter had been warned and still sinned. We are warned in Scriptures about sin, and need to heed the warnings. Third, when we begin down a path of denial it is harder and harder to turn around. Finally, even this terrible sin was forgiven. We can be forgiven of any sin we confess (1 John 5:9).

### **3. JESUS' TRIAL BEFORE PILATE (15:1-14)**

In the morning, after having abused Jesus considerably, the Jewish leaders bring Jesus before Pilate. In the record in Luke we find out that there were in fact two trials before Pilate; after the first, Pilate send Jesus to stand before King Herod (whom Jesus utterly refused to engage). Then Jesus came back to Pilate for a second trial.

The Gospel accounts are all clear with various details that Pilate did not wish to have Jesus executed. As mentioned before, the romans consider crucifixion a punishment only for extreme criminals. It was clearly puzzling to Pilate that the Jews wanted Jesus crucified. It is clear Pilate attempts a number of ways to have Jesus released. We are told that this was because he saw Jesus was innocent (and practically speaking, he could be held accountable for executing an innocent man); His wife sent him a note to release Jesus (Matthew 27); as he spoke to Jesus he became more and more convinced Jesus was no mere man.

Pilate seems to have tried a number of ways to have Jesus released while still appeasing the Jews. First, he declared Jesus innocent twice. When this did nothing, he has Jesus beaten and mocked as though to satisfy their hunger for blood. Pilate authorizes the Jews to execute Jesus themselves. Finally, he states he will release one prisoner for the feast, and offers the notorious prisoner Barabbas or Jesus. To Pilates shock, they choose Jesus to die. Yet even then Pilate resisted the execution. However, in John it is related that the Jews threatened Pilate by accusing him of treason (for supporting another king). Matthew states that when Pilate saw a riot rising, he acquiesces by washing his hands of the matter.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Pilate is one of the most mentioned men in the New Testaments. Jesus tells him a great deal in John in particular about His kingdom and His purpose. Pilate must have had a sense of the greatness of Jesus, yet he still gave in to the world. Pilate is an example of the ultimate evil men can do when people who know better give in.

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 15:15-47

In our last study we examined the five trials of Jesus. In the course of this time Jesus has been beaten, scourged, mocked, treated with contempt, spat upon, and insulted. IN EACH TRIAL! Although Jesus was found innocent on multiple occasions in the trial process, the ultimate decision by Pilate is that Jesus is to be crucified.

### 1. ABUSE BEFORE BEING CRUCIFIED (15-21)

Once the sentence was passed, Mark tells us that the Roman soldiers took Jesus into their area and continued to abuse Him. They (Herod's people) had clothed Him in purple, and hit him in the head with a reed. And outrageously mocked Him. When they were finished they sent Him out. By this time Jesus is likely to be beaten and abused to carry His cross; we are told that a Cyrenian named Simon was pressed into carrying it for Him.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Jesus has been accused and convicted of blasphemy. Ironically, the greatest acts of blasphemy in history are occurring right now, as God in the flesh is being taunted in a farce of worship.

### 2. JESUS IS PLACED ON THE CROSS (22-32)

Jesus was crucified on a place called "the Skull". In Aramaic it is called Golgotha, in Latin Calvary. It is not actually called a mountain or hill (though it is traditionally thought as such). He is brought there with two other criminals, offered wine with gall to drink, and His clothes were both divided and then cast lots for. All of these things were prophetic (Palm 69:21, Psalm 22:18, Isaiah 53:9). Jesus was insulted by the passersby, by the other criminals (although one would change his mind), and by His enemies, who saw His death on the cross as proof of divine displeasure (Isaiah 53:10).

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** On the cross was posted the crime for which Jesus died: being King of the Jews. When He was a little boy, Herod tried to kill Him for this (Matthew 2:2,16). Ultimately, Jesus died being guilty of His divine role.

### 3. JESUS' LAST WORDS (33-37)

Putting together the Gospel accounts, we understand that Jesus was crucified about 9AM. At Noon, darkness fell over all the land. This lasted until three PM, when He died. Mark's account only records one of the messages Jesus spoke on the cross. In total, He said seven things on the cross:

(1) *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."* Luke 23:34

(2) (To His mother and John): *"Woman, behold your son!" "Behold your mother!"* John 19:26.

(3) (To the thief on the cross): *"Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."* Luke 23:43

(4) *"I thirst!"* John 19:28-29 / Psalm 69

(5) *"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"* that is, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* Matthew 27:46 / Psalm 22

(6) *"It is finished!"* John 19:30

(7) *"Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'"* Luke 23:46 / Psalm 31

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Jesus' words reveal a great deal. Some are fulfillment of prophecy. Some reveal His divine person, while others contrast that with His human side too.

As well the darkness on the land is quite dramatic. Jesus was the light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5). When He died, in effect, the light died with Him.

#### **4. JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS (22-32)**

When Jesus died, a number of remarkable things happened. First, the Temple curtain tore in half. Second, there was a great earthquake, and rocks split and tombs opened. Third, some dead returned from the dead and appeared after Jesus' resurrection. Fourth, some of the Gentiles who saw this confessed Jesus as the Son of God.

Jesus' mother was present when He died, as well as John and some of the women who were His disciples. These women will be, the truest sense of the word, the first Evangelists (Good News Messengers) when Jesus arises in three days.

We are told in John that Jesus' body suffered one last humiliation on the cross; after His death a spear was driven into His heart.

As darkness descends, certain of Jesus' disciples (Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both Sanhedrin members) ask for the body to place it into a grave. His grave is unusual, being a brand new tomb.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** In regards to the tearing of the Temple veil, we are told later that Jesus tore the curtain that separated God from man (Hebrews 10:20). This also is symbolic of the death (or end) of the Law of Moses, as Jesus said would happen when "it was finished" (Matthew 5:17-18, Luke 22:37, Luke 24:44).

# Gospel of Mark

## Chapter 16

At the conclusion of Mark 15, Jesus of Nazareth was dead and buried in a new tomb. His disciples had scattered, and according to Matthew 27:64-66 His enemies, remembering His words about returning from the dead, have even stationed soldiers at the tomb to ensure nothing happens. It appears that all is lost. But this is not the end of the Gospel; this is the point where the Gospel is empowered.

### 1. THE FIRST WITNESSES (1-8)

A Sabbath (literally *rest*) was the last day of the week, which Jews were forbidden to work. It ended at sunrise, so this is when the women who had loyally followed Jesus came to adorn the body of Jesus. But on their arrival, the tomb is open, and Jesus is not the one inside (and the guards are missing or unconscious). Instead, there is a “man” who declared that Jesus was risen from the dead.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** There are many who claim that the original text of Mark ended here. This is an unreasonable (and unsupportable) claim, which would mean that Mark concluded without anyone actually seeing Jesus raised from the dead. The reason for this doubt is twofold: first, skeptics of the Bible claim Jesus was not raised, and those who reject baptism claim there was not command in Mark 16:16. However, the absence of this passage (in only two ancient manuscripts out of hundreds) does not indicate it is not original.

Second, we need to accept the idea that when Jesus (who is the first fruit of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20) and the model of our resurrection (1 John 3:2)) was raised in a bodily resurrection. This is why we say that when we die, we are not yet judged and taken to heaven; we await this resurrection in order to be taken before God in judgment.

Finally, one of the remarkable facts about the resurrection is that the first witnesses were the women who faithfully followed Jesus. These women might be counted as Jesus most faithful disciples; they constantly followed and served Him, all the way to His crucifixion. They are the first to see and testify to His resurrection. Yet in the Jewish court of the time, women were not permitted to make such a testimony. This reaches out to the characteristic that in Christ *there is neither..... male nor female, for you are all one in Christ* (Gal. 3:28).

### 2. JESUS APPEARS (9-13)

What follows in these passages is a summary of the various appearances of Jesus. These summaries are clarified at length in the other Gospel accounts. First, there is the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene that is recorded in John 20. She (and the other women who saw Him while returning) were not believed by the disciples.

Then Mark moves to Jesus appearing to some disciples on the road. This is likely the account recorded in Luke 24:13-33. There we see two disciples travelling to Emmaus, and Jesus joining them on the walk. As they travelled, they were unaware of the identity of Jesus, and they discussed at length the death of Jesus and what that meant. When they arrived, they broke bread, and at that moment realized that it was Jesus.

### **3. JESUS FINAL APPEARANCES (14-18)**

Finally, Mark notes the appearance of Jesus to the disciples in the upper room at the end of the day. This is found in both Luke and John. John tells us that a week later, on the next Sunday, Jesus again appeared to the apostles, this time with Thomas present. Next, according to Matthew and John, Jesus sent His disciples up to Galilee and met them there. He then directed them to return to Jerusalem, and again met them there. This is likely the point that Mark picks up at in verse 15, when Jesus gives them the great commission.

The Great Commission is the term we use to describe Jesus sending out His apostles and disciples to preach His word. He first informed them that all of the authority of heaven and earth was His (Matthew 28:18). This meant that the Kingdom had finally come; Jesus had prayed about this in Matthew 6:10 (*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*) This clarified Jesus had the authority to send men out in His name. Second, Jesus set the boundary of their mission: the entire planet. The Kingdom of Heaven had come, and its authority covered the entire earth. Third, the work they were to do was to teach all men the things that Jesus had taught them, and to make those people disciples by baptizing them. Finally, Jesus authorized His apostles to fulfill this commission by working signs and wonders.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** First, we cannot miss that the way to saved is to believe and be baptized. There is no way to suggest that belief alone saves us. At the same time, there is no way that baptism without belief saves us. Both **MUST** be present to be saved. This is the message preached throughout the book of Acts.

Second, let us understand that this commission was unique to the Apostles in regards to the work of establishing miracles in their teaching. This is the pattern revealed in Acts, and we are told that this was the signs of an apostles (2 Cor. 12:12).

### **4. JESUS ASCENDS (19-20)**

Mark closes with the ascent of Jesus into heaven. Jesus will appear 2 more times on earth (once to Paul, once to John). Yet we are told that He reigns as king from heaven (hence the authority on heaven and on earth), and reigns there until the end.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Some mistakenly believe that Jesus plans to return again and THEN establish a kingdom. This is not what the Bible teaches us. Jesus reigns in heaven NOW; His kingdom is NOW; and when He returns, it will be to gather His own and bring an end to all things:

*1 Corinthians 15:25-26 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.*

*Hebrews 10:12-13 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.*

