

NT Survey – (The Gospel) According to Mark
Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School
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Review

Israel endured 400 years of revelatory silence ("the silent years") until the events surrounding the birth of Christ, where the NT narrative picks up. These 400 years were a time of world-shaking events which would set the stage for the NT: Samaritans; civil power given to the high priest; Greek becomes *lingua franca*; Septuagint is written; Pharisees and Sadducees; *Pax Romana*; and the Roman road system. At the "proper time", after God had orchestrated world events, the Messiah is born (Titus 1:1-3; Gal 4:4-5).

NT (27)					
Gospels (4)	History (1)	Paul to Churches (9)	Paul to People (4)	General Letters (8)	Prophecy (1)
Matthew	Acts	Romans	1 Timothy	Hebrews	Revelation
Mark		1 Corinthians	2 Timothy	James	
Luke		2 Corinthians	Titus	1 Peter	
John		Galatians	Philemon	2 Peter	
		Ephesians		1 John	
		Philippians		2 John	
		Colossians		3 John	
		1 Thessalonians		Jude	
		2 Thessalonians			

Matthew – Written to Jews presenting Jesus as the promised King, the Messiah fulfilling prophecy. The account is wrapped around five discourses – extended teachings of Jesus.

Title and Author

The second Gospel is technically anonymous since the author does not name himself in the book. The title "according to Mark" (Kata Markon) was added later by a scribe, but is significant in that it shows the view of the early church. Early church tradition indicates Mark, Peter's interpreter and follower of Peter was the author of this gospel.

Papias (ca. AD 60 – 130), a disciple of the apostle John: "The elder said this also: **Mark, who became Peter's interpreter, wrote accurately, though not in order, all that he remembered of the things said or done by the Lord.** For he had neither heard of the Lord nor been one of his followers, but afterwards, as I said, he had followed Peter, who used to compose his discourses with a view to the needs of his hearers, but not as though he were drawing up a connected account of the Lord's sayings. So Mark made no mistake in thus recording some things just as he remembered them. For he was careful of this one thing, to omit none of the things he had heard and to make no untrue statements therein." (Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.39.15)

Irenaeus (ca. AD 115-200): "Now Matthew published among the Hebrews a written Gospel also in their own tongue, while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and founding the church. But after their death, **Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the things which were preached by Peter,** and Luke also, who was a follower of Paul, put down in a book the Gospel which was preached by him. Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who had even rested on his breast, himself also gave forth the Gospel, while he was living in Ephesus in Asia." (Against Heresies, 3.1.1-4)

Clement of Alexandria (ca. AD 150-215) as quoted by Eusebius: "Peter having publicly preached the word at Rome, and spoken forth the Gospel by the Spirit, many of those present exhorted **Mark, as having long been a follower of his, and remembering what he had said, to write what had been spoken; and that having prepared the Gospel,** he delivered it to those who had asked him for it; which when Peter came to the knowledge of, he neither decidedly forbade nor encouraged him." (*Ecclesiastical History*, 6.14)

The internal evidence is mostly circumstantial. The author was familiar with the geography of Palestine and Jerusalem. The author knew Aramaic and used Latin expressions and understood Jewish customs. The Gospel has a special tie to Peter as Mark did – special emphasis is given to Peter (16:7) and the similarity between Mark and Peter’s sermon in Acts 10:34-43.

Mark’s Jewish name was John; his Roman name was Mark. He was the son of Mary who owned the home where some believers met to pray for Peter’s release from prison (Acts 12:12). Mary’s home is traditionally where the Last Supper was held (Mark 14:15). Her home is also the probable place where the disciples met after the resurrection (John 20:19) and before Pentecost (Acts 1:13).

¹¹When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.” ¹²And when he realized *this*, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. Acts 12:12

Mark was the cousin of Barnabas and perhaps the spiritual son of Peter.

¹⁰Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and *also* **Barnabas’ cousin Mark** (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him); Col 4:10

¹³She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and *so does my son, Mark*. 1 Pet 5:13

Mark accompanied Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey. He later abandoned them.

²⁵And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, **taking along with them John, who was also called Mark**. Acts 12:25

⁵When they reached Salamis, they *began* to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and **they also had John as their helper**. Acts 13:5

¹³Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; **but John left them and returned to Jerusalem**. Acts 13:13

The commitment of Barnabas to Mark’s discipleship led to a separation between Barnabas and Paul.

³⁷Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. ³⁸But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and **Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus**. Acts 15:37-39

Late in Paul’s life, Mark was ministering to/with Paul in Rome; he considered him useful for service.

²³Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, ²⁴*as do* Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers. Philem 1:23-24

¹¹Only Luke is with me. **Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service**. 2 Tim 4:11

Date of Writing

Early church writings place Matthew as the first Gospel written – perhaps as early as AD 50. Acts was most likely written between AD 61-63, being written soon after the closing of Acts with Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome. Luke was written before Acts ~ AD 60. Mark was written before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 since no mention is made in the Gospel. Early church writings differ as to when Mark was written – before or after Peter’s death in AD 64-68. Mark was probably written between AD 50-70, most likely around the time of Peter’s death ~ early AD 60s.

Introduction

The Romans were the rulers of the known world, men of few words and much action. They have no knowledge of the OT or Jewish culture, therefore no interest in prophecies fulfilled or Messiahs given. They would, however, be interested in a leader claiming special authority and seeming to have supernatural power. Mark writes of a man who does not just speak, but Jesus, the servant of an all-powerful God, who acts. No genealogies, no prophesy, few words. Just a man of power, actions, and miracles, a man the Romans could admire and understand.

The theme of Mark is Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1:1), the Suffering Servant (10:45)

¹The beginning of the Gospel of **Jesus Christ, the Son of God**. Mark 1:1

⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to **serve, and to give His life a ransom for many**. Mark 10:45

Rome's Christians were terribly persecuted under Nero (54-68 AD). According to the early-second-century historian Tacitus, Nero burned Christians alive as torches to light his gardens at night. He killed other Christians in equally severe ways (e.g. feeding them to wild animals for public entertainment). Mark's Gospel would strengthen Roman believers in the midst of this persecution by showing how Jesus persevered in the face of opposition and continued in the will of the Father on the road to the cross. Also, Mark's Gospel encourages believers as they see the suffering servant triumph over death.

Outline

- I. Introduction of the Servant (1:1-13)
- II. The Service of the Servant (1:14-10:52)
 - A. Galilean Ministry (1:14-7:23)
 - B. Withdrawal with Disciples into Various Gentile Regions (7:24-8:26)
 - C. The Road to Jerusalem (8:27-10:52)
- III. The Sacrifice of the Servant (11:1-15:47)
- IV. The Success of the Servant (Resurrection) (16:1-20)

Summary

Introduction of the Servant (1:1-13)

1:1-8 – John the Baptist – Verse 1 is a verb-less sentence – a statement of title. Matthew and Luke begin with the birth and genealogies of Jesus. Mark skips these entirely since they do not fit with his purpose of presenting Jesus as the suffering Servant. The birth of a servant is uninteresting and a servant's lineage means nothing.

Beginning – Elsewhere in Scripture, Jesus' baptism by John is thought to be the starting point of the gospel – the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In Acts 1:21-22, the earthly ministry of Jesus is bounded by His baptism and ascension.

²¹Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—²²beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these *must* become a witness with us of His resurrection. Acts 1:21-22

Peter preaching to Cornelius in Acts 10:37 starts with the baptism.

³⁷you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. Acts 10:37

Jesus is Greek for the Hebrew Yeshua (Joshua) meaning Yahweh (the Lord) is salvation or the salvation of Yahweh (the Lord). This is the name given to Joseph by the angel in Matt 1:21. Christ is Greek for the Hebrew Messiah meaning Anointed One signifying His office as the ruler in God's coming kingdom and the Lord's Servant (Isa 52-53). "Son of God" is a statement by Mark affirming the deity of Jesus.

John Fulfills OT Prophecy. This is the only place that Mark refers to the OT, though Jesus quotes from it. This quote brings together Exodus 23:20 (LXX) and Malachi 3:1 (Heb) in verse 2 and Isaiah 40:3 (LXX) in verse 3. Because Mark was introducing the ministry of John the Baptist in the wilderness, he cited Isaiah as the source.

John appeared in the wilderness. This was the desolate arid region between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, some 20 miles from Jerusalem – a full day’s journey. A continuous stream of people from “all the country of Judea and all the people of Jerusalem” were traveling a long distance to hear John. He was preaching “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” as the people were “confessing their sins.”

Baptism here is an outward expression of what has already happened internally. It is a repentance-baptism indicating that repentance has taken place. This repentance is a turning from dead works and turning to God in faith (Heb 6:1). Linked to repentance is the confessing of sin – the open, willing, acknowledging or admitting that one has missed God’s perfect mark.

John’s clothing and diet was standard dress and food for a man living in the desert. Locusts and wild honey were the common diet in desert regions. John’s preaching contrasts himself with the coming Mighty One. **John so elevates the Servant that he sees himself as so low as to not be worthy to do the most menial task a slave could do.** John administered the outward sign of water baptism, but the coming One would give the Holy Spirit.

❖ **John clearly recognized his humble position before an all holy God. How high is my view of God? How low is my view of myself?**

1:9-13 – Jesus’ Baptism – Jesus comes from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Nazareth was an obscure village about 90 miles north of Jerusalem. John objected to baptizing Jesus (Matt 3:14). Jesus’ response was: “Permit *it* at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matt 3:13) “All righteousness” was refers to Jesus fulfilling the Father’s will for His son. Jesus’ baptism was not a symbol of His confession of sin, repentance, and salvation that the others who came to John experienced. Instead Jesus was identifying Himself with the sinners he came to save; pictures His death and resurrection; prefigured the significance of Christian baptism; marked His first public identification with those whose sins He would bear; and was a public affirmation of His Messiahship by testimony directly from heaven.

Mark’s account mentions only Jesus seeing the heavens opening and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him. However, the account in John 1:32-34 indicates John the Baptist also saw the Spirit descend. Luke mentions that the Spirit was in bodily form which would apparently be visible to all. The visible descending of the Spirit indicated Jesus’ empowerment for ministry. Jesus claimed this anointing in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:17-20). A voice came out of the heavens saying, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased” This pronouncement would remind the hearers of the Lord’s King and Servant. The tense of “am well-pleased” indicates that God is always pleased with the Son – no beginning or end. All three persons of the Trinity were involved in Jesus’ baptism. The Son was empowered by the Spirit and approved by the Father.

After His baptism, the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness. His first actions after His baptism was to confront the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Though not in Mark’s account, Jesus used the word in His victory over these temptations (Matt 4:1-11; Psa 119: 9, 11). A detail unique to Mark is the “wild beasts”, stressing the loneliness and harshness of the 40 days.

Mark only devotes two verses to the temptation where Matthew’s account is eleven and Luke’s is thirteen. Mark’s purpose is not to fully describe the account but to show that this event began a conflict with Satan that would end at Jesus’ victory at His resurrection.

The Service of the Servant – Galilean Ministry (1:14-7:23)

1:14-15 – Summary of Jesus’ Message – John had been taken into custody because he was rebuking Herod Antipas over his incestuous marriage to his niece. Jesus came into Galilee from Judea via Samaria. The timeline for Jesus’ ministry is:

Early Life	About 30 years	Birth and silent years
Public Presentation (2 ½ years)	3-6 months	Opening of the public ministry
	~6 months	Early Judean ministry
	~18 months	Great Galilean ministry
Private Preparation (1 year)	~6 months	Training of the twelve
	~6 months	In and around Jerusalem
Final Events	~6 weeks	Passion, resurrection, and ascension

Jesus’ Galilean ministry picks up in Mark 1:14. God’s dealings with man have entered a new era with the coming of the Servant-King. The Jews would have understood the kingdom of God to be God’s earthly rule. The King was at hand. God’s sovereign rule has two aspects: 1) God’s reign in the heart’s of His people and 2) God’s future reign in the literal earthly kingdom.

Man’s response to Jesus’ offer of the kingdom is to repent and believe. Repent here is a turning from dead works and turning to God in faith (Heb 6:1). The good news that the King is offering to set up His kingdom in individual’s hearts. Repentance and faith are required to enter the kingdom.

❖ **How sensitive am I to sin in my life? Does repentance come easily? (cf. Psalms 32 and 51)**

1:16-20 – Calling the First Disciples – Jesus demonstrates His power over individuals by calling the disciples to leave all to follow Him.

❖ **What do I hold back from Jesus?**

There are 37 separate miracles performed by Jesus recorded in the gospels: Matthew has 21; Luke has 22; John has 8; Mark has 20. All Jesus’ healings were immediate, complete, and visible to all.

1:21-28 – Curing a Demoniac – In Capernaum, Jesus enters a Synagogue and amazes the people because He teaches as one having authority. The scribes (scholars – professionally trained in the interpretation and application of the law) would quote other authorities. Jesus teaches directly without referring to outside authorities. This was so foreign that those present were amazed (astonished). There is a man with an unclean spirit in the synagogue. Jesus heals the man. His purpose in performing miracles was to prove His deity.

1:29-31 – Curing Simon’s Mother-in-Law – Peter’s mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever. Luke’s account (4:38) adds that this was a “high” fever. The fact that someone was lying down during an illness and not carrying on their normal duties indicated that she was seriously ill.

1:32-34 – Curing Many People – Word of Jesus’ healing of the demonic in the synagogue and Peter’s mother-in-law obviously spread to such an extent that “the whole city was gathered at the door”. Mark wants to emphasize the mighty power of Jesus in that He “healed many, and cast out many demons”. The demonstration of Jesus’ power authenticated His message (1:15), but Mark points out that the people were coming to gain something not simply to fall at the King’s feet.

1:35-39 – Withdrawal for Prayer and Preaching Tour in Galilee – Jesus apparently often or regularly spent purposed time alone with His Father (Mark 6:46; 14:32-39). Here after probably a late, physically exhausting day, He rises early while it is still dark for the purpose of prayer. The Capernaum crowds were probably seeking Jesus as a popular miracle-worker, but His purpose was to preach. Mark makes a short statement concerning the preaching tour through Galilee, but the tour probably lasted weeks or months.

1:40-45 – Curing a Leper – Mark chooses to include only one event from the preaching tour through Galilee. He does not need to relate the content of the preaching since it is primarily – “repent and believe in the gospel.” Leprosy could have been any serious skin disease ranging from ringworm to true leprosy (Hansen’s disease) – a progressively disfiguring disease. Lepers were considered ceremonially unclean (Lev 13:11) and social outcasts. Leprosy brought great physical, mental, social, and religious anguish. Jesus felt such “deep pity” that He reached out His hand in an act of compassion. Jesus could have healed this man by His word alone, but showed that He was not bound by ceremonial law. He placed love and compassion over ritual and regulation. Jesus commanded the man to “show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.” The testimony was that he had been cleansed, but also that an undeniable messianic sign had taken place. The priests may have accepted the leper’s cleansing, but would reject the One who did the cleansing.

❖ **Am I moved with “deep pity” and compassion?**

2:1-14 – Healing a Paralytic – After the tour through Galilee, Jesus is back at Peter’s home which was His base of operations (Matt 4:13). Jesus had left Capernaum to get away from the crowds to go out and preach in the towns. When it was heard that He was home the crowds gathered again.

The average home would have been one room with a flat roof used for relaxation and sleeping on hot nights. There was an outside stairway leading up to the roof. The roof was made of clay and branches supported on wooden beams. The capacity of the average Capernaum home may have allowed about fifty persons standing close together.

The paralytic was desperate. His paralysis was serious since he could not move with aid but had to be carried. The paralytic and his friends showed great faith by their persistent, aggressive effort to get to Jesus. True faith works; it moves us to action. The crowd was so thick and the people were so hanging on Jesus’ every word.

Jesus had probably been preaching about forgiveness of sins when He provided this opportunity for a teachable moment. “Son” is an affectionate address such as teacher to disciple. While this man came to Jesus for physical healing, Jesus first dealt with the man’s spiritual need. Sometimes we allow a felt need to take precedence over a true need. Regardless of the difficulties of life, the most important thing is our relationship with Jesus.

Jesus was making a claim to deity which was clearly understood by the Pharisees. “He is blaspheming”, the scribes thought only God can forgive sins (Isa 43:25); a fact that would have been clear to all who were listening. Jesus was “aware in His spirit”; a statement confirming Jesus’ omniscience. To “do” either is equally impossible for men, but possible for God. It would have been easier to say “Your sins are forgiven.” since nobody could prove whether or not the man’s sins were indeed forgiven. So Jesus healed the paralytic to demonstrate that He could do either just as easily. Jesus performed a miracle that only God can perform. Since they could not see the forgiveness He performed a miracle that they could see.

❖ **What “needs” do I place first in my life over a relationship with Jesus?**

2:13-17 – Calling Matthew – Once again Mark does not elaborate on the specific content of Jesus’ teaching. Jesus spent much of His time near water where His disciples were baptizing (John 4:1-3). Jesus calls Levi and he “left everything behind, and got up and *began* to follow Him” (Luke 5:28). Jesus was not a separatist. He came to save those separated from their Creator by sin. Jesus was condemning the Pharisees by telling them that they, as supposedly physicians, had abandoned those who needed healing.

❖ **Do I live separated from sinners with no opportunity to share the gospel?**

2:18-23 – Controversy Over Fasting and Parables of Cloth and Wineskin – Fasting, denying oneself sustenance for a time, should be done as a result of deep concern, mourning, and sorrow over some spiritual need. It is an act of discipline that allows the believer to focus the mind on the Lord. It should be done privately in humility (Matt 6:16-18).

In the OT, only the annual Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur – Lev 16:29) was specified as a fast. It is not necessary to lump John’s disciples into the same category as the Pharisees in observing fasts. John was “...preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” The “Great Fast” on the Day of Atonement was associated with repentance so it seems natural that John and his disciples would “often fast” (Luke 5:33). The Pharisees on the other hand promoted voluntary fasts twice a week (cf. Luke 18:12) in an outward display of supposed godliness. In fact, since it was done to be seen by men from hearts not devoted to God “they had their reward in full” (Matt 6:16).

Jesus then responds in a parable emphasizing the joy of being with the Great Physician. It is impossible for the disciples to be sorrowful, and thus fast, while Jesus was with them, but one day He would be taken away and they would be filled with sorrow. Jesus follows up His teaching on fasting with two parables illustrating the difference between Jesus’ relationship-religion and the Pharisee’s external-religion. The two are not compatible.

If an unshrunk patch is placed on a shrunken garment, the patch will shrink – the garment will not shrink causing a worse tear than the first. The two are not compatible. In the same way, Jesus’ new and internal gospel of forgiveness and cleansing cannot be attached to the old and external traditions of self-righteousness and ritual. MacArthur’s NT Commentary: Matthew 8-15

Old wineskins have already been stretched due to the expanding, fermenting wine and have become brittle. When new wine is placed in old wineskins the wineskins will burst due to the expanding wine. The two are not compatible. Jesus’ new teaching of an inward change that comes about by repentance from dead works and faith in Him is not compatible with the Pharisaic supposed God-pleasing external traditions.

❖ Do I have any “law” baggage?

2:23-28 – Controversy Over Sabbath Work – The specific time and place of this event is not provided by Mark. According to Pharisaic tradition, there were 39 acts forbidden on the Sabbath. One of them was reaping which was probably extracted from Ex 34:21.

²¹“You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; *even* during plowing time and harvest you shall rest. Ex 34:21

What Jesus and His disciples were doing was allowed in the Mosaic Law.

²⁵“When you enter your neighbor’s standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor’s standing grain. Deut 23:25

Jesus instructs the Pharisees from 1 Sam 21:1-6. He sarcastically asks them if they had read the account which they certainly had, but without understanding what it had taught. The bread of the Presence was baked weekly, and each Sabbath twelve fresh loaves (representing the twelve tribes) replaced the previous ones, which could be eaten only by the priests. On that particular occasion, however, an exception was made on behalf of David and his men, who were weak from hunger. God was not offended by that act, and He did not discipline either Abimelech or David. The Lord was willing for a ceremonial regulation to be violated when doing so was necessary to meet the needs of His beloved people. God instituted the Sabbath as a day of rest for man (Ex 20:8-11). The Pharisees then twisted it and made it a day of burden.

“Son of Man” is used some 80 times in the Gospels to refer to Jesus. This was Jesus’ favorite self-designation. It originated in the OT (Dan 7:13-14), was used during the intertestamental period, and was chosen by Jesus to define His messianic mission. However, the Jews did not understand that the Messiah must first suffer. Jesus claimed He was greater than the Sabbath. He claimed to be God.

3:1-6 – Controversy Over Sabbath Healing – This is the last in a five event account of Jesus in conflict with the Jewish religious leaders ending with them seeking to destroy Jesus.

- Conflict over forgiving the paralytic’s sins
- Conflict over dining with tax collectors and sinners
- Conflict over fasting
- Conflict over picking grain on the Sabbath
- Conflict over healing on the Sabbath

Jesus entered again into a synagogue. The specific time and place of this event is again not specified by Mark, though in or around Capernaum is a likely place. In the synagogue was a man with a withered hand (dried up; wasted away). Luke adds that it was the man’s right hand (Luke 6:6). The scribes and Pharisees (Luke 6:7) were watching Him to see if He would heal. Their purpose in the synagogue was not to worship but to spy on Jesus. The question in the Pharisees’ minds was not “if Jesus *could*” heal, but “if Jesus *would*” heal. The fact that Jesus has proven to them that He is the Messiah does not cross their minds. They are seeking to accuse Him. Rabbinic law allowed healing on the Sabbath only if a life was in danger. The Pharisees were consumed with the man-made legal issue of healing on the Sabbath. Jesus confronts them with the moral issue. Clearly it was “lawful” to only do good. The Pharisees kept silent since their position held no merit.

Jesus looked around at them with anger. This is the only explicit statement of Jesus being angry though His anger is seen when He clears the temple. This anger is a righteous indignation over sin. The Pharisees were consumed with hatred instead of compassion. He was grieved at their hardness of heart – a continuing feeling of deep sorrow. The Son of God had come to give His life a ransom for many and yet His chosen people rejected their redeemer.

❖ **Do I have more righteous indignation for other people’s sin than my own?**

The Pharisees went out and immediately *began* conspiring *as to* how they might destroy Him. Jesus poses a threat to the Pharisees’ religious power. Because they wanted to destroy Jesus so badly, they were willing to join their enemies, the Herodians.

3:7-12 – Jesus Teaches and Heals Great Multitudes – After the five conflicts with the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus withdraws to “the sea” of Galilee – away from Capernaum. Matthew’s account includes that Jesus withdrew because He was aware of the Pharisee’s plots against Him (Matt 12:15). It was not yet His time to give His life a ransom for many and so He withdrew from the Pharisees and Herodians. Jesus withdrew with His disciples. This was perhaps not necessarily the twelve since they were not selected as a distinct group until Mark 3:13-21.

A “great multitude” followed Jesus composed of people from Galilee (west of Capernaum); Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea (south of Capernaum); beyond the Jordan (east of Capernaum), and Tyre and Sidon (north of Capernaum). The number of the crowd is unknown, but it could possibly have numbered in the thousands (Mark 6:34). Only Mark includes the detail of the boat. This shows how frantic the crowd was to have their afflictions taken away. If the crowd were to become unruly Jesus could step into the boat and push off shore.

Unlike the crowds who were after a healing yet apparently not recognizing Jesus as the divine Son of God, the demons recognized Him immediately and fell down before Him. This is the only response to those who comprehend His true nature.

❖ **How do I respond to Jesus?**

3:13-19 – Jesus Chooses the Twelve – Jesus went up on the mountain. Luke’s account tells us that Jesus prayed all night before summoning His disciples (Luke 6:12-13). Apparently more than the twelve went up onto the mountain. After choosing the twelve, Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount.

❖ **When faced with decisions, how committed am I to prayer?**

3:20-21 – Opposition of Jesus’ Family – Jesus comes home; back to Capernaum to the house of Simon and Peter. There was such a large crowd demanding Jesus and the disciple’s full attention that they could not even take care of their own physical needs. When Jesus’ family (own people) heard that His work so dominated His life that He was not able to properly care for Himself, they came to “take custody” or arrest Him. His family believed Him to be irrational. A period of time elapses before v31 picks up with His family arriving to “take custody of Him”.

❖ **How hard am I working for the kingdom?**

3:22-30 – Opposition of the Scribes / The Unpardonable Sin – The scribes came down from Jerusalem indicating that the claims and works of Jesus were causing concern in the religious center of Palestine. The religious leaders were saying that Jesus was the lord of demons. Jesus responds to the accusations in parables. He has cast out demons and is destroying the work of Satan. If Satan is doing good instead of evil, then he is working against himself and he would be finished. However, Satan is not finished. He is the ruler of this present world system. Therefore, Jesus is not in league with Satan. There is no sin or ignorant blasphemy that cannot be forgiven through repentance and faith. However, by attributing the clear work of God to Satan means one has completely hardened their heart and has rejected the truth.

3:31-35 – Jesus’ New Family Relationships – Jesus does not demand forsaking earthly family relationships, but He does say that the relationship we share with Him is intimate and personal and takes priority over other relationships. Those that have been called by God into His family, empowered to live Christ’s life and seek to please Him are doing His will.

❖ **How close am I to my brothers and sisters in Christ? Am I seeking to do the will of God?**

4:1-2 – Parables – Similar to 3:7-9, the crowd was so large that this time Jesus actually got into the boat while the crowd stood on the shore. Jesus sat down either because this was a typical position for teaching or simply because the boat was rocking. Jesus was teaching them “many things in parables”, though only four are given by Mark. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” means “If you can understand it, then understand it”; if you have the spiritual capacity (relationship with the King) to understand this, then take it in and be changed by it.

4:10-12 – Purpose of Parables – This explanation and the interpretation of the previous parable took place later than these four parables were taught. Not just the twelve were taught privately here but “His followers”. The mystery of the kingdom is give graciously to those whom God chooses for salvation. Those who are outside (or do not have a saving relationship with the King) are not permitted heart application of the Kings words. Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 as an explanation of why He teaches the crowds in parables. John gave a progression of heart hardening in John 12:36-41.

³⁷But though He had performed so many signs before them, *yet they were not believing* in Him.

³⁸*This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?”* ³⁹For this reason **they could not believe**, for Isaiah said again, ⁴⁰“HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM.” John 12:37-41

Many in the crowd had heard and seen wondrous things from Jesus, yet refused to believe in Him – “they were not believing”. These individuals had the opportunity to believe yet willfully rejected Jesus and continued in unbelief. After they had chosen to harden their own hearts, God then “judiciously hardened” their hearts so they “could not believe”.

Willful human rejection leads to divine judicial rejection. When a man says no to God, God says no to that person. God confirms men in their stubbornness, and binds them with their own chains of unbelief. MacArthur's NT Commentary: Matthew 8-15

4:3-8; 13-20 – The Sower and Soils – The true believer will bear fruit. The usual harvest was less than 10 fold. Therefore, when Jesus says, “thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.” He is saying that it will be a huge yield. The believer bears fruit by abiding in Christ (worshipping / being filled with the Spirit).

⁵“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. John 15:5

❖ **Am I bearing much fruit – in my own life; in the body of Christ; with unbelievers?**

4:21-25 – The Lamp – Jesus uses a lamp to picture the believer’s fruitfulness (good works) (Matt 5:14-16; Luke 8:16-17). We are not meant to be Christians in the dark. We are meant to glorify God by displaying His character in our lives.

¹⁸Then Moses said, “I pray You, show me Your glory!” ¹⁹And He said, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.” Ex 33:18-19

The more one applies the truth they have, the more they will be given. If someone does not apply the truth they have then that will be taken away.

❖ **Am I a doer of the Word?**

4:26-29 – The Growing Seed – This parable is unique to Mark. It pictures the gospel at work in a properly prepared heart (v20) leading to salvation. The word is sown with purpose in Spirit prepared hearts. The word will always accomplish the purpose for which it is sent forth.

¹¹So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it. Isa 55:11

The sower’s role is to sow and harvest. Growth is not his responsibility and how it happens is not understood, but growth does happen and when the time is ready he works to bring in the harvest.

❖ **Am I sowing and harvesting?**

4:30-32 – The Mustard Seed – The mustard seed was the smallest seed sown in Palestine grown specifically for eating. It takes over 21,000 mustard seeds to weigh one ounce – that is 340,000 in one pound! The mustard seed could reach a height of 12-15 feet in weeks. The kingdom will begin small and then become very large. It will become widespread and influential.

4:33-34 – Summary Statement on Parables – Mark makes it clear that there were many other parables that Jesus taught. Here He only gives a representative sample. On these occasions He only taught in parables to the general crowds, but would explain everything to His disciples privately.

4:35-41 – Jesus Calms the Sea – Jesus has just finished an extensive teaching session. We do not know how long this session was, but it may have been extensive like in Mark 8:2 (three days). This event occurred at evening on the same day, on the same seashore, in the same boat that Jesus had just taught through parables. Jesus wanted to take the boat across the Sea of Galilee, perhaps to escape the crowd and rest with the disciples. There were other boats whose fate is unknown.

The boat was experiencing a fierce gale of wind and the waves were breaking over the boat. The boat was sinking and Jesus was sleeping through this hurricane! This is the only place in the Gospels where Jesus is said to have slept and clearly shows His humanity. He must have been exhausted from the day of teaching to sleep through such a storm. The disciples yelled at Him for His apparent indifference to their dire situation. This shows that the disciples had placed limitations on who they believed Jesus to be. He could heal, cast out demons, and forgive sin, but they do not believe Him to be able to manipulate the very nature He created. Jesus tells the wind to be quite (and remain so).

Jesus rebuked the disciples for not believing who He claimed to be and was demonstrating He was. The disciples became very much afraid (lit “feared a great fear). The same word is to describe the reaction of the women who saw the empty tomb after they had been spoken to by an angel (16:8). It is an awe that overtakes people in the presence of supernatural power. Who is this? Through any storm of life we can “sleep” (not worry) because our creator is with us.

❖ **Are God’s promises real to me in the difficulties of life?**

5:1-20 – Healing the Gerasene Demoniak – Jesus and the disciples reached the other side of the sea. Mark only describes one man, telling of the more violent one, though there were two (Matt 8:28). The man, no longer able to live with other people, was living in caves that also served as tombs. He was uncontrollable, incredibly strong, continually crying out in torment, and self-mutilating himself. The demons recognized Jesus, ran to Him, and bowed before Him – not in worship, but to beg for mercy. They knew the nature of Jesus and that He had the power to condemn them to the abyss (Luke 8:31). This would mean an early beginning to their eternal torment and the end of their liberty to serve Satan on earth. The demons said that their name was Legion, for they were many. A Roman legion could be as many as 6,000 men. Jesus could have sent the demons anywhere; but He chose to send them into the pigs to demonstrate that the demons were real, they had actually left the man, that the deliverance was genuine, and that Satan’s desire is to destroy anything in God’s creation. The gentiles from Gersa came because they were curious. When they saw the proof they became frightened, yet still cared more about the herd’s destruction than the Deliverer of the demoniacs. The demoniac was the first missionary to the gentiles, proclaiming in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him.

❖ **Do I bow in worship of Jesus? Do I proclaim what great things Jesus has done for me?**

5:21-24 – Jairus’ Plea – Jesus and the disciples crossed back to the western side of the Sea of Galilee; probably back to Capernaum. He had been asked to leave on the eastern side, but here a large crowd greeted Him. Jairus was a synagogue official responsible for the administration of the synagogue and supervising the worship. He was probably a well respected leader in the community. Since the religious leaders of Israel were plotting to destroy Jesus it took great courage and faith for Jairus to come forward and prostrate himself before Jesus begging for his only (Luke 8:42) daughter’s life. Jairus had a great need that could only be met in Jesus. True faith moves us to action regardless of the consequences. Jesus could have healed the girl from a distance (like the centurion’s servant in Matt 8:5-13), but chose to go with Jairus to increase the faith of those who were present.

❖ **What are some areas that I am holding back in?**

5:25-34 – Healing a Woman with a Hemorrhage – This unnamed woman had been bleeding for twelve years. The specifics of her ailment are not given, but most likely some sort of uterine disease. This hemorrhage would make her ritually unclean according to Lev 15:25-27, ostracizing her from the rest of Jewish society. This woman had suffered immensely, endured much, and spent much to get well, yet had gotten worse. She had a desperate need that only Jesus could meet. The woman came to Jesus in faith and was completely healed. Jesus sought the women to confirm to her that her faith was the reason she was “made well” and not that she had touched His clothes.

“Made well” is the same Greek word often translated “to save” and is the normal NT word for saving from sin, which strongly suggests that the woman’s faith also led to spiritual salvation.
MacArthur Study Bible Page 1469

5:35-43 – Raising Jairus’ Daughter – The sovereign delay to heal the woman saw the death of Jairus’ daughter. The messengers, thinking that death was final, told Jairus to not bother Jesus any longer.

Jesus “refused to listen” to the messengers and instead issued a command to “keep on believing”. He had already exercised faith in coming to Jesus, he had seen the relationship between faith and Jesus’ power (Mark 5:25-34); now he was exhorted to believe that Jesus could restore his lifeless daughter. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: NT

When life is difficult and things seem to be falling apart around us, all we can do is cling to God’s “precious and magnificent promises” (2 Pet 1:4). Jesus took His inner circle of Peter, James, and John with Him to witness this miracle. These three were also chosen to witness the transfiguration (9:1-8) and His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (14:33). When Jesus arrived He found a “commotion” with the family, friends, and hired mourners “loudly weeping and wailing”. The family and mourners knew that the girl was dead. Jesus states that he condition is temporary.

This is such an awesome event that Mark preserves Jesus’ Aramaic words and translates them for his Roman readers. The five present were “out of their minds with great amazement”. Jesus gave two directions after resurrecting the girl. He did not want His public ministry to be hampered by crowds coming to Him for the wrong reasons. The second showed His compassion for the girl and the fact that she was resurrected in a natural body that still required nourishment.

❖ **Is God’s word great encouragement in difficult times for me?**

6:1-6a – Last Visit to Nazareth and Rejection – Jesus travels about 20 miles southwest to His hometown of Nazareth after raising Jairus’ daughter in Capernaum. Following Jesus’ baptism and temptation, He returned to Nazareth where He was rejected and the townspeople attempted to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:16-28). The reaction during this last visit to Nazareth was similar. Jesus brought His disciples with Him to give them a ministry example before they were sent out on their own. As was His custom, He entered the synagogue and began to teach. The listeners were “astonished” – the same as in Capernaum (1:22). This astonishment soon gave way to the “who does He think He is” attitude – how could a mere carpenter teach and perform miracles.

Jesus is called derogatorily the “Son of Mary”. A man was not described as his mother’s son in Jewish usage even if she was a widow, except by insult. His response to the townspeople’s offense was to state a proverb: “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his *own* relatives and in his *own* household” meaning “familiarity breeds contempt”. There was no limitation on Jesus’ power. Jesus sovereignly chose to perform miracles in the presence of faith. Jesus was “astonished” at their unbelief since they claimed to know Him so well.

Their refusal to believe in Jesus pictured what the disciples would soon experience (cf. 6:7-13) and what Mark’s readers (then and now) would experience in the advance of the gospel. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: NT

6:6b – Jesus’ Third Teaching Tour Through Galilee – Jesus’ first tour is summarized in Mark 1:35-39:

³⁵In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left *the house*, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. ³⁶Simon and his companions searched for Him; ³⁷they found Him, and said* to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.” ³⁸He said* to them, “Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for.” ³⁹And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons. Mark 1:35-39

Jesus’ second tour is summarized in Luke 8:1-3:

¹Soon afterwards, He *began* going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, Luke 8:1

This teaching tour sets the stage for sending out the twelve.

6:7-13 – Sending the Twelve Two-by-Two – Jesus summoned the twelve from among the disciples that were following Him. The disciples were sent out in pairs for mutual encouragement and to meet the Jewish legal requirement for a witness (Deut 19:15) and were given authority over unclean spirits and to heal (they were given the means to authenticate Jesus message). They were to take nothing – no bread, no bag, no money, only one tunic – they were to trust completely for their provision.

The two concessions of a staff and sandals are unique to Mark. Both are forbidden in Matthew 10:9-10, and the staff is forbidden in Luke 9:3. Matthew used [ktaomai] (“to procure, acquire”), instead of [airo] (“to take”); so the disciples were not to acquire *additional* staffs or sandals—but to use the ones they already had. Mark and Luke both use [airo], “to take or carry along.” But Luke says, “Take nothing for the journey—no staff [rhabdon],” presumably no additional staff; while Mark says, “Take nothing for the journey **except** (cf. Mark 6:5) a staff [rhabdon],” presumably the one already in use. Each writer stressed a different aspect of Jesus’ instructions. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: NT

If they were not received in a place, then they were to “shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.” Jews would carefully remove the dust from their feet when leaving Gentile region and reentering Jewish territory. This symbolically showed those that had rejected the gospel that they were spiritually like Gentiles. The disciples 1) preached repentance, 2) cast out many demons, and 3) healed many sick people. Anointing with oil is unique to Mark’s account and indicated that the disciples were acting by Jesus’ authority and power, not their own.

❖ **When presenting the gospel, do I rely on my own wisdom or the Spirit’s power?**

6:14-29 – John’s Fate Recalled – Herod Antipas was not “king”, but Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. Mark probably used the title reflecting that he was the ruler of Galilee and Perea. Mark relates three views as to who Jesus was: 1) John the Baptist risen from the dead, 2) Elijah, or 3) a prophet. Herod, plagued by guilt, was convinced that it was John.

Mark 6:17-29 then brakes from the account of Jesus to relate the death of John in a “flashback”. John had repeatedly rebuked Herod for marrying his half-niece Herodias. Herodias was the daughter of Herod’s half-brother Aristobulus. She had divorced his half-brother Philip. Herodias “had a grudge” against John (lit., “had it in for him”). She was waiting for the opportunity, “a strategic day” to destroy him and the banquet was her chance.

6:30-32 – The Apostles Return – The apostles (delegates, messengers) returned from their missionary journey and reported all that they had done (casting out demons and healing) and taught. The learning process includes acquiring knowledge, practicing, and evaluating efforts.

“Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.” – Each of us require time alone with Jesus to be refreshed and reflect on what He is teaching us. Here Jesus was attempting to physically remove themselves to a secluded place (desert or wilderness), away from the crowds that would not even allow them time to eat, let alone relax. They probably sailed from Capernaum to the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee.

❖ **Do I take time to evaluate what God is teaching me and how I am responding to His word?**

❖ **Do I work to exhaustion, but then take time to be refreshed in my relationship with God?**

6:33-44 – Five Thousand Fed – Some people were able to run the ~8 miles on land and arrive ahead of the boat making the ~4 mile trip across the sea. Along the way the runners gathered a large crowd from all the cities. Jesus and His disciples were trying to get away to relax together. Jesus could easily have felt annoyance at the incessant crowd, but instead felt compassion. They were like a “sheep without a shepherd”, helpless and in need of care, nourishment, and protection. The disciples did not get it and thought that they were to spend 200 denarii on food (one denarii was the average daily wage for a farm laborer; 200 denarii was roughly 8 months wages).

When an accounting of the available food was taken it came up as five loaves and two fishes. The loaves were small, flat, barley (John 6:9) loaves. Jesus commanded the crowd to sit down on the green grass; indicating it was spring before the grass turned brown during summer.

There is no explanation for this event other than a miracle. How the miracle itself took place is not stated, but the imperfect tense of the verb “gave” indicates the bread multiplied in Jesus’ hands. All 5000 men along with an unspecified number of women and children ate and were satisfied. In addition, there were twelve baskets of leftovers, more than the original five loaves and two fish.

6:45-52 – Jesus Walks on Water – Jesus “made” (lit. compelled) the disciples to get in the boat and leave. John’s account (John 6:15) explains that the crowd was intending to make Him king by force.

The disciples were sailing to Bethsaida from the northeastern shore when they were blown off course to the south toward Gennesaret south of Capernaum. Assuming a near full moon, Jesus could have seen the boat well out on the lake. At about the fourth watch (3 to 6 AM by Roman reckoning), Jesus came to them walking on the stirred up sea amidst a strong wind (John 6:18). All the disciples saw Jesus and were terrified. Jesus immediately encouraged them by His words. While they all were afraid, Peter was the only one who desired to go to Jesus on the water.

²⁸Peter said to Him, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” ²⁹And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

³⁰But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said* to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” Matt 14:28-31

When Jesus entered the boat, the wind stopped and the boat was immediately at the land (John 6:21).

There are four miracles in this account 1) Jesus walks on water, 2) Peter walks on water, 3) the sea is calmed, and 3) the boat is translated to land. The disciples were utterly astonished. The day’s events had done nothing to open their minds and hearts to Jesus’ nature; “for they had not gained any insight from the *incident of the loaves*, but their heart was hardened.”

❖ **Am I surprised when I see God accomplish great things through, around, or in-spite of me?**

7:1-13 – Conflict with Pharisees/True worship – This section returns to the conflict between Jesus and the “religious” elite of Israel even as He enjoyed public popularity. Another group of religious leaders came from Jerusalem (cf. 3:22) as they heard of His deeds and teaching. Jesus had many confrontations with the Jewish religious leaders (cf. 2:6, 2:16; 2:18; 2:18; 3:6; 3:22). The Pharisees had seen that Jesus’ disciples were not obeying the “tradition of the elders”. They were eating with ceremonially impure (unwashed) hands. It had nothing to do with hygiene, but denoted whatever was contaminated according to religious rituals. Verses 3-4 is a paraphrase by Mark to explain the Jewish customs to his Roman, Gentile readers.

Jesus condemns the Pharisees as hypocrites. A hypocrite is “an actor, a pretender”; a spiritual phony; one who puts on a mask and feigns himself to be what he is not. Jesus explains the heart of hypocrisy by quoting Isa 29:13 (LXX).

...honor with lips... ...heart is far from Me... ...vain worship... ...precepts of men...

The Pharisees honored the Lord with their lips (outwardly), but inwardly their heart (devotion, commitment) was far from Him. They had rejected the “Shema” (Deut 6:4-5).

⁴“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Deut 6:4-5

Their worship had become “vain” (futile, useless, of no purpose) and they were teaching the commands of men in the place of God’s Word. Hypocrites cannot worship God. Hypocrisy comes from a proud, self-righteous heart. True worship comes from a heart that is broken before the Lord.

¹⁶For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. ¹⁷**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.** Psa 51:16-17

Jesus gave one of “many such” examples of abandoning the command of God. Hypocrites neglect (abandon) the Word and hold to man-made traditions – they become experts at it.

❖ **Are there areas in my life that I am a hypocrite? Are there areas where I am legalistic?**

7:14-23 – The Sinful Heart – The Pharisees’ obsession with external piety led Jesus to clarify where the sin problem was – in the heart. Whatever proceeds from a person has its beginning in that person. Even though the OT prophets stated the sinfulness of the heart clearly, the Pharisees’ man-made religion focused on the external because it could do nothing to change the heart. A Jew who did not observe the OT laws regarding clean and unclean food was defiled because his heart was hard in disobedience – not because of the food. After leaving the crowd, privately the disciples asked concerning the nature of the heart. Food enters the stomach and then is eliminated. It does nothing to the moral center of a person.

The general term translated “evil thoughts” precedes the verb in the Greek text and is viewed as the root of the various evils which follow. Evil thoughts generated in a heart unite with one’s will to produce evil words and actions. The first group of six emphasizes evil deeds: fornications (sexual immorality), thefts, murders, adulteries (marital unfaithfulness), deeds of coveting (insatiable cravings for what belongs to another), and wickedness (depravity, evil purposes and desires – the many ways evil thoughts express themselves). The second group of six emphasizes evil character: deceit (cunning maneuvers designed to ensnare someone for one’s personal advantage), sensuality (lewdness, unrestrained and unconcealed/shameless immoral behavior), envy, slander, pride, foolishness (moral and spiritual insensitivity).

The heart, the essence of a each person, is corrupted by sin. We are hopelessly lost and not able to do anything by ourselves that can make us right before God. We are not able to choose or do anything that is acceptable to God apart from His grace. The Scriptures describe each person as a sinner (Rom 3:23); having a wicked heart (Jer 17:9); not seeking God (Rom 3:10-12); separated from God (Isa 59:2); a slave of sin (Rom 6:15-23); dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the ways of Satan, a child of wrath (Eph 2:1-3); father is the devil (John 8:44); blinded by Satan (2 Cor 4:3); under the domain (authority; house) of darkness (Col 1:13); under the power of Satan (1 John 5:19); and under the wrath of God (John 3:36).

There is only one cure for this condition – the Gospel.

¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16

If we have already repented and believed in the Gospel, then our goal is to walk in obedience and in opposition to the wickedness in our hearts. This involves: recognizing and repenting of sin (Eph 4:30), yielding to God in every area of life (1 Thess 5:19), and immersion in the Word (Eph 5:18-21 and Col 3:16-4:1).

❖ **What areas of my heart need to be given over to God in obedience in repentance?**

The Service of the Servant – Withdrawal with Disciples into Various Gentile Regions (7:24-8:26)

These accounts in Gentile territory are Jesus' only time outside of Palestine during His ministry.

7:24-30 – Healing the Syrophenician Woman's Daughter – Jesus left Capernaum to go to the region of Tyre and Sidon (many manuscripts add Sidon). He did not go there to minister to the Gentiles, but to get away from the Pharisees and spend time instructing His disciples. Yet His popularity extended even to the Gentiles. A Gentile woman came and begged Jesus to heal her daughter. She was from Phoenicia which was a part of Syria and Mark stresses that she was not Jewish. When Jesus was near this woman her response was to “immediately” fall at His feet.

This woman “kept asking”; she persisted in her pleading for Jesus to heal her daughter. Jesus' response to the woman's pleading was “Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.” The “children” could be the disciples whom Jesus was desiring to minister to privately, but more likely refers to Jews who were the first recipients of the Gospel (Rom 1:16). “Dogs” is not the common derogatory term used of Gentiles, but little dogs (puppies) used of household pets.

“Yes, Lord” – this is the only time that Jesus is referred to as “Lord” in Mark. The woman realized her undeserving position before Jesus and humbly asked for a crumb of grace. Because of the humble faith that relied on Jesus' grace, Jesus granted the woman's request and healed her daughter. “Has gone” indicates that the demon was gone even as Jesus told the woman.

❖ Do I kneel before Jesus begging for crumbs of grace?

7:31-37 – Healing the Deaf Mute – This miracle is recorded only in Mark. Mark included it because it was a miracle on Gentile territory and would have been of particular interest to his Roman readers. A man was brought to Jesus who was deaf and spoke with “difficulty”. This is the only use of this word in the NT and is only used once in the OT LXX in Isaiah 35:6 when speaking of the Millennial Kingdom. The miracles of Jesus during His earthly ministry were only a foretaste of the blessings to come during Messiah's earthly rule.

Jesus uses a form of sign language to communicate with the deaf mute. He touched the man's ears to indicate he would open them. He spat (on the ground) and touched the man's tongue to indicate that He would restore the man's speech. He looked up to heaven to indicate that God would heal the man. And a deep sigh indicating that the man should exercise faith. Mark interprets Aramaic for his Roman readers. “Ephphatha!” (*ehf' fuh thuh*) means “be completely opened”. This word could easily be lip-read by a deaf person. This Aramaic word may indicate that the man was not a Gentile.

Jesus wanted the news about Him to be contained so the He could still easily accomplish His mission. Jesus wanted them to remain silent yet they would not. **He wants us to proclaim the Good News and yet we remain silent!** The people were “utterly astonished”.

8:1-10 – Feeding the 4000 – During Jesus ministry in the Decapolis, a large crowd gathered and had been with Him for three days without anything to eat. Jesus felt compassion for the crowd and did not want to send them away to get food because they were weak. The crowd had been with Him to be fed by His words, now Jesus will provide for their physical need as well. When Jesus started “giving” the bread and fish to the disciples, He literally “kept on giving”. The “seven large baskets” are the same type of basket used to lower Paul in Damascus (Acts 9:25). The seven large baskets here are probably more leftovers than the 12 baskets full in the feeding of the 5000 (Mark 6:43). 4000 men were fed (Matt 15:38) so the total could have been ~16,000.

After dismissing the crowd, Jesus left the Decapolis with His disciples. Crossing the Sea of Galilee He came to the district of Dalmanutha or the region of Magadan (Matt 15:39).

❖ Do I limit the magnitude of the miracles God can accomplish in my life?

8:11-13 – Pharisees Seek a Sign – After reaching Galilee, the Pharisees again come to Him, this time seeking a sign. “Sign” is different than “miracle”. The Pharisees were seeking something independent of Jesus as a sign. Jesus “sighs deeply”; He was grieved and disappointed at their unbelieving hearts. He then answers that “no sign will be given to this generation”... “except the sign of Jonah” (Matt 16:4). Jesus then leaves Galilee and heads to the northeastern shore (v22).

❖ **My “signs” are in the word of God. Am I looking for something else?**

8:14-21 – Disciples do not Understand – The disciples had forgotten to bring enough bread for the journey; only one small loaf for the 13 of them. Jesus however was not concerned with the physical but the spiritual so He began to teach them using the Pharisees as an illustration of the sin of unbelief. The Pharisees rejected Jesus, but supposed that a sign would convince them. Herod also had longed to see Jesus perform a miracle, yet would not believe Him to be the King (Luke 23:8-11). If one has a hardened heart in unbelief, then even a sign will not convince them.

²⁹“But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ ³⁰“But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ ³¹“But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’” Luke 16:29-31

The disciples were still stuck on the bread and discussed who was at fault for not bringing the bread. They lacked spiritual understanding. Matthew indicates that they finally got it.

¹²Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Matt. 16:12

❖ **Do I have a hardened heart and fail to understand and apply the word because of my preconceived ideas?**

8:22-26 – Healing Blind Man – This is the second of two miracles recorded only in Mark (The deaf mute in 7:31-37 was the other). Jesus established a one-to-one relationship with the blind man. The reason for spitting on the man’s eyes is not given. Perhaps the problem with the man’s eyes caused the eyelids to be stuck together by hardened secretions. This would have allowed the man to open his eyes. If what the man saw when Jesus enabled his eyelids to open with His spittle was actually what the man would normally see, then the miracle occurs at the second laying on of hands. Jesus again desired the man to be silent to allow Him to continue His planned activity unhindered.

The Service of the Servant – The Road to Jerusalem (8:27-10:52)

8:27-30 – Peter’s Confession – It has been about three years since Jesus’ baptism. Jesus went north of Bethsaida about 25 miles to Caesarea Philippi. Caesarea Philippi was located at the source of the Jordan River on the southern slopes of Mount Hermon.

“...Jesus had been moving to this moment—teaching and reteaching, affirming and reaffirming, demonstrating and redemonstrating, building and rebuilding the truth of who He was in order to establish it completely and securely in the minds and hearts of the Twelve.” MacArthur's NT Commentary: Matthew 16-23

Jesus now is going to give the mid-term exam – “Who do you say I am?” Jesus began the exam by asking a more general question, “Who do people say that I am?”. The disciples’ answer is the same as that in 6:14-15. The three views: 1) John the Baptist, 2) Elijah, and 3) Jeremiah or one of the prophets – each shows Jesus as the Messiah’s forerunner, but not the Messiah.

¹⁴And King Herod heard *of it*, for His name had become well known; and *people* were saying, “John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him.” ¹⁵But others were saying, “He is Elijah.” And others were saying, “*He is* a prophet, like one of the prophets *of old*.” Mark 6:14-15

“But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ (,the Son of the living God Matt 16:16 added). Matthew adds, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” Peter’s senses, mind, and reasoning did not allow him to understand at the heart level who Jesus was. Only God can provide that illumination.

¹⁰For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. ...¹⁴But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 1 Cor 2:10-14

The popular idea of the Messiah was a political savior who would free Israel from Roman rule. The disciples knew who Jesus was, but they did not yet know what He came to do. Therefore, He commanded silence until they understood what His mission was.

8:31-33 – Jesus Rebukes Peter – “He began to teach them.” Here begins a new content to Jesus’ teaching – the suffering servant.

⁴⁵“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

“Son of man” is used some 80 times in the Gospels to refer to Jesus. This was Jesus’ favorite self-designation. It originated in the OT (Dan 7:13-14), was used during the intertestamental period, and was chosen by Jesus to define His messianic mission. It has occurred only twice in Mark to this point (2:10, 28). After this point it is recorded 11 times (8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21 [twice], 41, 62).

Jesus uses “must” to denote His submission the Father’s plan as the Servant Sacrifice. Jesus had previously alluded to His death (Mark 2:19-20), but here was “stating the matter plainly”. Peter began to rebuke Jesus and unknowingly was being used by Satan as he opposed God’s revealed will. Every time we set our mind on man’s interests instead of God’s interests we are accomplishing Satan’s desires and not God’s will.

...Satan managed to prompt Peter to oppose Christ’s way and try to lure Jesus into disobeying God’s will. The text does not explain the means of the temptation, only its source. And because he succumbed, Peter found himself opposing the plan of God in the same way the devil had opposed it in the wilderness. Before he realized what he was doing, he found himself speaking for Satan rather than for God. In trying to defend Christ on the basis of his own understanding, he found himself standing against Christ. MacArthur's NT Commentary: Matthew 16-23

❖ **What are some areas where I am accomplishing Satan’s desires and not God’s will?**

8:34-9:1 – Discipleship – When we accept Jesus, we accept Him as Savior and Lord. The two are inseparable. We cannot only accept Him as a Savior without the implications of His Lordship. Negatively, we must deny ourselves decisively saying no to self. Positively, we must take up our cross decisively dying to self and self interest. If we desire to “save” our natural life and keep control, then we will lose eternal life. If we deny our self and take up our cross (“lose” our life), then we will save our soul. What good is it to keep the natural life and all the earthly pleasures and possessions and yet suffer the loss of one’s soul? The answer: for nothing! Having gained even the world there is nothing one can give for his soul. To provide a preview of Jesus’ coming in the glory of His Father, Jesus tells some that they will see His glory at the transfiguration.

❖ **Have I bowed in Lordship to Jesus in every area of my life?**

9:2-8 – The Transfiguration – Six days later Jesus’ prophecy of 9:1 was fulfilled. Luke’s account in 9:28 places the transfiguration “Some eight days after these sayings...”. Where Luke is counting a part of a day as a whole day. Jesus took the inner circle of His disciples (Peter, James, and John) up to a high mountain. The mountain was probably the highest in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi – the 9200 feet Mt Hermon.

Jesus was “transfigured”. He was changed into another form. For a brief time Jesus’ human body was transformed (glorified) and the disciples saw Him as He will be when He returns visibly in power and glory to establish His kingdom on earth. Two OT heroes, perhaps Elijah and Moses c.f. Rev 11:3, were conversing with Jesus about His coming “departure” (Luke 9:30-31). Peter said something that did not make sense because “he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified.” The cloud is God’s Shekinah glory cloud. The Father says, “This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!” “Listen to Him” means “be obedient to Him” referencing Deut 18:15.

¹⁵“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. Deut 18:15

❖ **Jesus in God almighty, what does that mean to me?**

9:9-13 – The Coming of Elijah – This was Jesus’ last command to silence recorded by Mark and the only one on which He set a time limit. With Elijah present at the transfiguration, the disciples believing that Jesus was the Messiah (8:29), and references to the resurrection, the disciples believed the end of all things was at hand and yet Elijah had not yet come. The scribal teaching that Elijah must come first was based on Malachi and confirmed in v12 by Jesus.

⁵“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. ⁶“He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.” Mal 4:5-6

And *yet* how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? The answer is that there are two advents prophesied in the OT: one to suffer; the other to rule. John the Baptist fulfilled the Elijah prophecy (Mal 4:5-6) typically at Christ’s First Advent. Yet Malachi’s prophecy indicates that Elijah himself will also appear just before Christ’s Second Advent (cf. Rev 11).

9:14-29 – Healing a Boy with an Evil Spirit – The subject of the argument between the disciples and the scribes is not specifically given though it would seem to be centered on the man with a demon possessed son. The crowd was amazed when they saw Jesus. Some suggest that their amazement was due to some kind of “afterglow” (like Moses in Ex 34:29) from the transfiguration. Unlikely, since Jesus commanded the disciples to not relate the event to anyone until after the resurrection (v9). Jesus was distressed at the crowd and especially the disciple’s lack of reliance on God.

The child was possessed with a “deaf and mute spirit” whose purpose was to destroy the child. The father’s appeal to the disciples in Jesus’ absence was appropriate since they had been given power to cast out demons. Jesus took up the father’s words of doubt, “if You can”, to show that the point was not His ability to heal the boy but the father’s ability to trust in God who can do what is humanly impossible. Jesus then challenged the father not to doubt: Everything is possible for him who believes. Faith sets no limits on God’s power and submits itself to His will.

The father’s response was immediate. He declared his faith (I do believe), but also acknowledged its weakness: Help me overcome my unbelief! This brings out an essential element of Christian faith—it is possible only with the help of the One who is its Object. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: NT

This is the last account of an exorcism in Mark. When Jesus saw a crowd gathering He immediately cast the demon out. The location of the house that Jesus and the disciples entered is unnamed. “This kind” of demon is possibly a certain type more powerful than others (cf. Dan 10). The disciples had been given authority to cast out demons, yet had failed here because they had become self-reliant about that ability. “This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer.” Some manuscripts add “and fasting”, however the earliest manuscripts omit this word.

❖ **What are some areas in my life that I need to increase my faith in?**

9:30-32 – Death and Resurrection Foretold – Jesus had just taken His disciples to Caesarea Philippi to prepare them for the coming way to the cross with the transfiguration. Now Jesus turns toward Jerusalem by way of Galilee. As he went through Galilee toward Capernaum His desire was to keep His journey quiet so that He could continue to focus on the disciples. This is the second of three times the cross is predicted (8:31, 9:31, and 10:33-34).

Here is the first time that Jesus’ teaching talks about Himself being “delivered” into the hands of men. This word was used of Judas’ betrayal (3:19; 14:41; Luke 24:7) and of God delivering up Jesus to death (Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:32). Since only the Father had the authority to truly “deliver” Jesus up, “the later idea is probably thought about suggesting that the implied Agent of the passive verb is God, not Judas.” The Bible Knowledge Commentary: NT

The disciples did not yet understand the idea of a suffering Messiah instead of a reigning Messiah and were afraid to ask.

9:33-41 – True Greatness (Teaching on Servanthood) – After returning to Capernaum they entered the house of Simon and Andrew. Jesus questioned the disciples about what they were discussing on the way to Capernaum. Instead of focusing on the coming Passion they were discussing the rank in the coming messianic kingdom. This discussion may have been precipitated by the privilege given to Peter, James, and John. The disciples kept silent, probably embarrassed by their discussions. Even though they did not answer, Jesus knew what they had talked about and began to teach them on the essence of true greatness.

The ones who are the greatest in God’s kingdom are those that humble themselves and by deliberate choice make themselves last and servant of all. “Servant” is “diakonos” depicting someone who attends to the needs of others freely and not a slave. Greatness in God’s kingdom is not determined by status, but by service.

Here is a beautiful picture of Jesus taking this child in His arms to give an object lesson to the disciples. This child may have been Peter’s. Those that are great in the kingdom sacrificially care for those that cannot or can only marginally care for themselves. Receiving one like that is like receiving Jesus and the Father through Him.

There is no gray area in the kingdom, no room for neutrality: for/against; believer/unbeliever; heaven/hell; love/hate; saint/ain’t.

❖ **To what extent do I serve others?**

9:42-50 – The Seriousness of Sin – Jesus moves from the believer’s attitude of servanthood to the believers attitude toward sin. We should take our impact on the spiritual condition of other believers seriously. Do not cause another believer to sin (1 Cor 8:9-13). We should also deal quickly and decisively to eradicate sin from our life. Sin is heinous; a stench that pollutes our lives. “If” could also mean “whenever” indicating a real possibility for sin to occur. The punishment for sin is eternal hell. Since that is where we are NOT going, then we should be living holy lives out of gratitude.

²⁸Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; ²⁹for our God is a consuming fire. Heb 12:28-29

“Everyone will be salted with fire.” This is a difficult statement to interpret with about 15 possible explanations haven been suggested. Every person will either be preserved (salt as a preserving agent): believers will have their faith assured through trials; unbelievers will be preserved for eternal fire. “Have salt in yourselves” – The work of the Word and the Spirit produces godly character enabling the disciples to serve one another.

❖ **How serious do I take sin in my life?**

10:1-12 – Teaching about Divorce – Jesus was heading to Jerusalem. From Capernaum in Galilee He traveled into Judea and then went into Perea on the east side of the Jordan. Ministry in these regions lasted about six months, but Mark only records some choice events. On this occasion, the crowds gathered around Him and He “again” picked up a public ministry as He began to teach them.

A group of Pharisees tested Jesus on divorce, expecting Him to give a self-condemning answer. There were two main rabbinical teachings: 1) divorce for almost any reason and 2) divorce for only adultery. Jesus turns the question back to the Pharisees asking what the scriptures say. The Pharisees conceded that the law never commands divorce, but Moses permitted it. Deut 24:1-4 recognized the reality of divorce and sought to protect the wife’s rights and reputation and also regulate remarriage.

Jesus said, in view of their hard-heartedness, their obstinate refusal to accept God’s view of marriage. Moses *acknowledged* the presence of divorce in Israel but did not institute or authorize it. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: NT

From the beginning God meant for marriage to be a permanent union – a union so complete that there is no possibility of separating the man and women. This union is God ordained; no man (person) should dissolve it. God’s idea about divorce is clear: He hates divorce (Mal 2:13-16).

According to Jesus, the only legitimate grounds for divorce is adultery (Matt 5:31-32). The Holy Spirit through Paul adds abandonment by an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor 7:10-15).

❖ **For the married – Am I protecting and nurturing the relationship with my spouse?**

❖ **For the single – Am I protecting my purity and the purity of others?**

10:13-16 – Children and Faith – People were bringing children to Jesus so that He might pray for them and bless them. The word for children means babies to preteens. Jesus was “indignant” – displeased with and angered by their sin. All those who do not recognize their desperate need for Jesus and come to Him in simple trust and dependence will not be saved.

10:17-22 – The Rich Young Ruler – Setting out to continue the journey to Jerusalem from the unspecified house in Perea (Mark 10:10), Jesus meets an extremely wealthy, young, influential man who yet had such an emptiness inside that he “ran” up to Jesus and knelt before Him. This young man called Jesus “Good Teacher.” Since only God is intrinsically good, Jesus here asks the man why he calls Jesus “good.” Is he prepared to acknowledge that Jesus is God? Later (v20) the man drops the word “good” perhaps recognizing that he was not prepared to call Jesus God.

“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” The question is one that many today are asking. It illustrates how spiritually insensitive this man was in that he did not recognize his inability to gain what is a gift received by faith. Jesus’ answer was to keep the commandments, something no one has ever done. Matthew added the second greatest command “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18; Matt 22:37-39). Jesus’ purpose in stating the last six commands (defraud is probably a paraphrase of not coveting) in His response was to lead the man to see his sinfulness and need for the Savior (Gal 3:24).

As Paul did before he encountered Christ, this man believed that he had kept them perfectly from his youth (age 12) (Phil 3:4-6). Yet according to Matthew’s account the young man also believed he was still lacking something. He desired to accomplish one last culminating deed to enter into eternal life (Matt 19:20). Jesus’ response to the man’s statement that he had kept all the commands was a penetrating look and a great compassion. Sacrificial love gives all to serve others. In stark contrast to Jesus’ love (agape) which only gave of Himself, this man could not surrender himself to Jesus. He went away saddened and grieving because of all the things he would do to try and earn eternal life, he would not accept Jesus as Lord God and surrender himself to Him.

❖ **I must surrender everything in following Jesus?**

10:23-27 – Riches and the Kingdom of God – Jesus took this moment to expand on the subject that temporal blessings do not necessarily indicate spiritual sensitivity. To the Jews, the rich were blessed by God. Temporal blessings tend to give people a sense of security and self-sufficiency which makes them believe that they do not require God in their life. “Easier for a camel...” This Jewish proverb depicts the impossible. It is easier by comparison for a camel, the largest animal in Palestine at that time, to go through the eye of a common sewing needle (the smallest opening) than for a rich man who trusts in his riches to enter God’s kingdom. It is impossible for anyone who trusts in anything other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to enter the kingdom of God. If someone who apparently appears blessed by God and is able to do better and more deeds than others cannot be saved, then who can? No one, on their own terms. Only with God’s work in their heart can they turn from their sin and be saved.

10:28-31 – Rewards of Being a Disciple of Jesus – Peter now compares the disciple’s response to Jesus’ call to forsake everything and come follow Him with the rejection of that call by the rich young ruler. When we enter the family of God we gain a family (of disciples) that we may have lost by coming to Jesus. In this life we are also promised persecutions (important for Mark’s Roman readers to hear). For us today: “indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim 3:12). Ultimately we will receive eternal life for forsaking all to follow Jesus.

❖ **Am I living godly in Christ Jesus?**

10:32-34 – Jesus’ Third Prediction of His Suffering – Jesus was leading the way up (about 2550ft ASL) to Jerusalem (this is the first mention of His destination) from Perea through Jericho. The disciples were amazed and fearful because Jesus was resolutely pursuing the Father’s will; heading toward the place where He was to be killed (8:31; 9:31). Jesus now gets more specific with the twelve concerning the events to come in Jerusalem. He would be delivered to the chief priests and scribes (14:53), condemned to death (14:64), handed over to the Gentiles (crucified) (15:1), mocked and spat on (14:65; 15:16-20), scourged (15:15), killed (15:37), and would rise again (16:6).

❖ **Am I resolute in accomplishing God’s revealed will?**

10:35-45 – Greatness in the Kingdom – Matthew’s account (20:20-28) adds the detail about James and John’s mother coming with her sons. It seems probable that their mother was Salome, Jesus’ mother’s sister, thus making James and John Jesus’ first cousins (Matt 27:5-56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25b). The disciples already believed Jesus to be the Messiah (8:29) and with the revelation that they are headed for Jerusalem, James and John believed that the rule of Messiah on earth was about to begin. James and John wished to have the first and second places of honor and authority in His royal court. Spiritual greatness does not come through selfish ambition, but through dying to self, humility, and servanthood (10:42-45).

Jesus asked the two if they were able to share in His sufferings and sin-bearing death. The two believed they were able, but did not yet understand that Jesus was to die for all and not go into battle to set up the kingdom. Jesus goes on to prophesy to them that they indeed will share in those sufferings and death. His prediction was fulfilled: James was the first apostle to be martyred (cf. Acts 12:2), whereas John, who endured many years of persecution and exile, was the last apostle to die (cf. John 21:20-23; Rev 1:9). The other ten disciples began to feel indignant with James and John – not because James and John had sinned, but because they dared to ask for the honor that they also wanted. Great leaders are not self-serving and domineering. But in the church, one who is great must be a servant (diakonos – one who voluntarily renders useful service to others) and the one who is first will be a slave of all (doulos – one who forfeits his own rights in order to serve any and all). God incarnate is the supreme example of this servant leadership. The climax of that service was that He gave His life a ransom for many. The ransom price was paid to God to satisfy His justice and holy wrath against sin. The ransom was paid for “many” including each of us.

❖ **Am I a servant and slave of all?**

10:46-52 – Bartimaeus Receives His Sight – Jesus and His disciples accompanied by a large crowd of Passover pilgrims left Perea, crossed the Jordan, and were heading toward Jerusalem by way of Jericho. This is the last healing recorded in Mark. As Jesus and the disciples are leaving Jericho on the way up to Jerusalem, they come across two blind men who know Jesus as “Lord, Son of David.” They ask for their sight back. “Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.” Only Mark records the man’s name as Bartimaeus indicating the man may have been well known in the early church. Bartimaeus cried out in faith for mercy to the Messiah (“Son of David” indicating he believed Jesus to be the Messiah). Jesus responds by healing him. The fact that Bartimaeus began following Jesus indicates that he submitted his life to Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

The Sacrifice of the Servant (11:1-15:47)

- 11:1-11 – Triumphal Entry – This is on the Sunday before the resurrection. Jesus sends His disciples into Bethpage to obtain a donkey on which he will ride into Jerusalem. Jesus enters Jerusalem on the donkey with most of the crowd spreading their coats on the road. It appears that the crowd was acknowledging Jesus’ messianic claims and expecting Him to set up the kingdom at this time (v10). Jesus enters the temple, gave it a thorough inspection, and returned to Bethany.
- 11:12-14 – Cursing a fig tree – Early Monday morning after leaving Bethany, Jesus curses the fig tree as an illustration of God’s judgment on fruitless Israel.
- 11:15-19 – Purging the Temple – The temple was meant as a place of worship, not a place of commerce. Jesus overturns the seats of the money changers and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. The crowd is astonished at His teaching, but chief priests and scribes become seek to destroy Him.
- 11:20-26 – Prayer – Going out of Jerusalem to Bethany, Jesus uses the cursing of the fig tree as an object lesson in the power of prayer. “And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive” presupposes that the thing asked for is actually according to God’s will (1 John 5:14)

❖ **How is my prayer life and how do I regulate my prayers based on 1 John 5:14?**

- 11:27-33 – Jesus’ Authority Questioned – On Tuesday morning, Jesus and His disciples went into Jerusalem and came into the temple again. Here the chief priests, scribes, and elders (representatives of the Sanhedrin) came to question Him. They asked Jesus about the nature of His authority to teach, confirm His message with miracles, and purge the temple the day before. They were looking for some way to trap Him in His response and not for the truth.

Jesus answers with a counter question which made His answer to them dependent on their answer to Him. Jesus’ question implied that His authority came from the same source as John. Jesus challenged the Jewish religious leaders, “Answer me!”, since they did not have the courage to answer honestly. There were two possible answers to Jesus’ question: 1) heaven, which would mean that they did not accept John (and Jesus as well) so they would stand condemned and 2) men, since John was considered to be a true prophet, they would discredit themselves before the people. By suspending judgment, these religious leaders showed that they really rejected John and Jesus as God’s messengers. Throughout their history most leaders of Israel repeatedly rejected God’s messengers, a point Jesus made in the following parable (12:1-12).

❖ **Do I question Jesus’ authority?**

- 12:1-12 – Parable of the Vine-growers – Jesus spoke this parable directly to the Sanhedrin representatives exposing their hypocrisy and absolute failure as those entrusted with the spiritual wellbeing of Israel. This parable also has elements of allegory in that several of the details have specific meaning: owner – the Father; vineyard – Israel (a familiar OT figure, cf Isa 5:7); vine growers – Jewish leaders; servants – prophets; and beloved son – Jesus.

God patiently continued to send prophet after prophet to Israel preaching repentance from dead works. Yet the prophets were mistreated and even killed like John the Baptist. Finally the Father sent the Son. Because the people turned to the Messiah instead of the religious leaders, the Sanhedrin sought to kill Jesus. Jesus here foretells His own death at their hands and the impending judgment on Israel that was alluded to earlier with the withered fig tree. “What will the owner of the vineyard do? Matthew’s account has the leaders answering first. Jesus then moves to a new parable featuring Himself quoting Psa 118:22-23 LXX. The builders (Jewish leaders) rejected (crucified) the stone (Jesus) who then became the chief cornerstone in God’s plan of redemption. The religious leaders understood these parables. Jesus graciously gave them a chance to understand and repent, but they would have nothing of it and were seeking to seize Him.

❖ **Do I fulfill my responsibilities for those I have been entrusted with spiritual oversight over?**

12:13-17 – Jesus Answers on Priorities – Despite Jesus’ condemnation of the religious leaders, they continued their attack. They were attempting to trap Jesus in an unguarded statement that they could use against Him. The Pharisees and Herodians (who were enemies) joined forces in their attack on Jesus. They used flattery and feigned interest in His teaching to attempt to gain an advantage of Jesus. Yet Jesus “knew their hypocrisy”. All who lived under Roman rule were obligated to pay taxes. It was not optional. Here Jesus taught submission to governing authorities (Rom 13:1-7). The Pharisees and Herodians were amazed at Jesus. They came to Him with what they thought was perfect logic, but the Perfect One saw through their fallible thinking and put them to shame. Mark’ Roman readers would be particularly interested how to be a believer in an emperor worship empire.

❖ **In what ways am I not submitting to my governing authorities?**

12:18-27 – Jesus Answers on the Resurrection – The Sadducees presented a case to Jesus that would supposedly embarrass Him with an apparent unanswerable question. The question came from the Levirate marriage (meaning marriage to a dead husband’s brother) described in Deut 25. The purpose of this practice was to prevent the extinction of a family line. The Sadducees did “not understand the Scriptures or the power of God”. The power of God could raise someone from the dead and give them a new existence in His presence in which one is “like the angels in heaven”. Resurrection-life is different from this temporal-life in which marriage is meant for companionship and reproduction. Resurrection-life consists of continual fellowship with God. The Sadducees believed that the resurrection was not taught in the Pentateuch (i.e. they did not understand the scriptures). Jesus here presents an argument based on the tense of a verb. ...All Scripture is inspired. The Sadducees were completely mistaken. They believed themselves instead of the Scriptures.

❖ **Do I work hard at understanding the Scriptures and do I limit the power of God?**

12:28-34 – Jesus Answers on the Greatest Commandment – A scribe (a lawyer) was listening to this confrontation with the Sadducees. He was probably a Pharisee since he believed that Jesus “answered the Sadducees well”. This scribe too came to test Him (Matt 22:34-36). Jesus quoted from Deut 6:4-6 and Lev 19:17-18 then says “There is no other commandment greater than these.” and “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets” (Matt 22:40). The Hebrew text does not mention “mind”; the Septuagint omits “heart”; but Jesus included both terms, stressing the comprehensive nature of the command. This scribe’s ulterior motive seems to fade away as he hears Jesus’ answer and agrees with Him. The scribe had been taught that he needed to keep many commands (613 of them), yet apparently he believed that there was more to a relationship with God than external religion – a dedication of the heart. A heart that is changed by God’s love to love God and other people is “much more” than all the external sacrifice. Because this heart “believes God and it is reckoned to him as righteousness”. Jesus had so humbled the intellectual elite that “no one dared ask him any more questions”.

❖ **How dedicated is my heart?**

12:35-37 – Jesus Questions the Jewish Leaders – The religious elite of Israel were questioning Jesus, now the Messiah will question them. In doing so He also claims Himself to be God. How is it that the scribes say that the Messiah will be only a man (i.e. the Son of David)? The answer is that the Scriptures declare that the Messiah is David’s son and David’s Lord. Jesus is both God (David’s Lord) and man (David’s son).

12:38-40 – Hypocrisy Condemned – Jesus here condemns pride and hypocrisy. Beware of scribes (teachers of the Law) who:

- Walk around in long robes – singled the wearer out as especially devout and a scholar.
- Like respectful greetings in the market places – receiving honorific titles by the common people who respected them.
- Like chief seats in the synagogues – singled out in the synagogue by sitting on a bench near where the scrolls were kept.
- Like places of honor at banquets – receiving honor and preferential treatment.
- Devour widow’s houses – greedily living off the hospitality of widows.
- For appearance’s sake offer long prayers – to impress people with their piety they would offer long and elaborate prayers. (c.f. Luke 18:9-14)

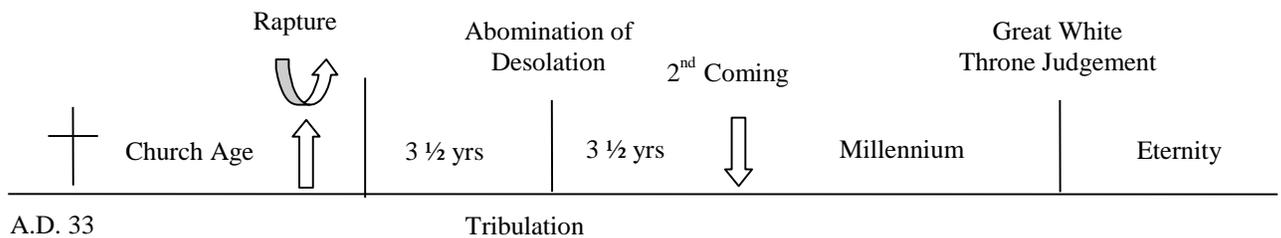
All who point people to themselves instead of Christ will receive a greater condemnation.

❖ **Does my life direct people to or away from Jesus?**

12:41-44 – The Widow’s Mite – From the court of the Gentiles (cf. 11:15) where He conducted His public teaching, Jesus entered the court of the women. Against the wall of this court were 13 trumpet-shaped collection receptacles for receiving worshipers’ freewill offerings and contributions. The woman gave sacrificially – completely entrusting herself to God. She put in all she had which was 1/64 of a day laborer’s wage (denarius). This woman’s heart was fully committed to God. She was not holding anything back.

❖ **Do I have a proper view of money and am I ordering my life according to God’s priorities?**

13:1-37 – The Olivet Discourse – This section of Mark (Chap 13) (cf. Matt 24-25 and Luke 21:5-36) is called the Olivet Discourse as it is a unit of teaching from Jesus to the disciples as they sat upon the Mount of Olives on Tuesday. This section answers the disciples’ question to Jesus concerning the events after this present age. The Olivet Discourse deals with the 70th week of Daniel (Dan 9:24-27). This is understandable since the 70th week deals with the Nation of Israel and Jesus is teaching Jews. We will interpret Mark 13 in the context of the systematized eschatological doctrine of Pre-millennialism (Jesus’ 2nd coming will precede the Millennial Kingdom) and Pre-Tribulationism (the Rapture will occur before the Tribulation) as depicted below.



13:1-4 – Things to Come (The Destruction of Jerusalem) – This vocal disciple is not mentioned (Peter?), but he spoke for the twelve as Matthew and Luke’s accounts indicate that “the disciples” came to Him and commented on the temple buildings. The temple was considered an architectural wonder of the ancient world. It was built with large white stones, polished and generously decorated with gold.

Jesus responds with a prediction of the temple’s destruction. This prediction was fulfilled in AD 70 when the Romans attacked Jerusalem, killed one million Jews, and leveled the temple to the foundation. The disciples believed that Jesus was about to usher in the kingdom. They ask Jesus two questions: 1) When would these things be (the temple destroyed and the kingdom begin)? and 2) What would be the sign of their fulfillment? Jesus answers the second question first describing the Tribulation through His second coming to set up the kingdom and answers the first question by providing a parable indicating immanency.

13:5-23 – Things to Come (The Tribulation) – In this section, verses 5-13 occur during the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, verse 14 occurs at the midpoint, and verses 15-23 occur in the last 3 ½ years. While Jesus is teaching His disciples concerning the end of the age, Mark expects this to be of great importance to his readers as well (c.f. 13:14).

There will be false Christs (v6), hearing of wars and rumors of wars where nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom (v7-8), earthquakes (v8), and famines (v8). These are merely the beginning of birth pangs which signal the end of pregnancy. There are false ones sometimes. When the true birth pangs start, they are infrequent, but increase in severity and frequency as the end draws near. Here as well this is only the beginning - the end will be severe and fast paced. There will also be martyrdom (v9-13) as Tribulation Saints take the gospel to all the nations. When the believers are delivered up because of their faith, they should not be anxious but rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance as they provide a *defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence* (1 Pet 3:15). The one who endures faithfully to the end of their life will demonstrate that they are true believers.

At the midpoint of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will set up an image of himself (the Abomination of Desolation) in the temple (indicating the temple will be rebuilt by the midpoint of the Tribulation). Standing, continuous action, indicates the desecration will last the 3 ½ years remaining in the Tribulation. When this event occurs, the end is near and believers should flee Judea. A time of tribulation such as not occurred... After this point the birth pangs get intense. All life, including believers (the elect), will be destroyed if the Lord does not cut those days short.

❖ **Am I faithful? Am I enduring?**

13:24-27 – Things to Come (The Second Coming of Christ) – Contrasting the false Christs with the true Christ who comes in clouds with great power and glory without deception. At the end of this unparalleled time of tribulation on the earth is the time of the coming of the Son of Man. Great cosmic disturbances will accompany Jesus’ 2nd advent. After the last 7 years and particularly the last 3 ½ years this will be too much to take for those that remain. Luke relates:

²⁵“There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and **on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves,** ²⁶**men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.** ²⁷“Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. ²⁸“But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Luke 21:25-28

Then Jesus will come clothed in glory and power gathering His elect from all over the world. Many believe this will include resurrected OT saints and believers who were martyred during the Trib.

❖ **Knowing that this is not my fate, am I living in holy conduct and godliness(2 Pet 3:11)?**

13:28-37 – The Parables of the Fig Tree and the Absent House Owner – Jesus now answers the “when” of the disciple’s question. As the fig tree changes as summer grows near so when the events that Jesus just described occur know that the coming of the Son of Man is near. The generation living at the time of the Tribulation will see all these things. This heaven and earth will pass away, but Jesus promises will not. In His incarnation, Jesus voluntarily restricted the use of certain divine attributes in subjection to the Father’s will. Be on the alert... Keep watch – they should not be found asleep, but vigilant, on guard for His coming.

❖ **Am I living as if the Rapture is imminent?**

14:1-2 – Jewish Leaders Plot to Kill Jesus – Passover (Ex 12:1-13) is an annual festival commemorating when the Lord passed over the children of Israel and did not allow the destroyer to come into their houses to smite them (Ex 12:23), but did kill the first born of Egypt. The Passover was celebrated in Jerusalem (Deut 16:5-6) at twilight on Nisan 14 (Thursday afternoon of the passion week) when the Passover lamb was killed and then the Passover meal was eaten on Nisan 15 (Thursday evening). The Passover was followed immediately by the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex 12:14-21) (Nisan 15-21) to commemorate the Jews’ exodus from Egypt.

The Passion week chronology:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Sun Sunset	Mon Sunset	Tues Sunset	Wed Sunset	Thu Sunset	Fri Sunset	Sat Sunset
Mon Sunrise	Tues Sunrise	Wed Sunrise	Thu Sunrise	Fri Sunrise	Sat Sunrise	Sun Sunrise
Mon Sunset	Tues Sunset	Wed Sunset	Thu Sunset	Fri Sunset	Sat Sunset	
Temple Cleansing	Teaching in Temple / Olivet Discourse	No Record	Passover prep & Passover	Betrayal / Trials / Crucifixion	In grave	Resurrection

The chief priests and scribes (Sanhedrin) were seeking to seize Jesus by stealth (lit. craftiness or deceit). They were looking for some sly plan by which they might kill Him. However, they were afraid of the people so they had resigned themselves to attempt this after the Feast of Unleavened Bread was complete (after Nisan 21).

14:3-9 – Mary Anoints Jesus – This incident occurred the previous Friday. Mark recorded it here to show how Judas made the offer to betray Jesus when Mary’s anointing (John 12:3) was his last straw. This account also shows the different responses of Mary and Judas to Jesus. Jesus and the disciples were at a banquet in Jesus’ honor held by Simon the Leper, someone Jesus presumably healed (Mark 1:40?). A woman, Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus, came and anointed Jesus for burial. The “pure nard” was an aromatic oil from a rare plant root native to India. Jesus rebuked the disciples who were scolding Mary. She had done a “good deed” (lit good, noble, beautiful work). This was a time for worship of their Redeemer. Prefaced by a solemn introductory saying (I tell you the truth; cf. 3:28), Jesus promised Mary that wherever the gospel (cf. 1:1) is preached throughout the world (cf. 13:10), her deed of love would also be told along with the gospel in memory of her. This unique promise looked beyond His death, burial, and resurrection to the present period of time when the gospel is being preached.

14:10-11 – Judas Plans to Betray Jesus – The chief priests offered Judas money – 30 pieces of silver (Matt 26:15). He then began looking for a way to betray Jesus when He was “apart from the crowd” (Luke 22:6).

14:12-21 – The Passover Celebration – Here begins the account on Thursday. The disciples wanted to know where they would go and prepare the Passover since the Passover had to be eaten within Jerusalem and they were probably in Bethany at the time. Jesus sent two disciples – Peter and John (Luke 22:8). They were to meet a man carrying a pitcher of water which would have stuck out since men did not carry pitchers. This secretive approach was necessary to prevent Judas from betraying Jesus before the proper time. The owner of the house had fully prepared an upper room for the Passover. Tradition says that this man was Mark’s father.

Reclining at the table and eating... The order of the Passover feast went as follows:

1. Drinking an initial cup of red wine.
2. Ceremonial washing of hands.
3. Eating of bitter herbs.
4. Drinking a second cup of wine and the head of the household would explain the meaning of the Passover.
5. Singing the first part of the Hallel, which means “praise” (Psalm 113-114)
6. Eating the roasted lamb – The head of the household would wash his hands and then break pieces of unleavened bread and hand them out to be eaten with the lamb.
7. Drinking a third cup of wine.
8. Singing the second part of the Hallel (Psalm 115-118)

It was perhaps at the ceremonial washing of hands that Jesus washed the disciples feet as an object lesson in humble servanthood (John 13:1-20). Jesus then predicts that one of the disciples would betray Him.

14:22-26 – The Lord’s Supper – The Passover is a memorial to God’s deliverance from bondage. Here Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper as a memorial to His delivering us from the bondage of sin. It is a remembrance.

²³For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you; **do this in remembrance of Me.**” ²⁵In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, **in remembrance of Me.**” ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. 1 Cor. 11:23-26

The timing of when He took bread is not given, but it probably occurred during the eating of the Passover lamb. The elements of the Lord’s Supper represent Jesus’ body given and bloodshed for our salvation. The early church observed the Lord’s Supper regularly.

⁴²They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... ⁴⁶Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house,... Acts 2:42, 46

As they finished the Passover feast they sang a hymn (Psalm 115-118). Psalm 118 had some special significance as Jesus went to Gethsemane then the cross.

⁵From *my* distress I called upon the LORD; The LORD answered me *and set me* in a large place.

⁶The LORD is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me?... ¹⁷I will not die, but live, And tell of the works of the LORD... ²²The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner *stone*. ²³This is the LORD’S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Psa. 118:5-6, 17, 22-24

Since their conversation after the meal included Jesus’ discourse and prayer (John 13:31-17:26), it was probably near midnight when He and the eleven finally left the upper room and the city.

❖ **Do I continually remember Jesus sacrifice?**

14:27-31 – Foretelling Scattering and Peter’s Denial – In Luke and John this prediction is limited to Peter and took place during the last supper. Matthew and Mark expand this prediction of desertion to the eleven with special emphasis on Peter. Perhaps the original prediction took place in the upper room and then on the way out to Gethsemane it was reiterated with emphasis on Peter. In desperation to avoid the same fate as Jesus, the disciples will turn away from Him. Zechariah prophesied this in 500 BC.

⁷“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate,” Declares the LORD of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; And I will turn My hand against the little ones. Zech 13:7

Even with this prediction of desertion, Jesus promises reunion in Galilee. Peter insisted he was the exception to the “you will all fall away”. Jesus then told Peter that he would not only desert Him but would “deny” Him three times.

14:32-42 – Prayer in Gethsemane – Gethsemane was a garden filled with olive trees on the Mount of Olives. This place would have been well known to Judas as Jesus and the disciples met there often (John 18:2).

²Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. John 18:2

Jesus left the disciples at the garden entrance and took Peter, James, and John with Him into the garden. Jesus then left the three to move farther into the garden and pray. Jesus’ soul was deeply grieved to the point of death. Jesus was in extreme anguish. He was about to bear the totality of the Father’s wrath for all sin of all time. The prospect of what was to come threatened to cause Jesus’ death. He was under so much stress that drops of blood came out of his pores like sweat.

⁴³Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. Luke 22:43-44

Jesus prayed a prayer of submission to His “Daddy’s (Abba) will. He recognized the Father’s ability to provide a different means to accomplish the sacrifice for salvation, yet submitted Himself to the plan that would lead Him to the cross. Three times Jesus came and found the disciples sleeping when they should have been “keeping watch”. The disciples were about to enter into a difficult period when they would be tempted to fall away from Jesus. The disciples failed to understand the spiritual truth that “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Only by being alert (watching) and praying can one overcome temptation and testing and allow its spiritual benefit to be seen in our lives (James 1:2-4).

“It is enough.” Enough sleeping, opportunity to prepare yourself, time to attempt to be an encouragement to Me by praying for what is about to come, etc?

❖ **In the midst of difficult circumstances, do I submit to the will of the God to honor Him?**

14:43-52 – Betrayal – Judas, the chief priests, scribes, and elders with a crowd that they had incited came to Gethsemane to arrest Jesus after going to Mark’s home where the Passover had been celebrated. Judas used a sign of affection and respect (a kiss) as a sign of betrayal. Jesus offered no resistance, but Peter attempted armed resistance. Peter cut off the right ear of Malchus, Caiaphas’ servant (John 18:10-13). Jesus then restored the ear (Luke 22:51). Jesus had taught in the temple that entire week and they did not arrest for fear of the crowd. Yet they came at night in cowardice. At this time all His disciples left and fled as He was arrested.

This unusual episode, unique to Mark, supplements verse 50 emphasizing the fact that all fled, leaving Jesus completely forsaken. Most interpreters believe that this young man (a person in the prime of life, between 24 and 40 years of age) was Mark himself. If so, and if he was the son of the house owner (vv. 14-15; cf. Acts 12:12) that night's events may have occurred as follows. After Jesus and His disciples left Mark's father's house after the Passover, Mark removed his outer cloak (cf. Mark 13:16) and went to bed wrapped in a linen sleeping garment (lit., "cloth"). Shortly afterward a servant may have aroused him with the news about Judas' treachery since Judas and the arresting force had come there looking for Jesus. Without stopping to dress Mark rushed to Gethsemane perhaps to warn Jesus, who had already been arrested when Mark arrived. After all the disciples fled, Mark was following Jesus and His captors into the city when some of them seized Mark, perhaps as a potential witness, but he fled from them naked, leaving his linen sleeping garment in someone's hands. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: NT

14:53-65 – The Second Jewish Trial – Jesus' trial before the Jewish religious authorities included a preliminary hearing by Annas (John 18:12-14, 19-24); an arraignment before Caiaphas, the high priest, and the Sanhedrin at night (Matt 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65); and a final verdict by the Sanhedrin just after dawn (cf. Matt 27:1; Mark 15:1a; Luke 22:66-71).

Jesus' Six Trials	
Religious Trials	
Before Annas	John 18:12-14
Before Caiaphas	Matt 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65
Before the Sanhedrin	Matt 27:1-2; Mark 15:1a; Luke 22:66-71
Civil Trials	
Before Pilate	Matt 27:2, 11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:15; John 18:28-38
Before Herod	Luke 23:6-12
Before Pilate	Matt 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-19:6

The information concerning the trial before the Sanhedrin probably came from secret disciples like Nicodemus. The Sanhedrin were attempting to convict Jesus by gaining testimony against Him, but the testimony did not agree. Caiaphas asked "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed *One*?" (i.e. Are you the divine Messiah?) Jesus' answer was an emphatic yes. And even though the Sanhedrin was about to crucify Jesus, in the resurrection they would see Him. The high priest tore his clothes in response to Jesus' words indicating he believed that Jesus had blasphemed. Since they believed Jesus had blasphemed, there was no need for more witnesses so they moved for a verdict. Those of the Sanhedrin that were present condemned Jesus to death.

14:66-72 – Peter's Denials – Peter remembered Jesus' words but also saw Jesus looking at him.

⁶⁰But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. ⁶¹The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." ⁶²And he went out and wept bitterly. Luke 22:60-62

The account of Peter's failure is really an account of true faith and repentance. Even though Peter failed, when confronted he repented and his relationship with Jesus was renewed (John 21:15-19).

❖ **Do I repent with confronted with my sin (Psa 51; 32)?**

15:1 – The Third Jewish Trial – This occurred early in the morning, probably between 5 and 6 AM. The council claimed Jesus was guilty of blasphemy. However, they needed a plan to obtain a guilty verdict from the Roman governor since blasphemy was not punishable under Roman law. The next to see Jesus would be Pilate.

- 15:2-5 – The First Roman Trial – The council charged Jesus with blasphemy, but the only charge that interested Pilate was that Jesus claimed to be a king which was treasonous. Jesus answers cryptically to Pilate, “It is as you say.” This answer is understood to mean “Yes, but not in the way you think.” Pilate told the council that he did not believe Jesus to be guilty (Luke 23:4-5). This caused the council to accuse Jesus even more, but Jesus, uncharacteristic of a prisoner on trial for his life, did not respond. Learning that Jesus was a Galilean and hoping to avoid making a judgment against Him, Pilate sent Him to Herod Antipas, governor of Galilee (cf. 6:14), also in Jerusalem at the time. But Herod soon returned Him to Pilate. Only Luke recorded this middle phase of the civil trial (cf. Luke 23:6-12).
- 15:6-15 – The Third Roman Trial – As was his custom, Pilate offered amnesty to a prisoner on the Passover. Jesus was not guilty of a capital offense, so Pilate probably viewed this as a chance to get out of this situation since the chief priests were only doing this “because of envy”. Earlier in the week the crowds welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem as their king, so Pilate thought that they would ask for their release now. However, the chief priests stacked the crowd. Pilate made attempts to release Jesus, but succumbed to the crowd’s pressure lest he jeopardize his position if Emperor Tiberius become displeased with him for inciting a riot. Pilate then released Barabbas then had Jesus scourged and handed Him over to the Jews to be crucified.
- 15:16-21 – Jesus Is Mocked and Led to Golgotha – The whole Roman cohort (usually 600 men) treated Jesus severely pushing a crown of thorns onto His head, mocking Him, beating Him, and spitting on Him. After this treatment they led Jesus out to be crucified. The cross’ crossbeam weighed about 100 pounds and was customarily carried by the condemned criminal. Jesus was so weak from the scourging and beatings that He could not carry it Himself. A passerby, Simon of Cyrene, was pressed into service to bear Jesus’ cross. Mark describes Simon as the father of Alexander and Rufus indicating that his children were known to the church in Rome.
- 15:22-32 – The Crucifixion – Golgotha is an Aramaic word meaning “Place of a Skull” that Mark translates for his Roman readers. This was a rocky knoll that resembled a skull. The Roman soldiers either gave a sedative (wine mixed with myrrh) or allowed it to be given to Jesus. This was possibly to decrease the pain of the crucifixion process, but more probable it was to decrease the struggling of the condemned during the crucifixion. Jesus tasted the sedative, but refused it. Mark’s readers were well acquainted with the process of crucifixion so he did not elaborate. This occurred at the “third hour” or 9AM according to Jewish rendering. The scriptures were fulfilled (Psa 22:18) by the Roman soldiers casting lots for Jesus’ garments.

Judging from nonBiblical descriptions of crucifixion in NT times, Jesus was placed on the cross as it lay flat on the ground. First His feet were nailed to the upright beam and then His arms stretched across the horizontal beam and nailed through the wrists just above the hand, allowing a slight bend at the knees when the body was extended. The cross was then picked up and dropped into the hole, causing excruciating pain as the weight of His body pulled at the already torn flesh around the nails. MacArthur's NT Commentary: Matthew 24-28

In contempt for the Jewish religious leaders, Pilate had “The King of the Jews” placed on the cross.
¹⁹Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, “JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” ²⁰Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. ²¹So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews’; but that He said, ‘I am King of the Jews.’” ²²Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.” John 19:19-22

Having Jesus crucified with criminals fulfilled Isa 53:12. The verbal abuse and mocking continued while Jesus was on the cross. The two men crucified with Jesus also joined in reviling Him. But one of them soon stopped and asked Jesus to remember him in His kingdom (Luke 23:39-43).

15:33-41 – The Death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God – Jesus was crucified at 9 am. From noon until 3 pm there was darkness over the “whole land” (Greek “world”). This was a miraculous event that had world-wide impact. From Jesus’ statement at the “ninth hour”, this three hour darkness would appear to be the time when Jesus was separated from the Father and bore the full penalty for our sin.

Some Jewish bystanders apparently misunderstood or more likely, as a mockery, deliberately misinterpreted Jesus’ cry as a call to Elijah. Popular Jewish belief held that Elijah came in times of distress to deliver righteous sufferers. Wanting to see if Elijah would bring Jesus down, the onlookers sought to prolong His life by giving Him something to drink.

Jesus had the authority to lay down His life. The crucifixion did not kill Him, it was the vehicle by which He gave up His life (John 10:17-18). Normally, a person suffered extreme exhaustion for a long period (often two or three days) and then lapsed into a coma before dying. But Jesus was fully conscious to the end; His death came voluntarily and suddenly. Jesus’ “loud cry” was recorded in John and Luke (John 19:30; Luke 23:46). At the same time the veil was torn there was a violent earthquake and resurrections of saints who then went into Jerusalem (Matt 27:51-53).

In contrast to the mockers, the Roman soldier’s declaration along with the torn veil climaxes Mark’s crucifixion account and shows clearly that the way to the Father is open to ALL who will come to Him by faith in His Son – including Gentiles (Romans).

There were many who had followed Jesus at the cross to witness the crucifixion: Mary, Jesus’ mother; Mary Magdalene from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons (Luke 8:2); Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses – the wife of Clopas – mother of one of the twelve; and Salome the mother of the sons of Zebedee – James and John.

15:42-47 – Jesus Is Buried – Joseph of Arimathea went to ask Pilate for Jesus’ body. Joseph was a wealthy (Matt 27:57), reputable member of the Sanhedrin and a secret disciple of Jesus (John 19:38). Joseph had not consented to their plan and action (Luke 23:51). “He gathered up courage”; he was no longer a secret disciple and he would no doubt come under persecution in the years to come. Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead and asked for confirmation from a centurion. Joseph along with another once secret disciple of Jesus, Nicodemus (John 19:39) took Jesus’ body and wrapped it in a linen cloth and laid Him in Joseph’s tomb. The women were looking on and would come back Sunday morning after the Sabbath.

The Success of the Servant (Resurrection) (16:1-20)

16:1-8 – The Resurrection – Saturday night after sunset, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices to complete the burial process (counteract the decaying smell). Early on Sunday morning (the first day of the week) the women came to the tomb. The women were concerned about who would remove the large stone from in front of the entrance to the tomb indicating they were not expecting the resurrection. The stone was rolled away to allow the witnesses in; not to let Jesus out. As the women entered the tomb they saw the angelic messenger (young man). There were two angels (Luke 24:3-4 and John 20:12), but Mark only mentions the spokesman. The angel announced that Jesus had risen – the tomb is empty. The women were to go tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus was going ahead of them to Galilee.

Peter mentioned here is another indication of Mark’s authorship. Mark singles out Peter to show that his forgiveness from his denying Jesus was complete.

The Disputed Ending – The last 12 verses of Mark (16:9-20) known as “the longer ending of Mark” constitute one of the most difficult and most disputed textual problems in the NT. Several interpreters believe that Mark concluded his Gospel at this point. The abrupt ending is consistent with Mark’s style and punctuates his development of the themes of fear and astonishment throughout his Gospel. The reader is left to ponder with awe the meaning of the empty tomb as interpreted by the angel’s revelatory message.

While for the most part summarizing truths taught elsewhere in Scripture, vv. 9-20 should always be compared with the rest of Scripture, and no doctrines should be formulated based solely on them. ...it is possible to be wrong on the issue, and thus it is good to consider the meaning of this passage and leave it in the text... MacArthur Study Bible (NASB)

16:9-14 – Appearances – Here there are only three of Jesus’ post resurrection appearances. Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. She had been delivered from much and she loved Jesus much and followed Him faithfully. When Mary told the disciples about seeing Jesus alive, the disciples refused to believe her. Jesus then appeared to two disciples on the way to the village of Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). Yet the eleven did not believe these two either. Jesus then rebuked the eleven for their unbelief and hardness of heart.

16:15-18 – The Disciples Commissioned – This is a less detailed version of the Great Commission recorded in Matthew. The emphasis of v16 is the contrast between the saved and the condemned. The “signs” that were to accompany the believers were manifested during the apostolic age. These were supernatural signs that authenticated the gospel message (v20) before the NT was complete.

16:19-20 – The Ascension – The phrase “Lord Jesus” is only used here and in Luke 24:3. From the Mount of Olives near Bethany, Jesus ascended to heaven (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:12). There He sat down at the right hand of God where He intercedes for us. The disciples had work to do on earth – to preach the gospel everywhere confirmed with signs.

❖ **Am I involved in disciple making?**

Homework

Read Luke