

Home	Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7	Chapter 8
Chapter 9	Chapter 10	Chapter 11	Chapter 13	Chapter 14	Chapter 15	Chapter 16	Chapter 12	Word Text

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

Home
Chapter 1
Chapter 2
Chapter 3
Chapter 4
Chapter 5
Chapter 6
Chapter 7
Chapter 8
Chapter 9
Chapter 10
Chapter 11
Chapter 13
Chapter 14
Chapter 15
Chapter 16
Chapter 12
Word Text

Search

---

### Introduction: Jesus, Servant of God

Mark, as the earliest gospel, should be read carefully as the foundational knowledge for the person of Christ. This gospel begins with the baptism and the life of Jesus in Galilee (chapters 1-9); following the transfiguration, we follow Jesus and his disciples from Galilee to Jerusalem, concluding with his entry into that holy city (chapter 11); the final section is the story of Jesus' passion (chapters 14 and 15). Chapter thirteen is apocalyptic and addresses the end of time; the final chapter contains the resurrection.

As the first gospel, Mark is dated about 64-72 CE. This would be just prior to the decisive Roman destruction of the temple in 70 CE. The Romans, as we will recall, conquered this Jewish nation in 63 BCE. The Christian movement began in an era of violence and national upheaval. From a conquered nation came the person Jesus, usually said to have been born about 8 to 4 BCE; he is said to have died between 27 and 33 CE. Paul's death in 64 CE puts him as having written before the cataclysmic Roman temple destruction. Importantly, the other gospels are post-70 CE, as are, arguably, Acts, the books of Timothy, Titus, Peter, Jude, James and John, and, of course, Revelation.

In social context, Jesus was born a Jew into a Jewish world. After 70 CE, the survival of the Jews meant survival through scripture simply because the nation, holy city, temple and priesthood had been destroyed. This is, of course, the time of the writing of the later gospels. Up until 70 CE, Jerusalem could be peopled with those who compromised with the Romans (Saducees), resisted through a conservative interpretation of their scripture (Pharisees) or violence (Zealots), while still others simply withdrew (Gnostics). With the temple destruction, the Jews essentially lost their identity. With Massada in 73 CE, Jewish resistance ended with suicide. The only possession left for wandering Jews was their Torah.

Christianity, born within Jewish synagogues and interpreting Christ as a new revelation of God, separated itself from its Jewish origin after 70 CE and became more Gentile in nature. Before 70 CE, Christians and Jews co-existed with a tension between Torah as full revelation of God and Jesus as new revelation. After 70 CE, Christians clearly began to go their own way, reinterpreting all of the existing scriptures in light of the new revelation. In the 80s, Jews no longer allowed anything other than strict orthodoxy within their synagogues and actually ex-communicated Jewish Christians. This schism between Jew and Gentile lends a peculiarly misguided hard-headedness about the recognition of their common ancestry.

This study will attempt to read Mark as closely related to its Jewish background.

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I would be glad to hear from anyone reading this study. I particularly welcome your comments upon my interpretation of the Gospel of Mark.

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[ [Home](#) ] [ [Chapter 1](#) ] [ [Chapter 2](#) ] [ [Chapter 3](#) ] [ [Chapter 4](#) ] [ [Chapter 5](#) ] [ [Chapter 6](#) ] [ [Chapter 7](#) ] [ [Chapter 8](#) ] [ [Chapter 9](#) ] [ [Chapter 10](#) ] [ [Chapter 11](#) ] [ [Chapter 13](#) ] [ [Chapter 14](#) ] [ [Chapter 15](#) ] [ [Chapter 16](#) ] [ [Chapter 12](#) ] [ [Word Text](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

- 1: The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;
- 2: As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.
- 3: The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
- 4: John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.
- 5: And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.
- 6: And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;
- 7: And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.
- 8: I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.
- 9: And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.
- 10: And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:
- 11: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.
- 12: And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

13: And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

14: Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

15: And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

16: Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

17: And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

18: And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

19: And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.

20: And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

21: And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

22: And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

23: And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

24: Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

25: And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

26: And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

27: And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

28: And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

29: And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

30: But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.

31: And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

32: And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

33: And all the city was gathered together at the door.

34: And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out

many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.  
35: And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.  
36: And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.  
37: And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.  
38: And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.  
39: And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.  
40: And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.  
41: And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.  
42: And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.  
43: And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;  
44: And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.  
45: But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

1: And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2: And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

3: And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4: And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5: When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6: But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7: Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

8: And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9: Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10: But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11: I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12: And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

13: And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

14: And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

15: And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

16: And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

17: When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

18: And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

19: And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

20: But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

21: No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

22: And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

23: And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

24: And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

25: And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?

26: How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

27: And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

28: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

1: And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

2: And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.

3: And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

4: And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

5: And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

6: And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

7: But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea,

8: And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

9: And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

10: For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

11: And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

12: And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.  
13: And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.  
14: And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,  
15: And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:  
16: And Simon he surnamed Peter;  
17: And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:  
18: And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite,  
19: And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.  
20: And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.  
21: And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.  
22: And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.  
23: And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?  
24: And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.  
25: And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.  
26: And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.  
27: No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.  
28: Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:  
29: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:  
30: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.  
31: There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.  
32: And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.  
33: And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?  
34: And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!  
35: For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

1: And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

2: And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

3: Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:

4: And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

5: And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

6: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

7: And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

8: And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

9: And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

10: And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

11: And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

12: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

13: And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

14: The sower soweth the word.

15: And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

16: And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

17: And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

18: And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

19: And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

20: And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

21: And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

22: For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

23: If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

24: And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.

25: For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

26: And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

27: And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

28: For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

29: But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

30: And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

31: It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is

less than all the seeds that be in the earth:

32: But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

33: And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.

34: But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

35: And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

36: And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

37: And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

38: And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

39: And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

40: And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

41: And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

1: And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

2: And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

3: Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

4: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

5: And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

6: But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

7: And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

8: For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

9: And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

10: And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

11: Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

12: And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that

we may enter into them.

13: And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

14: And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

15: And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

16: And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

17: And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

18: And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

19: Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

20: And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

21: And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea.

22: And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,

23: And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

24: And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

25: And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

26: And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

27: When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

28: For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

29: And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

30: And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

31: And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

32: And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

33: But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

34: And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

35: While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?

36: As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

37: And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

38: And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.

39: And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

40: And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

41: And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.

42: And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

43: And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

1: And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2: And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3: Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

4: But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5: And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

6: And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

7: And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

8: And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:

9: But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.

10: And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.

11: And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart

thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

12: And they went out, and preached that men should repent.

13: And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

14: And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

15: Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.

16: But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

17: For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.

18: For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

19: Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:

20: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

21: And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;

22: And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.

23: And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

24: And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

25: And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

26: And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

27: And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,

28: And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.

29: And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

30: And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

31: And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

32: And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

33: And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.

34: And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

35: And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed:

36: Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.

37: He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?

38: He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

39: And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.

40: And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.

41: And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

42: And they did all eat, and were filled.

43: And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

44: And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

45: And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

46: And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

47: And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

48: And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

49: But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

50: For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

51: And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

52: For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

53: And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

54: And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,

55: And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

56: And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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**Last modified: June 05, 2000**

[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

1: Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

2: And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.

3: For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

4: And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

5: Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

6: He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

7: Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

8: For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

9: And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

10: For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

- 11: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.
- 12: And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;
- 13: Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.
- 14: And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand:
- 15: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.
- 16: If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.
- 17: And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.
- 18: And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;
- 19: Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?
- 20: And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.
- 21: For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,
- 22: Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:
- 23: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.
- 24: And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.
- 25: For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:
- 26: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.
- 27: But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.
- 28: And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.
- 29: And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.
- 30: And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.
- 31: And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.
- 32: And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in

his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

33: And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;

34: And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

35: And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

36: And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;

37: And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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**Last modified: June 05, 2000**

[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

1: In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

2: I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:

3: And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

4: And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?

5: And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

6: And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.

7: And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.

8: So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.

9: And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

10: And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

11: And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

12: And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation

seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

13: And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

14: Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

15: And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

16: And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.

17: And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?

18: Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?

19: When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.

20: And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.

21: And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

22: And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

23: And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

24: And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

25: After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

26: And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

27: And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

28: And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

29: And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

30: And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

31: And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32: And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

33: But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

34: And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35: For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

36: For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37: Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

38: Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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**Last modified: June 05, 2000**

[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

1: And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

2: And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.

3: And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

4: And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

5: And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

6: For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.

7: And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

8: And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

9: And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

10: And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

11: And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?

12: And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought.

13: But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

14: And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

15: And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.

16: And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

17: And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

18: And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

19: He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

20: And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

21: And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

22: And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

23: Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

24: And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

25: When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

26: And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

27: But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.

28: And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?

29: And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

30: And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.

31: For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is

delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

32: But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

33: And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

34: But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.

35: And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

36: And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

37: Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

38: And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us.

39: But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

40: For he that is not against us is on our part.

41: For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

42: And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

43: And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

44: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

45: And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

46: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

47: And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

48: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

49: For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

50: Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

1: And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.

2: And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.

3: And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

4: And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.

5: And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

6: But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

7: For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

8: And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

9: What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

10: And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.

11: And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

12: And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

13: And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

- 14: But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.
- 15: Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.
- 16: And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.
- 17: And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?
- 18: And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.
- 19: Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.
- 20: And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.
- 21: Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.
- 22: And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.
- 23: And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!
- 24: And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!
- 25: It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.
- 26: And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?
- 27: And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.
- 28: Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.
- 29: And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,
- 30: But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.
- 31: But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

32: And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

33: Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:

34: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

35: And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

36: And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

37: They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

38: But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

39: And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:

40: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.

41: And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

42: But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43: But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

44: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

45: For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

46: And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.

47: And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

48: And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

49: And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.

50: And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

51: And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do

unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

52: And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

- 1: And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,
- 2: And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.
- 3: And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.
- 4: And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.
- 5: And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?
- 6: And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.
- 7: And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.
- 8: And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way.
- 9: And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:
- 10: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.
- 11: And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come,

he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

12: And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

13: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

14: And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

15: And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

16: And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

17: And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

18: And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

19: And when even was come, he went out of the city.

20: And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

21: And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

22: And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

23: For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

24: Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

25: And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26: But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

27: And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,

28: And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?

29: And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

30: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.

31: And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?

32: But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.

33: And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

1: And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!

2: And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

3: And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

4: Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

5: And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you:

6: For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

7: And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.

8: For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

9: But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

10: And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

11: But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought

beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

12: Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

13: And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14: But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:

15: And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:

16: And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.

17: But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

18: And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

19: For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.

20: And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

21: And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not:

22: For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

23: But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

24: But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,

25: And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

26: And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

27: And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

28: Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near:

29: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

30: Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these

things be done.

31: Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

32: But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

33: Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

34: For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

35: Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

36: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

37: And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

1: After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.

2: But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.

3: And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.

4: And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?

5: For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

6: And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

7: For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.

8: She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

9: Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

10: And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.

11: And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him

money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

12: And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?

13: And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.

14: And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

15: And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.

16: And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

17: And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.

18: And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.

19: And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?

20: And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.

21: The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

22: And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.

23: And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.

24: And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

25: Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

26: And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

27: And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

28: But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

29: But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.

30: And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.

31: But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

- 32: And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.
- 33: And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;
- 34: And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.
- 35: And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.
- 36: And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.
- 37: And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?
- 38: Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.
- 39: And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.
- 40: And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him.
- 41: And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
- 42: Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.
- 43: And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.
- 44: And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely.
- 45: And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him.
- 46: And they laid their hands on him, and took him.
- 47: And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.
- 48: And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me?
- 49: I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.
- 50: And they all forsook him, and fled.
- 51: And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him:
- 52: And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.
- 53: And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.
- 54: And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high

priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.  
55: And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.  
56: For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.  
57: And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying,  
58: We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.  
59: But neither so did their witness agree together.  
60: And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?  
61: But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?  
62: And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.  
63: Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?  
64: Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.  
65: And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.  
66: And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest:  
67: And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.  
68: But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.  
69: And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.  
70: And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.  
71: But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.  
72: And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

1: And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

2: And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.

3: And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing.

4: And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee.

5: But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.

6: Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.

7: And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

8: And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.

9: But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

10: For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.

11: But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

12: And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I

shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?

13: And they cried out again, Crucify him.

14: Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

15: And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

16: And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.

17: And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,

18: And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!

19: And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.

20: And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

21: And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

22: And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

23: And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

24: And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

25: And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

26: And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

27: And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.

28: And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

29: And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,

30: Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

31: Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.

32: Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

33: And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

34: And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

35: And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he

calleth Elias.

36: And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

37: And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

38: And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

39: And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

40: There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;

41: (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

42: And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,

43: Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.

44: And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.

45: And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

46: And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

47: And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

1: And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2: And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

3: And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

4: And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

5: And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

6: And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

7: But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

8: And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

9: Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

10: And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.

11: And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

12: After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.

13: And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.

14: Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

15: And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

16: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

17: And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

18: They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

19: So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

20: And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Interpretation](#)[Search](#)

1: And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

2: And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

3: And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.

4: And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.

5: And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.

6: Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

7: But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.

8: And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

9: What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

10: And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

11: This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

12: And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and

went their way.

13: And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.

14: And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?

15: Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it.

16: And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's.

17: And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

18: Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

19: Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

20: Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.

21: And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise.

22: And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also.

23: In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.

24: And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?

25: For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

26: And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

27: He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

28: And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

29: And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

30: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

31: And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32: And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

33: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34: And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

35: And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?

36: For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

37: David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

38: And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,

39: And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:

40: Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

41: And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

42: And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

43: And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

44: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Interpretation](#) ]

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Last modified: March 19, 1999

[Home](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)

### Servant of God: A Study of *Mark*

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[Search](#)

### Introduction

Mark, as the earliest gospel, should be read carefully as the foundational knowledge for the person of Christ. This gospel begins with the baptism and the life of Jesus in Galilee (chapters 1-9); following the transfiguration, we follow Jesus and his disciples from Galilee to Jerusalem, concluding with his entry into that holy city (chapter 11); the final section is the story of Jesus' passion (chapters 14 and 15). Chapter thirteen is apocalyptic and addresses the end of time; the final chapter contains the resurrection.

As the first gospel, Mark is dated about 64-72 CE. This would be just prior to the decisive Roman destruction of the temple in 70 CE. The Romans, as we will recall, conquered this Jewish nation in 63 BCE. The Christian movement began in an era of violence and national upheaval. From a conquered nation came the person Jesus, usually said to have been born about 8 to 4 BCE; he is said to have died between 27 and 33 CE. Paul's death in 64 CE puts him as having written before the cataclysmic Roman temple destruction. Importantly, the other gospels are post-70 CE, as are, arguably, Acts, the books of Timothy, Titus, Peter, Jude, James and John, and, of course, Revelation.

In social context, Jesus was born a Jew into a Jewish world. After 70 CE, the survival of the Jews meant survival through scripture simply because the nation, holy city, temple and priesthood had been destroyed. This is, of course, the time of the writing of the later gospels. Up until 70 CE, Jerusalem could be peopled with those who compromised with the Romans (Saducees), resisted through a conservative interpretation of their scripture (Pharisees) or violence (Zealots), while still others simply withdrew (Gnostics). With the temple destruction, the Jews essentially lost their identity. With Massada in 73 CE, Jewish resistance ended with suicide. The only possession left for wandering Jews was their Torah.

Christianity, born within Jewish synagogues and interpreting Christ as a new revelation of God, separated itself from its Jewish origin after 70 CE and became more Gentile in nature. Before 70 CE, Christians and Jews co-existed with a tension between Torah as full revelation of God and Jesus as new revelation. After 70 CE, Christians clearly began to go their own way, reinterpreting all of the existing scriptures in light of the new revelation. In the 80s, Jews no longer allowed anything other than strict orthodoxy within their synagogues and actually ex-communicated Jewish Christians. This schism between Jew and Gentile lends a peculiarly misguided

hard-headedness about the recognition of their common ancestry.

This study will attempt to read Mark as closely related to its Jewish background.

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## Chapter 1

- 1: The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;
- 2: As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.
- 3: The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
- 4: John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.
- 5: And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.
- 6: And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;
- 7: And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.
- 8: I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.
- 9: And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.
- 10: And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:
- 11: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.
- 12: And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.
- 13: And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.
- 14: Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,
- 15: And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.
- 16: Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.
- 17: And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.
- 18: And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.
- 19: And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.
- 20: And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.
- 21: And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.
- 22: And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.
- 23: And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,
- 24: Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.
- 25: And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.
- 26: And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.
- 27: And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.
- 28: And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.
- 29: And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew,

with James and John.

30: But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.

31: And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

32: And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

33: And all the city was gathered together at the door.

34: And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

35: And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

36: And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.

37: And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.

38: And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

39: And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

40: And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41: And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

42: And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43: And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

44: And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

45: But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

## Interpretation

Summary Jesus continues his mission in Galilee, controversy following him; this chapter opens in Capernaum, a city on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee, a fishing village of not more than one thousand in the first century. He creates controversy by healing a paralytic and telling him his sins are forgiven. The scribes accuse him of blasphemy. He calls the tax collector Levi, son of Alphaeus, to follow him, again causing the scribes to cite him for the offense of eating with sinners. Next, the people generally see that Jesus and his disciples are not fasting like his predecessor John the Baptist and followers, and they want to know why; Jesus replies in the parables of the bridegroom and new wine in old wineskins. His disciples again cause offense when they pluck from corn on the Sabbath and eat. This time, Jesus responds by telling his critics that the Sabbath is made for humankind, not humankind for the Sabbath. He bases himself authoritatively in scripture, citing I Samuel 21.1-6 and the example of David and his companions eating from the bread of Presence.

Largely, the controversies in Galilee mark Jesus knowledgeable of scriptural traditions but resisting the current pious and legal interpretations. He is in Capernaum, his home town. Characteristically, people have crowded around him, in this case so many that the small house has no room for them and not even when they crowd at the front door. Determined, some seeking aid for a paralytic dig through the roof and lower the man whom Jesus, on seeing their faith, says "your sins are forgiven." Scribes in the gathered turn to each other, whispering among themselves that he has blasphemed in indicating he can forgive sins. Dwelling houses in Palestine usually had a flight of stone steps built on the outside and leading to *the roof*, which was flat and made probably of sticks and packed earth (ON). Apparently, the scribes see Jesus as claiming divine prerogative. Jesus perceived in his spirit what the whispering was about and confronted them openly by asking them why they raised such questions in their hearts. Is it easier, he asked, to say your sins are forgiven or to tell the paralytic to take up his mat and walk? He continues by referring to himself as the Son of Man and telling the paralytic to take up his mat, to walk, and go home. Characteristically, those gathered marvel once again relative to the marvelous results they behold. Jesus is clear: "the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." Concerning the title, Oxford notes delineates at least two meanings:

*Son of Man*, a title which Jesus used of himself, probably seemed to his listeners to carry either of two meanings: (a) that Jesus called himself a typical human being in accordance with the common meaning of *son of* (see [Matthew 5.45 n.](#)); or (b) that Jesus (contrary to the humble conditions of his daily life) linked himself to the prophesied figure of [Daniel 7.13–14](#) who was popularly regarded as the coming Messiah (see [Acts 7.56 n.](#)). Jesus nowhere fully discloses his own understanding of the term (but see [Mark 8.32 n.](#)). However, each meaning by itself, as well as both together (see [Matthew 25.29 n.](#)), could have appealed to him. It was also characteristic of him to speak in such a way as to oblige his hearers to determine their own personal attitudes toward him as part of the process of understanding his words (see [Matthew 13.3 n.](#)).

The verses alluded to in Daniel describe the Son of Man in the following way: 13 "As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. 14 To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed."

Tax collectors in Jesus' day were no more liked than tax collector today:

Both Greek states and Rome had only a rudimentary civil service and budgeting process. Hence minor taxes were regularly sold to a private company, which would pay the agreed price to the treasury and collect (in principle, at the fixed rate) from the taxpayers. These *tel̄nain̄nain̄* had long been known and disliked in the Greek East (an Alexandrian comic poet calls them "birds of prey"). Roman *publicani*, while they always performed this service, had an essentially different origin. They were state contractors who would buy at auction both performance contracts (e.g., building contracts or contracts for army supplies) and collection contracts (as for taxes or the revenues of mines or ponds or forests). During the age of Roman expansion and public building, in the Middle Republic, they made most of their money from the former and, as Polybius tells us, they widely distributed prosperity among Roman citizens. This changed when the reformer Gaius Gracchus in 123 bce entrusted them with the collection of the principal tax (the tithe on produce) of the province of Asia, which Rome had just acquired, and also with staffing the criminal courts, which tried senators for maladministration and, in due course, for other crimes. This vastly increased the scale of their undertakings, and made them a major power in the state, though they always narrowly defended their economic interests. Their power in the courts was temporarily removed by Sulla (81 bce), but was soon essentially restored. As a result, governors and their staffs, instead of regulating their activities, tended to become their partners—often in collusion with the provincial upper class, which could pass the burden on to those below—in grossly exploiting the provinces, especially in the east, where Pompey introduced the Asian system to all the new provinces he organized, including Syria (OC)

In the late Republic, the power of the *publicani* led to major abuses, which we know from Cicero's speeches. Illegal extra charges were widely added, and permitted by the governor, and violence was used to extort compliance. Although there was more control under Augustus, this is the background to what we find in Judea. The Jews soon hated the Roman occupation even more than they had hated Archelaus, whose deposition they had demanded. Native collectors of taxes were now seen as collaborators with the oppressor, using his backing for their illegal profits. The problem was apparently worse in Judea than elsewhere, presumably because of the religious element in the national resistance; it is interesting that the "publicans" appear only in the Gospels, not in the rest of the New Testament, even though they were of course active in all the provinces. They are regularly coupled with sinners (note that where [Matthew 5.46](#) has "publicans" [Luke 6.32](#) has "sinners"), with prostitutes, and with gentiles (OC)

Jesus clearly is not worried about his social reputation when he befriends Levi and makes him a follower. On this occasion, when questioned by the scribes, he replies "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." By his act, though, he sets himself apart from the accepted social order and pointedly positions himself with the lower class.

Jesus next calls attention to himself and his disciples by not fasting; John the Baptist and his followers had managed to escape this level of social scrutiny by fasting in the accepted tradition.

Fasting in connection with prayer, penitence, and preparation for new ventures has been practiced from early times in many cultures and religions. The Bible recognizes it as regular in mourning for the dead (1 Samuel 31.13), expressions of penitence (Nehemiah 9.1), intercession (2 Samuel 12.16), and prayer for God's aid (Judges 20.26). Fasting was undertaken for personal reasons (Psalm 25.13), as a national act in the face of calamity (Joel 2.15), or as a periodic liturgical observance (Zechariah 8.19); normally it involved abstinence from all food to show dependence on God and submission to his will. The great national and liturgical fast was that of the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16.29–34), but fasting was generally recognized, especially after the exile, as a meritorious pious practice and as a potent aid to prayer (Tobit 12.8; Luke 2.37). Later, the author of Isaiah 58 claimed that if fasting was to be of value, it must be accompanied by compassion and a concern for social justice (ON).

The Pharisees fasted on Mondays and Thursdays. Jesus reminds them that scripturally, not fasting can sometimes be sound: his disciples have him with them; he uses the metaphor of the bridegroom, signifying a time when joy is the appropriate expression. He also remains firmly aware of his mission to move beyond the current religious observances: his "new wine" cannot be poured into old wineskins, which would burst from the fermentation.

The Pharisees next observe Jesus' disciples eating corn in the fields on the Sabbath and attack Jesus through their act. Jesus demonstrates superior scriptural knowledge and reminds the Pharisees that David himself had suspended the rules and eaten from the bread of the Presence. Jesus clearly does not ascribe to any rules ethic where the rule always holds regardless of circumstance; he clearly sides with the act and reminds his critics that the Sabbath is for humankind, not humankind for the Sabbath.

Jesus uses, it would seem, the process of civil disobedience. He knows the law and traditions and sees in them the purpose of serving the greater needs of humankind. He is clearly opposed to a purely legalistic keeping of laws. In the face of the religious establishment, however, he seems clearly defiant. It should not be overlooked that these religious leaders are indeed pious; for Jesus, though, something more than piety is necessary. One must go beyond the mere law in meeting the contingencies of a pressing humanity.

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## Chapter 2

- 1: And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.
- 2: And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.
- 3: And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.
- 4: And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.
- 5: When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.
- 6: But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,
- 7: Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?
- 8: And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9: Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10: But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11: I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12: And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

13: And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

14: And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

15: And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

16: And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

17: When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

18: And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

19: And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

20: But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

21: No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

22: And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

23: And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

24: And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

25: And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?

26: How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

27: And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

28: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

## Interpretation 2

Summary The Pharisees conspire with the Herodians against Jesus because he heals a man's withered hand on the Sabbath. Questioning their legal and ritualistic piety, Jesus challenges them: "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" The fame of Jesus has apparently grown because Mark next records him as being surrounded by a throng near the Sea of Galilee; because the press of the crowd is so great, he asks his disciples to take him out upon the sea in a boat. Unclean spirits fell down before him and proclaimed "You are the Son of God!" Jesus admonished those healed not to make him known. From the sea, Jesus goes up into the mountains where he appoints the twelve:

16 So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

He next returns home with a crowd following him. His family describes Jesus as having gone mad; the scribes say he has been infected by Beelzebul and demons. Jesus points out to the scribes that it is illogical that he would be

infected by Beelzebul at the same time that he is casting out Satan; a divided kingdom, Jesus reminds them, is a kingdom which will not stand. This section concludes with a warning about blasphemy of the Holy Spirit:

28 "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— 30 for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

This chapter concludes with word that Jesus' mother and brothers are asking for him; Jesus responds by saying that everyone gathered there are his brothers and sisters: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

In this chapter, as everywhere in Mark, Jesus is active:

a favorite word in Mark is the Greek word meaning *immediately* or *at once* or *then*, which occurs about forty times in sixteen chapters. On the other hand, Mark records fewer words of Jesus than does any of the other Gospels; it contains one collection of sayings in the form of a discourse ([Mark 13](#)) and a few parables (e.g. [Mark 4](#)). Oxford Handbook

Jesus continues teaching, preaching, and healing in Galilee, and in going about his work, he continues to tangle with the religious establishment. The first controversy is over the Sabbath, with the Pharisees conspiring with the Herodians. We will recall that what is done on the Sabbath has already been an issue in the second chapter of Mark: The Pharisees observed Jesus' disciples eating corn in the fields on the Sabbath and attacked Jesus through their act. Jesus demonstrated superior scriptural knowledge and reminded the Pharisees that David himself had suspended the rules and eaten from the bread of the Presence. Jesus clearly did not ascribe to any rules ethic where the rule always holds regardless of circumstance; he clearly sided with the act and reminded his critics that the Sabbath is for humankind, not humankind for the Sabbath. In this round, Jesus asks, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" His critics are silent. Jesus is clearly doing good by healing the withered hand. Jesus, acting by the principle stated in [Mark 2.27](#), equates acts to meet human need with acts *lawful . . . on the sabbath* (*Oxford Annotated*).

With a multitude now pressing about him, Jesus seeks solitude and distance in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. He has done the good work of healing many with diseases and unclean spirits:

"Spirit" translates words that in both Hebrew and Greek mean "wind" ([Genesis 8.1](#); cf. [Genesis 1.1](#)) or "breath" ([Genesis 6.17](#); [Ezekiel 37.5](#)), as well as vital essence. Biblical writers do not normally combine the two terms to designate the totality of human nature. The body/soul dichotomy that so fascinated Greek philosophy is not generally presupposed, even when the two terms occur in close proximity; thus, [Matthew 26.41](#) is not a real exception to this rule (*Oxford Companion*).

The unclean spirits recognize the one casting them out as the "Son of God." Jesus rebukes them not to make him known, reminding the reader once again that Jesus sees his mission as different from that of the expected Messiah; he is the servant walking among and healing humankind, reaching out with a gentle touch, a caring heart.

Next, Jesus appoints the twelve:

13 He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, † to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, 15 and to have authority to cast out demons. 16 So he appointed the twelve: † Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is,

Sons of Thunder); 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Concerning his disciples, *Oxford Companion* reminds us of their humanity:

The somewhat amorphous group called disciples constitutes a vital feature of all the Gospel narratives, but the authors used the term to communicate different aspects of being a follower of Jesus. In Mark the disciples are agents of instruction for the author, but as negative examples. They teach the audience or readers, but mostly through the things they do wrong or fail to understand. The constant questions and concerns of the disciples, particularly in the central section of Mark's gospel, provide an opportunity for the author to explain the purpose of Jesus' mission and the hidden meanings of his teaching. Discipleship in Mark involves fear, doubt, and suffering, as [Mark 8.31](#), [Mark 9.31](#), and [Mark 10.33](#) make explicit; nowhere is this more poignantly captured than in the character of Simon Peter. The disciples in Mark, whomever this broad term may include, never fully understand and never quite overcome their fear and apprehensions. There is actually the hint in Mark that the disciples' fear is in some sense the beginning of wisdom.

A question asked by *Oxford Companion* is significant: Did Jesus consciously act as if he were establishing the new Israel by selecting twelve representatives? The symbolic significance of the number twelve is difficult to miss. Readers will want to look at the complete number symbolism described in the *Oxford Companion*; concerning twelve, it says the following:

**Twelve**, like seven, is a number of completeness and perfection. This number in particular must not always be taken literally. Israel always comprised more tribes than the twelve that were actually counted, and the counting of the twelve was not always uniform ([Genesis 49](#); [Joshua 13–19](#); [Revelation 7.7–8](#)), but the twelve meant "all Israel." It was regarded as important that there were twelve apostles and that their number should be complete, but the lists do not quite tally (See [Twelve, The](#)). The twenty-four elders ([Revelation 4.4](#)) clearly represent all Israel and the whole church. The twelve cornerstones and gates of the new Jerusalem not only link the city with the tribes of Israel and the apostles, but also signify its divine perfection, as do its measurements of 12,000 stadia square and its walls of 144 cubits. The 144,000 of [Revelation 7](#) and [Revelation 14](#) in each case mean that the number is complete and not one of the elect is lost; in [Revelation 7](#) John hears the 144,000 from Israel (all Israel) being counted, but sees "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (the redeemed gentiles).

These twelve live intimately with Jesus, adopt his mission and his way of life.

In this chapter's final section, Jesus reveals the cost of his mission. His mother and brothers, concerned for his safety given the intense emotions which have been aroused around him, also begin to fear for his sanity. The Pharisees have previously recognized his powers but attributed them to Beelzebul or Satanic forces.

The Phoenician god at Ekron consulted by King Ahaziah ([2 Kings 1.2–18](#)). The name in Hebrew means "Lord of Flies," but no evidence exists for a Philistine god who either drove off flies or gave oracles through their buzzing. The Hebrew form is probably a derogatory transformation of Baal-zebul, which appears in Ugaritic texts meaning "Lord Baal," but could also be understood as "Master of the Heavenly House" (cf [Matthew 10.25](#)). In Aramaic, Beel-zebul may have been construed as "Lord of Dung," Beel-zebul possibly as "Enemy." During

the Greco-Roman period, Beel-zebul came to be used for a leader among the demons opposed to God. Jesus denies that he casts out demons by authority of Beelzebul, the ruler of demons ([Matthew 12.24–27](#) par.). Some translations employ Beelzebub in the New Testament passages, following the text of 2 Kings. Christian interpreters identified Beelzebul with Satan on the basis of the Gospel passages (*Oxford Companion*).

Jesus, aware of his mission to humankind as more pressing than his family's concern, replies "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

## Relevant Information: Jewish Sects

Taken from *Exploring the New Testament World* by Albert A. Bell (Thomas Nelson Inc., 1998)

### Sadducees

The Sadducees claimed their descent from David's high priest Zadok (2 Sam. 8.17; 1 Kings 2.35), or perhaps from the word meaning righteous. They were ultra-conservatives, recognizing only the authority of the Torah, refusing any notion not taught therein. They did not deny angels, which appear in the Torah, but they were cool to elaborate beliefs about angels and demons. Such beliefs flourished in the period after the Babylonian exile. They rejected belief in the resurrection because they saw no evidence of it in the Torah.

In Mark 12:18-27, the Sadducees question Jesus about the woman married to seven brothers; one could hear them snickering as they posed the problem; they probably regarded their question as reducing to absurdity the whole issue of resurrection. Jesus answers from the book of Moses, the only book they recognize, telling them the dead raised are like angels, who don't marry. In Acts 4. 1-3, 5.17, the Pharisees attack the apostles of Jesus for preaching "that in Jesus there is resurrection of the dead." Paul creates dissension between the Sadducees and Pharisees when he voices his belief in the hope of the resurrection (Acts 23.6-8).

The Sadducees had little contact with the ordinary people of Judea and no concern with popularity. They demonstrated a rather harsh spirit, being rude even among themselves. They had the support of the rich but no following among the masses. They were aristocratic, high-priestly people, concerned almost exclusively with running the temple. After the temple's destruction in 70 CE, the Sadducees disappeared from history, unable to adapt to the changed circumstances in which Judaism found itself.

Oxford Companion says the following about this failure to adapt:

In their development of an oral tradition of legal interpretation, the Pharisees and Sages were in one way doing no more than what had been done throughout Jewish history, that is, adapting their legal traditions to changing circumstance. Why should the Sadducees oppose this? Possibly because the written Law reinforced their control over the Temple; possibly too because the Pharisees were attempting to undermine that position by transferring some of the priestly rituals and practices away from Jerusalem to the towns and villages outside. Certainly the Sadducees were concerned principally to uphold the Temple and its sacrifices: for them it was the proper observance of Temple ritual that maintained the covenant relationship between Israel and God.

Rejection of belief in the resurrection again indicates a traditionalist stance. Jews had long believed that so long as Israel obeyed the Law then God would rule over them and reward the righteous and punish the wicked in this life. Belief in the resurrection, on the other hand, was linked to beliefs that the present age was in the grip of dark powers, so that in this life the righteous would suffer, although God would ultimately vindicate them. Those who had died would be raised so that they too could receive their due rewards ([Daniel 12.2](#)). To reject belief in the resurrection and, indeed, possibly also in demonic powers who controlled this world in the present age, was then also to reject the belief that this present age was radically corrupted; in fact, from the Sadducees' point of view, those who argued the contrary view may have appeared to deny the continued existence of the covenant between God and Israel. This may also explain their denial of fate. They believed that Jews were free to influence their destiny; if they obeyed the Law and repented and made due restitution when they sinned, then all would be well. The darker views of the world associated with belief in the resurrection also entailed beliefs in the pervasiveness of the power of sin (see [Romans 5.12–21](#), which may owe more than a little to Paul's Pharisaic background, although such beliefs should not be thought of as specifically Pharisaic), such that men

and women were no longer in control of their fate. It is such views that the Sadducees rejected.

This may suggest a further reason why the Sadducees disappeared after 70 ce. Not only was their position as the Temple aristocracy fundamentally destroyed; their belief that the maintenance of the Temple cult would suffice to stave off real disaster for Israel had also been proven false.

### Pharisees/Scribes

Most knowledge about the Pharisees has to be based on information gleaned from Christians and Sadducees, their opponents. They weren't priests, and the term rabbi was not commonly used; they were teachers and interpreters of the Torah, a scholar class devoted to the Written and the Unwritten Law. Even their name is debated: perhaps a corruption of Persian, an allusion to the theological doctrines--resurrection, angels and demons--which they were accused of picking up from the East. Another possible origin is Semitic, deriving the name from "heretic" or "separated ones." The term Pharisee was at first used in a derogatory way. Another possible origin of the name is from the word meaning "to specify" or "be exact." They were concerned with the fine points of the law. The name is used only once in the Talmud, with the Pharisees otherwise being called "sages" or "scribes."

Scribes existed in Judaism probably since the time of Ezra. Ezra, it will be recalled, led the people of Israel back to a strict observance of the Law after their return from the Babylonian exile in 538 BCE. Scribes were copyists of the Law and regarded themselves as preservers and protectors rather than interpreters. These scribes were known as soferim. By the late second century BCE, sofer had taken on the sense of one who "seeks out wisdom of all the ancients." By this time, sofer had also come to include interpretation: an intellectual, not a scribe; a scholar, not a copyist. The Greeks still translated the word as grammateus.

The Pharisees are in the New Testament, "those skilled in the law," and "teachers of the law." The Pharisees were considered the most authoritative in their explanations of the Law and were esteemed as a leading sect. Jesus said they "sit on Moses' seat" (Matthew 23.2-3), and he urged people to follow their teaching. Part of the negative reputation of the Pharisees may come from the Herodians; since the Pharisees opposed Herod bitterly, his followers are less than objective in reporting about them.

The Pharisees were liberals. They accepted the books of the prophets, as well as the Torah, as authoritative Scripture. Still, they were not ready to canonize the Writings. The Pharisees also stressed a continuing oral interpretation of the Scriptures as conditions changed or new insights were achieved. The body of oral law eventually became known as the Mishnah. The Pharisees welcomed new rituals, including the celebration of the Hanukkah, established in 164 BCE to commemorate the cleaning of the temple from defilement under King Antiochus IV Epiphanes; also, the Purim, the joyous re-enactment of the Jews' rescue by Esther. The practice of baptizing proselytes is pharisaic, as is much of the Jewish doctrine about angels, demons, the Messiah, and bodily resurrection.

Both the Sadducees and Pharisees developed out of the Maccabean period (160s BCE). The Pharisees seem to have come from a group known as the Hasidim or the "Pure Ones." The term is used, also, of a Jewish mystic group who refused to break the Law by fighting on the Sabbath. Not many survived the war; those remaining liberalized their beliefs somewhat.

The Pharisees themselves were divided in their own day. The Hillel group took a lenient view of the Law and conciliatory stance in most controversies, whether with Gentiles or Jews. Hillel formulated the negative golden rule: do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you. Gamaliel, who advised the Sanhedrine, posed the rule, consider carefully what you propose to do to these men; he was a follower of Hillel, who was a minority at the time. Paul was a student of Gamaliel. The second group was led by Shammai, who advocated a stricter interpretation of the Mosaic Law in opposition to the Roman government; he was less tolerant of Gentiles. His party won control of the Sanhedrin during Jesus' lifetime. Only after 70 did the moderate views of Hillel become dominant. After 70 CE, the terms Pharisee and scribe drop out of common usage, to be replaced by "rabbi." After the destruction of the temple, all Jews became concerned with survival of the faith. The Pharisaic movement may be seen largely as an attempt to free Judaism from the domineering priesthood and the restrictions of the temple or as an attempt to provide an alternative mode of Judaism.

Oxford Companion says the following about the history of these people:

The Pharisees' origin lie in the period of the Maccabean revolt (166–159 bce), where we hear of the emergence of a group of Jews zealous for the Law, the Hasideans ([1 Maccabees 2.42](#)), who opposed the way in which the high priests were accommodating to the intrusion of Hellenistic ways into Judaism. This renewal movement spawned not only the Pharisees but also the Essenes. It is likely that the Pharisees saw the establishment of the Hasmonean monarchy (140 bce) as an opportunity for national renewal and the restoration of true observance of the Law. Certainly, unlike the Essenes, they

remained in Jerusalem after the usurpation of the high priesthood by the Hasmoneans (152 bce). They probably shared the popular enthusiasm for the successful campaign for Jewish independence, recorded in [1 Maccabees 14.27–49](#), when a great synagogue of the Jews conferred the kingship and the high priesthood on Simon. Interestingly there is no sanction for such a synagogue, or assembly, in the Pentateuch, and this may have been justified by the oral tradition of the elders that the Pharisees cultivated. The Pharisees thus have their origins in a popular movement based on scribal traditions for interpreting the Law. They legitimated the Hasmonean monarchy by allowing it to control the Temple and subsequently sought to influence the monarchy both at court and in the Sanhedrin, the council in Jerusalem that was the continuation of the great synagogue. In this they were by no means always successful, falling foul of John Hyrcanus (134–104) and Alexander Jannaeus (103–76) but being restored to favor by Salome Alexandra (76–67). As their authority at the royal court diminished they sought to influence the people through the local courts and synagogues where they enjoyed considerable success. They were not a uniform movement; over the years different schools of interpretation of the Law grew up around different teachers, notably Hillel and Shammai. After the First Jewish Revolt (66–70 ce) they emerged as the leaders, under Jonathan ben Zakkai, of the academy at Jamnia, which laid the foundation of rabbinic Judaism.

The Herodians This group was considerably political in its influence. They were a party favoring the restoration of one of Herod's descendants to the throne. Herod's sons were Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee during Jesus' lifetime, and Philip, ruling Iturea and Trachonitis (east of Galilee). The Pharisees seemed to have initiated contact with the Herodians in an attempt to gain political allies in their campaign against Jesus. Herod Antipas was deeply concerned about Jesus due to his connection with John the Baptist, whom he beheaded (Mark 6.16). Luke is the only Gospel to relate that Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas during the deliberations over his fate.

Herod's grandson Agrippa I was made king of Judea in 41 by his friend, the emperor Claudius. Agrippa died in 44, and the province reverted to being governed by a Roman prefect. Agrippa II eventually ruled over northern territories, including Galilee, but Judea remained under direct Roman control.

#### Essenes

The Essenes were devout individuals who lived in sequestered groups or towns. Their theology was heavily apocalyptic, and their lifestyle was self-disciplined and ascetic. John the Baptist had strong overtones of Essene thought in his preaching and appearance. Some also think that Jesus' forty days in the wilderness (Mark 1.12-13) might have been spent at an Essene community or that he had been in previous contact with such a group and was accustomed to spending time alone in the desert.

Oxford Companions describes the Essenes as follows:

References to the Essenes occur in a number of ancient sources: in Josephus (*War* 2.8.119–61; *Ant.* 13.5.171–2; 15.10.371–9; 18.1.11, 18–22), Philo (*Quod omnis probus* 12–13 [75–91]; *Hypothetica*, in Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 11.1–18), and Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 5.15.73). What Josephus and Philo describe is a quite widespread group in Palestine living in communities in towns or villages and distinguished by their love for each other, their simplicity of life, and their strict adherence to the Law. Pliny by contrast describes a community living in the desert by the Dead Sea. Josephus also describes their strict examination of initiates, their ritual baths and meals, their strict observance of the Sabbath, their common ownership of property, and a number of other customs.

It is widely accepted that the Essenes referred to by these ancient authors were part of the same movement whose library and the ruins of whose buildings were discovered at Khirbet Qumran on the Dead Sea in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The name Essenes itself is obscure and does not occur in the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is said by Philo to refer to their holiness; another view suggests that the name reflects their reputation as healers.

The origins of the Essenes are not clear but probably lie in the group of Hasideans, who sought to renew the Law at the time of the Maccabean revolt (166–59 bce; see [1 Maccabees 2.42](#)). It was not, however, until twenty years later, according to the Damascus Document (I.10–11), that they emerged as a separate group under the leadership of the Teacher of Righteousness. The occasion of this split within the movement was probably

the usurpation of the high priesthood by the Maccabean king, Jonathan (152 bce). The buildings at Qumran date from this time. They were occupied, possibly with a short interruption after an earthquake in 31 bce, until their destruction in the First Jewish Revolt in 68 ce.

The Essene communities were tightly structured. Each group had a leader who controlled membership, administered the common goods and property, and ruled in matters of law (see CD 13–14; 1QS 6; the leader of the community is spoken of both as a priest and a guardian, but it is not always clear whether this refers to one or two persons). The community at Qumran had a council into which members were admitted only after long schooling in the ways of the community (1QS 6–9). Ultimate authority in the community lay with the priests (1QS 6.8). The community saw itself as administering the true understanding of the Law that had been entrusted by revelation to the Teacher of Righteousness (CD 3.13–15). Only the men of the community possessed such an understanding, and as such they, and only they, were the true men of the covenant of God and Israel. They were the "sons of light"; all others, including all other Jews, were "sons of darkness" (1QS 3.13–4.26).

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## Chapter 3

- 1: And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.
- 2: And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.
- 3: And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.
- 4: And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.
- 5: And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.
- 6: And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.
- 7: But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea,
- 8: And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.
- 9: And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.
- 10: For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.
- 11: And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.
- 12: And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.
- 13: And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.
- 14: And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,
- 15: And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:
- 16: And Simon he surnamed Peter;
- 17: And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:
- 18: And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite,
- 19: And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.
- 20: And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.
- 21: And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.
- 22: And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.
- 23: And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?
- 24: And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.
- 25: And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.
- 26: And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.
- 27: No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and

then he will spoil his house.

28: Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:

29: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:

30: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

31: There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

32: And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

33: And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?

34: And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

35: For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

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## Chapter 4

1: And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

2: And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

3: Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:

4: And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

5: And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

6: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

7: And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

8: And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

9: And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

10: And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

11: And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

12: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

13: And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

14: The sower soweth the word.

15: And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

16: And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

17: And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

18: And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

19: And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

20: And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

21: And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

22: For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

23: If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

24: And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.

25: For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

26: And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

27: And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

28: For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.  
 29: But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.  
 30: And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?  
 31: It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:  
 32: But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.  
 33: And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.  
 34: But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.  
 35: And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.  
 36: And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.  
 37: And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.  
 38: And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?  
 39: And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.  
 40: And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?  
 41: And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

## Interpretation 4

Summary In chapter four of Mark, Jesus speaks in parables: the parable of the sower, the lamp under the bushel basket, the parable of the growing seed, and the parable of the mustard seed. The chapter concludes with a word about the use of parables and a demonstration of Jesus' authority over natural forces.

Recall Matthew thirteen concerning the use of parables:

10 Then the disciples came and asked him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" 11 He answered, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 13 The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.'

Here, clearly, the purpose of parables has to do with the kingdom of heaven. Mark records a similar purpose: 10 When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. 11 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret † of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; 12 in order that 'they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.' " In a later section in this chapter of Mark, the explanation is added: 33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; 34 he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples. Readers need simply to recall that the teachings of Jesus in Galilee have been accompanied by controversy. Parables in picturesque images use analogy to refer to a similar but different reality. Jesus used parables to illustrate truth with daily life; although drawn from daily life, they may be exaggerated. The parables of Jesus are generally used to illustrate; here in Mark, however, they seem to be used to conceal. One rightfully asks why Jesus would want to conceal and why he would not desire that people "turn again and be forgiven." The following general uses of parables are cited in *Oxford Companion*:

Parables served a useful purpose in concealing Jesus' message from those hostile to him: by his parables he could publicly teach about the kingdom of God, but the representatives of the Roman empire could find nothing in them that was seditious. A third reason Jesus taught in parables was to disarm his listeners and allow the truth of the divine message to penetrate their resistance. Often hearers could be challenged to pass judgment on a story before discovering that in so doing they had in fact condemned themselves (cf. [2 Samuel 12.1–4](#); [Matthew 21.28–31](#); [Luke 7.36–50](#)). A fourth reason for the use of parables was to aid memory: since Jesus' listeners preserved his teachings by memorizing them, the memorable quality of the parables proved useful.

Since Jesus in proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is near at hand has everywhere faced challenge and opposition, it would seem appropriate to think that, perhaps, he does have in mind here a softening of the seditious. He teaches about the Kingdom of God publicly without arousing overt anger or suspicion of his motives.

The first parable provided is that of the sower.

3 "Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. 8 Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." 9 And he said, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

In this case, Jesus himself interprets the parable for his disciples; we need to note that he is alone with the twelve and other believers:

13 And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. 16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. 17 But they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. † 18 And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. 20 And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

Jesus is about the work of instructing his followers. There is clearly here the sense of those inside and those outside: truth is revealed but comprehended only by those initiated.

On the heels of Jesus' words about mystery and those initiated into truth revealed comes the next parable:

21 He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand? 22 For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. 23 Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" 24 And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you. 25 For to those who have, more will be given; and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."

If this is applied to the previous parable, it would seem to suggest that Jesus is not in the business of hiding light: what is hidden will be disclosed; what is secret will come to light. These lines suggest the mystery exists relative to timing: hidden now, will be disclosed; what is secret now, will come to light. The obstruction to understanding is, ironically, the very means of understanding: the mental structure of time. Little wonder that Jesus should say, "Pay attention." He goes on to speak even more directly: what you give, you will get; those having will get more, and those without anything will discover even that taken. If one begins with possessing truth revealed, then more will be gotten; if one begins without revealed truth, even what he has will be taken. How simple! The parable works on two levels--the invisible kingdom coming into being and the existing, but disappearing temporal kingdom.

Jesus, still speaking of the Kingdom of God turns to the parable of the growing seed:

26 He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, 27 and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. 28 The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

He's direct here in talking about the Kingdom of God and the mystery of its growth--the point is that "how it [the kingdom] grows," one does not know. Even organic life is not understood in impulse, but only in manifest result: the stalk, the head, the full grain. These parables are not unrelated: Jesus began by talking about a sower, then

talked about parables as not being anything more than a "timed" disclosure, and moves now to the idea of the germinating seed or the invisible made visible in time.

The Kingdom of God, if one credits the connected argument, begins with twelve and a few followers, a very small number. This time, the figurative image is the mustard seed.

Thus, in addition to fertility, abundance, and continuity, plants are used to represent life's frailty, brevity, and transitory nature ([Isaiah 40.6–8](#); [Job 14.2](#); [Psalm 90.6](#); [1 Peter 1.24](#)). Biblical symbolism draws also on the characteristics of individual plants, such as the great height and longevity of the cedar tree ([Psalm 92.12](#); see similarly the parable of Jotham, [Judges 9.8–15](#), and the parable of the mustard seed, [Matthew 13.31–32](#)). The New Testament is replete with agricultural imagery; see, for example, [Mark 4.3–8](#); [Mark 4.26–29](#); [Matthew 9.37–38](#); [Luke 13.6–9](#). (*Oxford Companion*)

The mustard seed grows very quickly, in a matter of weeks, from the smallest of seeds into a ten to twelve foot bush. As the mustard seed becomes the greatest bush, so will the Kingdom of God become the greatest kingdom.

Having used details from nature in these parables, it's not surprising to find this argument logically culminating in a demonstration of Jesus' authority or control over the natural or temporal world:

35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." 36 And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. 37 A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" 39 He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. 40 He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" 41 And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

I'm struck by the very human cry, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" This is the mortal cry in all days and all ages. Jesus responds, as he has throughout Mark, by acting, "He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still.'" What follows is dead calm. The disciples are probably even more afraid now; at first, they had been confronted only by natural and temporal powers; now, they are in the presence of the spiritual manifest, and they are afraid and filled with awe. They ask, even though Mark has answered this in the beginning and will continue to answer it through the passion and resurrection, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" The answer, though not supplied here, is simple: he is the Son of God, and the Kingdom of God is even now being revealed among humankind.

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## Chapter 5

- 1: And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,
- 2: And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.
- 3: And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.
- 4: And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.
- 5: And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?
- 6: And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.
- 7: And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.
- 8: And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way.
- 9: And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:
- 10: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.
- 11: And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things,

and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

12: And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

13: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

14: And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

15: And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

16: And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

17: And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

18: And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

19: And when even was come, he went out of the city.

20: And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

21: And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

22: And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

23: For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

24: Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

25: And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26: But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

27: And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,

28: And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?

29: And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

30: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.

31: And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?

32: But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.

33: And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

## Interpretation 5

Summary Jesus, coming from the direction of Bethany on the east side of the Mount of Olives, prepares to enter Jerusalem; the entry is clearly staged as the accomplishment of an act and certainly the end of a journey. The disciples are sent to bring a colt upon which Jesus will ride into the city: he is proclaimed Lord in the tradition of the "coming kingdom of David." On first entering Jerusalem, he enters the temple, looks around and leaves. He is next reported as cursing a fig tree which has leaves but not fruit. This is followed by a return to and cleansing of the temple. After this cleansing, the narration returns to the fig tree and the reason for the curse, emphasizing the power of God over faith. In Jerusalem, Jesus is now confronted by Pharisees, scribes, and elders questioning his authority. Jesus deflects this question to one about whether John the Baptist had been authorized by heaven or by men.

What does one make of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, coming in the eleventh chapter of Mark, signaling the end of the opening events and journey into the Holy City?

### Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

**11** When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he

sent two of his disciples <sup>2</sup> and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.' "

<sup>4</sup> They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, <sup>5</sup> some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" <sup>6</sup> They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. <sup>7</sup> Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. <sup>8</sup> Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup> Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

<sup>10</sup> Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

<sup>11</sup> Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Remember, Jesus has just been proclaimed Messiah in the tradition of David. Now, suddenly, he sends his disciples to find a colt that has never been ridden and instructs them to untie it and bring it to him. This event, of course, signals for Christians the last week in the life of Christ. For Jews, this event continues the lead-in to the celebration of Passover. What is one to expect? Advocates of tradition go back to Zechariah 9:9:

<sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you;

triumphant and victorious is he,

humble and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

When was Zechariah written? codified? Almost everyone recognizes it as post-exile (after the Babylonian captivity). Let's look at the *Oxford annotation*:

Zechariah, whose prophecies date from 520 to 518 b.c. and are found in [Zechariah 1–8](#), was contemporary with Haggai ([Ezra 5.1](#); [Ezra 6.14](#)). He shared Haggai's zeal for a rebuilt temple, a purified community, and the coming of the messianic age (see "[Introduction to Haggai](#)"). Like Haggai also, Zechariah forms a link between earlier prophecy (especially Ezekiel) and mature apocalyptic thought ([Daniel 7–12](#)). But Zechariah differs from his contemporary in the form and presentation of his message, employing the literary style of night visions and dialogues between God, seer, and interpreting angel. With him, therefore, both the form and imagery of Jewish apocalyptic thought are significantly developed.

[Zechariah 9–14](#), which nowhere claims to be from Zechariah, portrays nothing of the early Persian period but speaks rather of the Greeks ([Zechariah 9.13](#)). Instead of Joshua and Zerubbabel, unnamed shepherds lead the community. Instead of peace and rebuilding, there are expectations of universal warfare and the siege of Jerusalem. Style, vocabulary, and theological ideas differentiate these chapters from Zechariah's work. Although they may contain some earlier bits, they were written during the Greek period, principally in the fourth and third centuries b.c., by unknown authors. Since the eschatological and messianic themes found in the first section are here further elaborated, the authors are spiritual disciples of Zechariah. The pictures of the messianic Prince of Peace and the Good Shepherd smitten for the flock are used in the New Testament in order to describe the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In the Greek period, the fourth and third centuries BCE, eschatology and Messianism have intensified. Jesus is now placed in this tradition of expectation: as Prince of Peace and Good Shepherd. His own understanding and prediction of the Passion has been that he will be smitten for the flock. The Romans, by the era of Jesus, have replaced the Greeks; not being particularly religious, they have accepted hellenized religion. Multiple gods are familiar; they often seem to be humans made into gods. They symbolize forces of nature, and the ordinary mortal procedure is to sacrifice and pray to them in order to incur favorable human outcomes. The Romans in this era are generally tolerant of the religions but suspect anything which is contrary to political allegiance. Only when religion calls attention to itself as being in opposition to current rule is there likely to be a political backlash which includes overt overriding of rebellious cults. To be proclaimed, even symbolically, as involved in any overthrow of contemporary rule in Jerusalem is judged to be in opposition to the established hegemony. So, here comes Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a colt. The outcome is expected, although it is not immediate. Jesus simply journeys into Jerusalem, ends up in the temple, and walks out.

Next, Mark records Jesus as again entering into the temple and acting immediately to clean it up:

15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; 16 and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17 He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written,

'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'?

But you have made it a den of robbers."

18 And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. 19 And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

It needs to be clear here that the temple is permitting the Jewish obligatory shekel a year (from every male adult) to be used for taxes. The Greek and Roman money must be changed into Tyrian currency. Additionally, the last part of verse fifteen indicates people are carrying baggage from their pilgrimage into the temple's outer court. Jesus is, also, fulfilling scripture; the first scripture alluded to is Isaiah 56:

6 And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,

to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,

and to be his servants,

all who keep the Sabbath, and do not profane it,

and hold fast my covenant—

7 these I will bring to my holy mountain,

and make them joyful in my house of prayer;

their burnt offerings and their sacrifices

will be accepted on my altar;

for my house shall be called a house of prayer

for all peoples.

8 Thus says the Lord God,  
 who gathers the outcasts of Israel,  
 I will gather others to them  
 besides those already gathered

This reference also clearly indicates that Gentiles are coming to the temple and finding it to be used for business rather than prayer. The next reference is from Jeremiah, but to understand the implications clearly, one needs to recognize that Jeremiah is prophesying the destruction of the temple. The Oxford annotation makes clear the connection between the apostasy of Judah and the destruction of the temple:

**7.10–12:** As *Shiloh* ([Jeremiah 7.12](#), eighteen miles north of Jerusalem), the earlier central shrine, was destroyed (around 1050 b.c. in the days of Samuel; compare [1 Samuel 4–6](#); [Psalm 78.56–72](#)), so also *this house*, desecrated by idolatry, will be destroyed ([Jeremiah 7.10](#); [Jeremiah 7.11](#); compare [Matthew 21.13](#)). Immediately following this sermon, Jeremiah was arrested (see [Jeremiah 26.8](#)).

Now, read the entire section from Jeremiah:

**7** The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: **2** Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the Lord. **3** Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you † in this place. **4** Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is † the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord."

**5** For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, **6** if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, **7** then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever.

**8** Here you are, trusting in deceptive words to no avail. **9** Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, **10** and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, "We are safe!"—only to go on doing all these abominations? **11** Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight? You know, I too am watching, says the Lord. **12** Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. **13** And now, because you have done all these things, says the Lord, and when I spoke to you persistently, you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, **14** therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your ancestors, just what I did to Shiloh. **15** And I will cast you out of my sight, just as I cast out all your kinsfolk, all the offspring of Ephraim.

Like Jeremiah, Jesus will be arrested shortly after this cleaning of the temple. The reader should recall, too, that Jesus had entered the temple when he first came into Jerusalem but merely observed and left. His look must have been profoundly sad as his eyes swept through the Court of the Gentiles.

Mark next records what seems to be a bizarre event: Jesus curses a fig tree. Why? The first answer is, of course, natural: the fig tree has leaves, an indication of at least green fruit. The fig tree shows leaves in March followed by edible knobs which drop off before the true figs form. Beneath the leaves, however, nothing is found. Symbolically, Jesus has had this sad reality demonstrated in every city he has visited, and has heard it realized all too often in the religious hierarchy. Jesus has wanted to see the invisible written into the physical manifestations; what he has observed is outward piety (show) and little substance. He, thus, curses this instance of hypocrisy in the natural order. This, of course, causes one to wonder if in the natural and mortal order hypocrisy is not the thin lacquer between the absolute and real. Jesus is further saying prophetically that the Jews with their rituals have failed to produce genuine spirituality. The withering of the fruitless fig tree becomes a prophetic symbol of the doom which is coming to the Jewish nation.

Jesus is now confronted by what appears to be an official delegation from the Sanhedrin made up of chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. They want to know what his authority is for acting as he has.

27 Again they came to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him 28 and said, "By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?"

They know obviously he has not been authorized by the Sanhedrin. Jesus turns the tables by stopping them short:

29 Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin? Answer me." 31 They argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 32 But shall we say, 'Of human origin'?"—they were afraid of the crowd, for all regarded John as truly a prophet. 33 So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

If they reply that John had been authorized from heaven, then they will be forced to acknowledge that John had also said one greater than himself was to succeed; to answer that John's authority had come from earth would have been to raise the wrath of the crowd. Jesus, therefore, has answered the question without actually having said anything!

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## Chapter 6

- 1: And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.
- 2: And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?
- 3: Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.
- 4: But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.
- 5: And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.
- 6: And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.
- 7: And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;
- 8: And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:
- 9: But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.
- 10: And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.
- 11: And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city.
- 12: And they went out, and preached that men should repent.
- 13: And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.
- 14: And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.
- 15: Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.
- 16: But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.
- 17: For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.
- 18: For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.
- 19: Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:
- 20: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard

him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

21: And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;

22: And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.

23: And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

24: And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

25: And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

26: And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

27: And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,

28: And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.

29: And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

30: And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

31: And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

32: And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

33: And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.

34: And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

35: And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed:

36: Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.

37: He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?

38: He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

39: And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.

40: And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.

41: And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

42: And they did all eat, and were filled.

43: And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

44: And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

45: And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

46: And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

47: And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

48: And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

49: But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

50: For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

51: And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

52: For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

53: And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

54: And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,

55: And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

56: And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

## Interpretation 6

Jesus is back in his hometown Nazareth, twenty miles from Capernaum, with his disciples; once again, he is in the synagogues teaching. The people's reaction is again astonishment, and they ask concerning his wisdom, recognizing Jesus as the son of Mary and brother of James, Jose, Simon, and Judas, and having sisters. For whatever reasons, these people take offense, and Jesus remarks that a prophet is without honor only in his own country, their own kin, and their own house. He is prevented from healing except for a few sick; Jesus himself is now the one who is amazed at the people's unbelief.

Jesus goes through the villages teaching, calls the twelve and sends them out two by two; they are instructed to take nothing for their journey except for staff, sandals, and two tunics--no money, no bag, and no bread. They are granted authority over unclean spirits and told to shake off the dust of their feet as a testimony against them at any place they are unwelcomed. They are to stay at the house they enter until they leave. The message proclaimed by the disciples is repentance; their work is that of healing by anointing with oil. They also cast out demons. The disciples have taken up the same mission as that of Jesus: proclaiming the kingdom.

We learn that Herod has learned of Jesus with some saying he is Elijah or a prophet. Herod is afraid he is John the Baptist whom he has beheaded returned from the dead. Herod, of course, is the one had John beheaded as a result of reprimand for Herod's having married Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Herod recognized that John was a righteous man but relented to his wife's manipulations through his daughter who had pleased him by dancing and made the request inspired by her mother. John's head is presented to Herod's daughter on a platter who, in turn, presented it to her mother. John's disciples, upon hearing of the execution, claim the body and place it in a tomb.

The disciples returned to Jesus from their mission with stories of what they have done; like Jesus, they are beset by people's comings and goings, and Jesus recognizes they need to find a deserted place and rest. They are observed leaving by boat, and the people beat them to their destination. Coming ashore, Jesus sees the crowd and feels compassion for the bewildered and helpless people and begins to teach. At a late hour, the disciples wonder if they should send the people away; instead, they are instructed to take the five loaves and two fish they have and feed the people. They do so, and the people sitting in hundreds and fifties, eat and are full. Even after five thousand have eaten, twelve baskets of food remain.

The disciples leave before Jesus, going by boat to the other side of the lake Bethsaida. In the evening, the disciples are in a boat with a storm approaching; Jesus from the land sees them and is about to pass them, walking on the water, but gets into the boat and the winds abate. The disciples are terrified, thinking Jesus is a ghost, and are even more unsettled by the winds dying down; Jesus tells them to take heart and not be afraid.

The cross over to Gennasaret, south of Capernaum, where they are immediately recognized by the crowds. They continue rushing into the region and bringing the sick for healing. As Jesus travels in villages, cities and marketplaces, and farms, the crowds struggle to get close enough to touch his clothes, for in doing so, many are healed.

Jesus is still continuing his ministry amidst controversy in the Galilean area. The people are more attracted by the physical healing than they are for spiritual, the work Jesus really wants to do. Still, even for physical healing, faith is first required. What must be remembered is that Jesus sees his work as bringing about the Kingdom of God; he is concerned that miracles will create misunderstanding about this mission and hinder his work. Despite the healings, Jesus begins to be rejected in his home town and even by his own family. His disciples, likewise, when he comes walking on the sea in the early morning, between three and six, lack the necessary faith to understand Jesus' actions. Among the people are those who believe in his power to heal, and they compete to touch the fringes of his coat. The *Oxford Annotated Bible* reminds us that the fringes indicate "the blue twisted threads at the four corners of male garments, as a reminder to obey God's commandments ([Numbers 15.38-40](#))." The appropriate scriptures are found in Numbers 15 and Deuteronomy 22:

37 The Lord said to Moses: 38 Speak to the Israelites, and tell them to make fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generations and to put a blue cord on the fringe at each corner. 39 You have the fringe so that, when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and not follow the lust of your own heart and your own eyes. 40 So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and you shall be holy to your God. 41 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out

of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God.

12 You shall make tassels on the four corners of the cloak with which you cover yourself.

This detail indicates Jesus knows and observes the Jewish law.

Jesus is found in his characteristic roles in this chapter--as teacher, healer, and a man who retreats to pray. He is also a man of compassion who cannot ignore the physical suffering of people; he walks through the crowds touching, healing, and feeding. His compassion is active.

Herod's promise to his daughter is rash: "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." The reader will recall a similarly rash promise in the Old Testament in Judges 11 by Jephthah: 30 And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord, and said, "If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, 31 then whoever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be the Lord's, to be offered up by me as a burnt offering." It would seem that rash promises, whether to God or to our own family, have similar tragic outcomes. Herod ends up having John the Baptist, whom he fears, protects, is perplexed by and knows to be a righteous and holy man, beheaded; Jephthah, who has made his vow to sacrifice to God whatever comes first out of his house after battle, ends up sacrificing his virgin daughter:

34 Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah; and there was his daughter coming out to meet him with timbrels and with dancing. She was his only child; he had no son or daughter except her. 35 When he saw her, he tore his clothes, and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low; you have become the cause of great trouble to me. For I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot take back my vow." 36 She said to him, "My father, if you have opened your mouth to the Lord, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, now that the Lord has given you vengeance against your enemies, the Ammonites." 37 And she said to her father, "Let this thing be done for me: Grant me two months, so that I may go and wander † on the mountains, and bewail my virginity, my companions and I." 38 "Go," he said and sent her away for two months. So she departed, she and her companions, and bewailed her virginity on the mountains. 39 At the end of two months, she returned to her father, who did with her according to the vow he had made. She had never slept with a man. So there arose an Israelite custom that 40 for four days every year the daughters of Israel would go out to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.

One can hardly miss the parallel in Judges: this is a human sacrifice. John's life is also being sacrificed as will be the life of Christ by the end of Mark. Christ is, however, to be the sacrifice atoning for all human shortcomings.

## Related Materials: Synagogue

The synagogue is a new form of communal institution according to the *Oxford Companion*. Whereas in the temple, sacrifice is the primary way to serve God, the synagogue uses prayer, study, and exhortation. The service is open (nor restricted relative to inner and outer courts or with respect to Jew or Gentile) with all ceremonies in plain view. Their origins are far from clear:

Despite its importance in Jewish history, the origins of the synagogue and its early development are shrouded in mystery. Only during and after the first century ce does literary and archaeological evidence appear for Palestine. As for the Roman Diaspora, references before then are practically nonexistent (and what does exist refers to the Diaspora). Synagogue inscriptions from third- and second-century bce Egypt have been preserved, as have remains of a Delos synagogue building dating from the first century bce.

Owing to the paucity of sources, opinions have varied widely as to when, where, and why the synagogue developed. Theories have ranged from the late First Temple period (eighth-seventh century bce), through the exilic (sixth century) and postexilic (fifth century) eras, and down to the late Persian (fourth century) and Hellenistic times (third or second century). Most scholars have assumed a midway position, one that posits the emergence of the synagogue closely following the destruction of the First Temple in 587/586 bce, either during the Babylonian exile or soon after, when the Jews returned to Judea during the era of restoration.

Concerning synagogue services, Torah-reading was crucial, spread with varying practice over the Jewish year:

While Torah reading was accepted as normative on Sabbaths and holidays and later on Mondays and Thursdays as well, the division into weekly portions varied considerably. In Palestine the Torah was read over a three- or three-and-a-half-year period with a plethora of local traditions on the precise divisions of the weekly portions (141, 154, 161, 167, and 175). Moreover, the practice in Babylonian communities living in late Roman and Byzantine Palestine only added to this diversity: They concluded the Torah reading in one year. How widespread the custom was of translating the Torah portion into the vernacular is unknown, but the use of Greek in addition to Aramaic cannot be denied.

A sermon, prayer, and blessings as integral, were also a part of the service, varying considerable in actual practice.

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## Chapter 7

- 1: Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.
- 2: And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.
- 3: For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.
- 4: And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.
- 5: Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?
- 6: He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.
- 7: Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.
- 8: For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.
- 9: And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.
- 10: For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:
- 11: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.
- 12: And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;
- 13: Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.
- 14: And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand:
- 15: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.
- 16: If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.
- 17: And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.
- 18: And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;
- 19: Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?
- 20: And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.
- 21: For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,
- 22: Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:
- 23: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.
- 24: And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.
- 25: For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:
- 26: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.
- 27: But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.
- 28: And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.
- 29: And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.
- 30: And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

31: And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

32: And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

33: And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;

34: And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

35: And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

36: And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;

37: And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

## Interpretation 7

Summary Mark seven records three events or actions: a controversy about observing the tradition of the elders initiated by the Pharisees and scribes; the Syrophenician woman who asks for a demon to be cast out of her daughter; and the healing of a deaf man. The Pharisees notice that Jesus' disciples are eating without first having washed their hands, and they ask Jesus why they are not observing the tradition of the elders. Jesus calls them hypocrites, telling them that they abandon God while holding on to human tradition. He tells them that nothing outside a person going in can defile but only what is inside coming out defiles.

The Syrophenician woman is Greek and Gentile; this begins the movement of Jesus from Galilee into the north and into Gentile territory. Though recognizing herself Greek and understanding Jesus' mission to the Jews, this woman, nonetheless, asks for healing for her daughter, which Jesus performs at a distance.

Jesus is in Decapolis when he heals the deaf man; this is the area where the man indwelt by many demons had witnessed to the authority of Jesus, recognizing him as the Son of God, the place called the region of the Gerasenes. Decapolis consisted of ten cities, mostly Gentile. Jesus addresses this deaf man in Aramaic, indicating he is probably Jewish even though in a Gentile region.

How radical is the message of Jesus? In the controversy in this chapter about his disciples not washing their hands, Jesus overturns tradition in one swift stroke by declaring all foods clean. To understand fully, as even the disciples do not, one needs to remember that the tradition of the elders included a body of legislation which prescribed detailed applications of the Law of Moses. Jesus, like the Sadducees, rejected this additional legislation, even though the practice of the Sadducees in many ways coincided with that of the tradition. Jesus characterizes this legislation as a human creation, standing in antithesis to the commands of God. This legislation, though designed with the good intention of helping people uphold the Law of Moses, had the counter effect of causing them to break it; for example, Jesus cited the responsibility that children had to support and care for their parents, using Exodus 20.12 and 21.17 which speak of honoring and not cursing.

9 Then he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.' 11 But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban' (that is, an offering to God †)— 12 then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, 13 thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this."

Jesus knows that resources which could have been used to support elderly mothers and fathers is being promised instead to the upkeep of the temple; he sees this as outward piety, which, in reality, varies from the intent of the law itself. From such hypocrisy, Jesus moves to the human tradition of washing the hands, arguing that ritual cleansing or abstaining from foods would not alter the state of the heart, the real root of moral evil.

As always, one needs to read closely to determine fully what the story is relative to Jesus' action. When the Syrophenician woman comes and bows at Jesus' feet, asking that he exorcise a demon from her daughter, Jesus says, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." 28 But she

answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Jesus uses a figure of speech, indicating Jews in the word "children." The Greek woman recognizes the common "dogs" for Gentiles and responds by urging that even children drop crumbs whereby dogs are fed.

Note that Jesus commands the deaf man's ears to be opened.

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. 34 Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." 35 And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 Then Jesus † ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

His speech impediment is probably the result of not hearing; Jesus takes him away from the crowds into a more private area, lays his hands on--for he would not have heard words--looks up to heaven in a visible prayer and asks that the ears be opened. At the same time, the deaf man is also made to speak. Recall Isaiah 35.5, 6: "4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.' 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6 then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert."

## Related Reading Daniel 7

### Visions of the Four Beasts

**7** In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in bed. Then he wrote down the dream: † 2 I, † Daniel, saw in my vision by night the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea, 3 and four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. 4 The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then, as I watched, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a human being; and a human mind was given to it. 5 Another beast appeared, a second one, that looked like a bear. It was raised up on one side, had three tusks † in its mouth among its teeth and was told, "Arise, devour many bodies!" 6 After this, as I watched, another appeared, like a leopard. The beast had four wings of a bird on its back and four heads; and dominion was given to it. 7 After this I saw in the visions by night a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that preceded it, and it had ten horns. 8 I was considering the horns, when another horn appeared, a little one coming up among them; to make room for it, three of the earlier horns were plucked up by the roots. There were eyes like human eyes in this horn, and a mouth speaking arrogantly.

### Judgment before the Ancient One

9 As I watched,  
 thrones were set in place,  
 and an Ancient One † took his throne,  
 his clothing was white as snow,  
 and the hair of his head like pure wool;  
 his throne was fiery flames,  
 and its wheels were burning fire.

10 A stream of fire issued

and flowed out from his presence.

A thousand thousands served him,

and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him.

The court sat in judgment,

and the books were opened.

11 I watched then because of the noise of the arrogant words that the horn was speaking. And as I watched, the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. 12 As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. 13 As I watched in the night visions,

I saw one like a human being †

coming with the clouds of heaven.

And he came to the Ancient One †

and was presented before him.

14 To him was given dominion

and glory and kingship,

that all peoples, nations, and languages

should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion

that shall not pass away,

and his kingship is one

that shall never be destroyed.

### **Daniel's Visions Interpreted**

15 As for me, Daniel, my spirit was troubled within me, † and the visions of my head terrified me. 16 I approached one of the attendants to ask him the truth concerning all this. So he said that he would disclose to me the interpretation of the matter: 17 "As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever—forever and ever."

19 Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped what was left with its feet; 20 and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and concerning the other horn, which came up and to make room for which three of them fell out—the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke arrogantly, and that seemed greater than the others. 21 As I looked, this horn made war with the holy ones and was prevailing over them, 22 until the Ancient One † came; then judgment was given for the holy ones of the Most High, and the time arrived when the holy ones gained possession of the kingdom.

23 This is what he said: "As for the fourth beast,

there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth  
that shall be different from all the other kingdoms;  
it shall devour the whole earth,  
and trample it down, and break it to pieces.

24 As for the ten horns,

out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise,  
and another shall arise after them.

This one shall be different from the former ones,  
and shall put down three kings.

25 He shall speak words against the Most High,  
shall wear out the holy ones of the Most High,  
and shall attempt to change the sacred seasons and the law;  
and they shall be given into his power  
for a time, two times, † and half a time.

26 Then the court shall sit in judgment,  
and his dominion shall be taken away,  
to be consumed and totally destroyed.

27 The kingship and dominion

and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven  
shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High;  
their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom,  
and all dominions shall serve and obey them."

28 Here the account ends. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly terrified me, and my face turned pale;  
but I kept the matter in my mind.

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## Chapter 8

1: In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples  
unto him, and saith unto them,

2: I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have  
nothing to eat:

3: And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

4: And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?

5: And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

6: And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.

7: And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.

8: So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.

9: And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

10: And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

11: And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

12: And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

13: And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

14: Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

15: And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

16: And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.

17: And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?

18: Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?

19: When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.

20: And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.

21: And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

22: And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

23: And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

24: And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

25: After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

26: And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

27: And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

28: And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

29: And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

30: And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

31: And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32: And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

33: But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

34: And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35: For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

36: For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37: Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

38: Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

## Interpretation 8

Summary In Gentile territory, in the region of Decapolis, southeast of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus imparts bread to four thousand. Although Jesus has been up to this time manifesting authority in many ways, the Pharisees demand a sign from heaven. Jesus refuses. Jesus next speaks metaphorically about leaven ( yeast) bread to his disciples, who misunderstand. Jesus becomes vexed at his disciples for their worry about a lack of bread. And finally, Jesus heals a blind man at Bethsaida, not completely the first time, but only after laying his hands a second time upon him. Following this, Jesus' journey seriously turned from the north to Jerusalem. In spite of Peter's protest, Jesus now begins to teach his disciples about his true Messiahship and the cost of discipleship.

Remarkably, Jesus in much the same ways as he fed the five thousand in chapter six, now feeds four thousand in Gentile territory. This time, he takes seven loaves and a few fish versus five loaves and two fishes. Recall, in the previous feeding, the disciples found twelve baskets remaining after the people had eaten. Now, the basket used is big enough for a grown man to stand in. As Jesus imparts bread to the Jews, does he now impart bread to the Gentiles--with a demonstration that enough is left over for others. Is this already the universalizing of the Kingdom of God to all humankind?

Getting in a boat and journeying to Dalmanutha, a place not identified which Matthew replaced with Magadan, Jesus is confronted with Pharisees who begin to argue with him; they want a sign from heaven. As happens before, Jesus sighs deep in his spirit (whereas in contrast human beings ask in their hearts), knowing the Pharisees are testing him, and asks "Why does this generation ask for a sign?" He tells them *this* generation will not receive a sign then gets in a boat and leaves, cross again to the other side.

In the boat, Jesus, despite having in the disciples' presence already fed both Jews and Gentiles, finds his disciples again concerned about bread. This time, they have brought with them only one loaf. In what seems to the disciples a non-sequitur, Jesus tells his disciples to beware the yeast of Pharisees; he goes on to say, be aware, also, of the yeast of Herod. In the first case, what may be alluded to is the hypocrisy or false religiosity of the Pharisees; in the second case, Jesus addresses irreligion. The disciples, apparently yet, do not understand that Jesus is using a figure of speech. They see a connection in their asking about bread and yeast, but they fail to understand what it means as applied to the Pharisees and Herod. Jesus now, perhaps impatiently, asks them, why are you still talking about bread?

Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? <sup>18</sup> Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember? <sup>19</sup> When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" They said to him, "Twelve." <sup>20</sup> "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" And they said to him, "Seven." <sup>21</sup> Then he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

Jesus and his disciples next find themselves again in Bethsaida. When a blind man is brought to him for healing, Jesus takes him by the hand and leads him out of the village. The reader will recall that in the previous system Jesus healed a man who was deaf and mute. Jesus applied saliva in that case to get the man's attention, perhaps; this time, he uses a similar technique. In instances of healing, Jesus has placed emphasis upon the people's faith. This time, it takes two attempts for this man to recover his sight. On the first try, he reports he can see but that people look like trees walking. <sup>25</sup> Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. <sup>26</sup> Then he sent him away to his home, saying, 'Do not even go into the village.'" Jesus sends this man back to his own home.

Jesus continues his journey from the north of Palestine, headed now to Jerusalem. Preparation now is for the transfiguration which is to come in the next chapter. Emphasis is upon instruction. As John Shelby Spong in *Liberating the Gospels* remarks, Jesus in *Mark* has been up until this point involved with accounts of forgiveness, devil possession, the unclean leper, the paralytic--or involved with the sick, distorted, and unclean, or the hated, in the case of Levi. The Jewish New Year, according to Spong, is a call for repentance, followed by the Day of Atonement with its concern for cleanliness; this is to be followed by Tabernacles and Dedication, leading to the Passover. Spong's credible argument is that *Mark* is organized for liturgical reading. Massive crowds, like those at

Sinai, gathered around Jesus, who sends twelve on a mission in the same way Moses sends twelve men to spy out the new land. Just as Moses teaches on blasphemy, Jesus teaches on blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Spong further argues that the parables of the sower and the seed growing, as well as the mustard seed, recall the fall festival. The story of transfiguration is told at the time of Dedication, the journey being reserved for instruction.

Certainly, in Caesarea, Phillipi, Jesus' tone to his disciples turns serious:

27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." 29 He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." † 30 And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

The disciples, the reader recalls, have sacrificed homes and livelihood to live in Jesus' presence, and they have taken up his message of the Kingdom of God. The time has come now for instruction in what this kingdom is to be. Previously, in chapter six, the question of who Jesus is had arisen with the context of Herod and John the Baptist:

Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." 15 But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." 16 But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

This time, Peter takes the initiative and declares that Jesus is the Messiah and is instructed not to tell anyone. Why the secrecy? Recall, the issue of Messiahship is fraught with political overtones. This political expectation included an agenda to expel the Roman legions from Palestine.

Against this expectation, Jesus begins now to reveal his real message: "the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." At least one follower, Peter, wants nothing to do with this new vision; Jesus rebukes him severely: "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

From this point forward, the message of Jesus is about the Kingdom of God as it must be realized on earth:

34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, † will save it. 36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Discipleship, like the Messiahship Peter wanted not to accept, must come, not by popular acclaim but by suffering, by taking up the cross. The cost of discipleship will demand abandoning self-centeredness, the loss of life--as mortal creatures, humans cannot avoid this--and possibly martyrdom, giving up any emphasis upon material goods, and a seeking of the God who, in chapter nine, will come with power.

## Chapter 9

1: In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

2: I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:

3: And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

4: And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?

5: And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

6: And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.

7: And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.

- 8: So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.
- 9: And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.
- 10: And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.
- 11: And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.
- 12: And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.
- 13: And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.
- 14: Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.
- 15: And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.
- 16: And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.
- 17: And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?
- 18: Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?
- 19: When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.
- 20: And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.
- 21: And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?
- 22: And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.
- 23: And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.
- 24: And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.
- 25: After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.
- 26: And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.
- 27: And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?
- 28: And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.
- 29: And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.
- 30: And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.
- 31: And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.
- 32: And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.
- 33: But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.
- 34: And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
- 35: For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.
- 36: For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?
- 37: Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
- 38: Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

## Interpretation 9

**Summary** Jesus, instructing the disciples, says some there will not die until God's kingdom has come with power. Following this, Mark records the transfiguration, Jesus going to the mountain accompanied by Peter, James, and John. Elijah and Moses appear and talk with Jesus. Peter wants to build three buildings--one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Jesus. The disciples are terrified; a voice from heaven testifies, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" As the disciples look around, they find no one there except for Jesus.

As they come down from the mountain, Jesus orders the disciples not to tell anyone what they have seen until the Son of Man has risen from the dead. The disciples do as they're told but question what Jesus has meant by dead. Jesus asks the disciples why the scribes say that Elijah must come first, and then he tells them that Elijah has

already come, and they did to him what they pleased.

Around some scribes, a crowd has gathered and is arguing with them; the disciples have been unable to cast out a spirit from a boy who apparently has had a seizure. Jesus remarks on their lack of faith, momentarily sighing, "how much longer must I put up with you?" He questions how long the boy has had this condition and is told from childhood. The man who has brought his son to Jesus asks for pity, if he is able to do anything. Jesus picks up the doubt and replies, "If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes." The father says he believes and asks for help for his unbelief. Jesus commands the spirit which keeps the boy from speaking and hearing to come out; when the spirit comes out, the boy is left seemingly a corpse, and the people fear he is dead. Jesus, however, takes him by the hand, lifts him up, and he is able to stand. The disciples in a private moment ask Jesus why they have been unable to exorcise the spirit, and Jesus tells them that this species can be cast out only by prayer.

Again passing through Galilee, Jesus tells the disciples not to tell anyone they're passing through; he is teaching his disciples that the Son of Man is to be betrayed, to be killed, and after three days, to rise again. The disciples do not understand but are afraid to ask Jesus to explain; instead, they argue about it among themselves. Jesus overhears the argument, and back in Capernaum, he asks them what the argument has been about. They are silent, not wanting to reveal that they have been arguing over who would be greatest in the Kingdom of God. Jesus knows, nonetheless, the content of the dispute and settles it: "36 Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 37 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'"

Jesus, by this time, has apparently inspired imitators, for John tells him of someone, not a follower, casting out devils in his name and asks if the man should be stopped. Jesus logically replies, "40 Whoever is not against us is for us." He then tells John that anyone giving even a cup of water to aid in the mission will be rewarded.

Likewise, the disciples are warned of the drastic consequences to those who obstruct the mission: better to have had a weight tied to them and drowned; better to lose a limb or even two legs and go maimed in this life than to suffer in hell hereafter; it would be better to enter into the hereafter with one eye than to see with both in this world and then be condemned in the next. Mark describes hell as a place "where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched." Jesus concludes by telling them that they are to live in peace with each other, and for that, they will need a preservative in themselves: salt to help them love and serve each other.

What Jesus meant by the kingdom coming in power has been debated; what is known is that the Holy Spirit descends at Pentecost; Christianity spreads throughout the Roman empire; and the event has been identified with the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. The transfiguration follows.

Traditionally, the place of transfiguration has been said to be Mount Tabor, ten miles southwest of the sea of Galilee; some argue the mountain is less than two thousand feet high and that since Jesus has just been in Capernaum, some place north of there would be more likely. To be transfigured means to have a non-earthly appearance. Jesus is also said to have demonstrated to Peter, James, and John his pre-incarnate glory. With Jesus is seen Moses, the giver of the Law, and Elijah, an early prophet, authenticating Jesus as coming after them in the tradition and revelation of God. Peter wants to make shelters for all three, seemingly recognizing them as equal. God's visible answer is to remove Moses and Elijah and to declare authoritatively, "This is my Son whom I love; listen to him." The reader will recall that the same voice had manifest itself at Jesus' baptism to Jesus alone. Deuteronomy 18.15-19 speaks of a prophet with whom Jesus in this moment seems to be identified:

15 The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet † like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. 16 This is what you requested of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the Lord my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." 17 Then the Lord replied to me: "They

are right in what they have said. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, † who shall speak to them everything that I command. 19 Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet † shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable.

Traditionally, then, the Jews have been taught to expect a prophet like Moses to appear. With this tradition invoked, the discussion turns to Elijah.

The disciples know that Malachi has predicted that Elijah would appear on earth before the Messiah; they question Jesus as to why he has not been preceded. In replying, Jesus clearly alludes to John the Baptist:

"Elijah is indeed coming first to restore all things. How then is it written about the Son of Man, that he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt? 13 But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written about him."

Jesus, once again, reminds his disciples that his mission is to suffer and be treated with contempt, the same message which he had given to them earlier which had aroused Peter's opposition. Everywhere in *Mark*, Jesus has been the ministering servant, the Son of Man walking among people. He has not allowed a deliberate belief in his having come to expel the Roman rule, a movement that he undoubtedly recognizes as dangerous even as he recognizes that prophecy will make him intricately apart of such conspiracy.

Once again, Jesus is pushed into healing by a distracted father seeking aid for his demon-possessed son. The disciples have attempted to meet the needs of this man and failed. An argument has resulted from the crowd, including scribes, who have surrounded and observed the humiliating failure. For the disciples, the failure is frustrating, if not tragic, and leaves them feeling helpless. Jesus comes from the immediately preceding transfiguration; the crowd is amazed. It will be remembered that the face of Moses was resplendent, and some such visible reminder of Jesus' proximity to God must have been evident. The words are swift as Jesus laments an unbelieving generation. The reader does well to recall Moses on his own mountain:

9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, 10 and they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. 11 God † did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; also they beheld God, and they ate and drank.

12 The Lord said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." 13 So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. 14 To the elders he had said, "Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them."

15 Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. 16 The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. 17 Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. 18 Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

To understand Jesus' words concerning an unbelieving generation, it's important to recall what Moses observed when he came down from the mountain:

32 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses,

the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." 2 Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4 He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, † and cast an image of a calf; and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" 5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord." 6 They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.

Previously, in Exodus twenty, when Moses had given the people the ten commandments, he had also warned them concerning unbelief:

22 The Lord said to Moses: Thus you shall say to the Israelites: "You have seen for yourselves that I spoke with you from heaven. 23 You shall not make gods of silver alongside me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold. 24 You need make for me only an altar of earth and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your offerings of well-being, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you. 25 But if you make for me an altar of stone, do not build it of hewn stones; for if you use a chisel upon it you profane it. 26 You shall not go up by steps to my altar, so that your nakedness may not be exposed on it."

Moses returns, of course, to find the children of Israel have made golden calves; Jesus returns to the humiliating defeat of his disciples. The disciples seemingly have lacked faith or prayer to overcome evil. Remember, in the sixth chapter of *Mark*, the disciples have been given power over evil; since three disciples have been on the mountain with Jesus, probably only nine disciples have been left to face the world.

Even Jesus' response to the distracted father is a rebuke for his lack of faith: "If you can" has injected doubt. The father, though, quickly recovers and asks for help for his disbelief.

The disciples of Jesus have apparently bought into the popular notions of the expected Messiah. Jesus reminds them he will be rejected and put to death. Finding the conception of death difficult to accept, the disciples deny it, choosing rather to argue fine points of theology among themselves. That they're afraid to ask anything farther is probably due to their being afraid to know. They turn instead to the argument of who is to be greatest in the Kingdom of God.

Walking ahead of his disciples, Jesus, nonetheless, has become aware of their disagreement. The disciples are reluctant to reveal what has really been the egotistical content of their discussion, even when they begin to suspect that Jesus knows. Compassionately, Jesus explains to them that greatness in God's Kingdom requires service to people. This had to do with do unto others as you would have them do unto you; do only what you can will into a universal act; do not do unto others what you would want done unto. Jesus punctuates his point by picking up a child and reminding his disciples 37 "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me." Service to others would be received as service to Jesus as service to Jesus would be regarded as service to God. Only then, relative to service, could greatness be determined; ironically, such service would preclude all questions of greatness.

Interestingly, after the disciples of Jesus fail in their attempts at exorcism, attention turns almost immediately to those who are not followers of Jesus who yet succeed in overcoming evil. Jesus criticizes John for wanting to prevent this, reminding him that such acts are not against God. It would be improbable that people acting in the name of Jesus would turn against him.

Jesus now moves into the final teaching of this time. He teaches that the smallest service done to another would be rewarded in eternity. The full brunt of warning is against becoming a stumbling block to young believers or converts: 42 "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, better were it..." Jesus clearly argues against encouraging sin in oneself or in others. It needs to be recalled that King Josiah stamped out the sacrifice of children to the God Molech (2 Kings 23.10): "10 He defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, so that no one would make a son or a daughter pass through fire as an offering to Molech." This hell, or Greek Gehenna, became for the Jews a vile association of the worst abominations. The fires here were literally always smoldering. Jesus tells his disciples that they must, in principle, be ready to undergo such testing in order to be spiritually purified and made like salt. The goodness of the disciples was, in fact, like salt in seasoning and purifying the world.

## Chapter 10

- 1: And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.
- 2: And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.
- 3: And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?
- 4: And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.
- 5: And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.
- 6: But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.
- 7: For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;
- 8: And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.
- 9: What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.
- 10: And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.
- 11: And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.
- 12: And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.
- 13: And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.
- 14: But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.
- 15: Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.
- 16: And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.
- 17: And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?
- 18: And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.
- 19: Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.
- 20: And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.
- 21: Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.
- 22: And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.
- 23: And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!
- 24: And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!
- 25: It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.
- 26: And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?
- 27: And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.
- 28: Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.
- 29: And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,
- 30: But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and

children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

31: But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

32: And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

33: Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:

34: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

35: And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

36: And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

37: They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

38: But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

39: And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:

40: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.

41: And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

42: But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43: But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

44: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

45: For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

46: And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.

47: And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

48: And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

49: And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.

50: And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

51: And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

52: And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

## Interpretation 10

Summary Jesus leaves Capernaum and goes to region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, considerably south in the direction of Jerusalem and east of the Jordan; he continues to instruct his disciples. He teaches about divorce, talks about the example of children, tells the story of the rich man, and once again, foretells his death and resurrection, hears a request from the brothers John and James about who in the kingdom would be allowed to sit on his right side, and then ends with the healing of Bartimaeus. The Pharisees initiate the discussion about divorce, and the disciples follow-up on the discussion. Following this discussion, Jesus takes into his arms the little children brought to him by their parents, blesses them, and says that of such is the Kingdom of God made. The children are followed by a rich young man who wants to know what he should do to enter God's kingdom; Jesus tells him to keep the law but, also, to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor, a requirement that the young man finds too difficult. This leads to a discussion of the difficulty they rich may have in attaining God's kingdom.

On the road on the way to Jerusalem, he tells his disciples he will be condemned by the chief priests and scribes, handed over to the Gentiles, be killed, and rise again after three days. James and John ask to sit on the right side of Jesus in the kingdom, an indication that they still misunderstand the mission about which Jesus has been teaching.

Blind Bartimaeus exclaims for joy when he encounters Jesus, whom he recognizes as the Son of David, and asks to be healed of his blindness; Bartimaeus regains his sight and follows Jesus.

When the Pharisees initiate a discussion about marriage and divorce, Jesus uses it to teach his disciples a message about unity, the content which apparently escapes them since they follow up with much the same question as the Pharisees. Generally, Deuteronomy has said the following about divorce:

24 Suppose a man enters into marriage with a woman, but she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her, and so he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; she then leaves his house 2 and goes off to become another man's wife. 3 Then suppose the second man dislikes her, writes her a bill of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house (or the second man who married her dies); 4 her first husband, who sent her away, is not permitted to take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that would be abhorrent to the Lord, and you shall not bring guilt on the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a possession.

Jesus first asks the Pharisees what the Law says about a man's being able to divorce his wife; they reply, showing they know the scriptures, that the Law allows a man to write a certificate and dismiss the wife. The Pharisees, of course, are trying to trick Jesus into incriminating himself by the Mosaic law. The certificate issued is to protect the wife's interest, allowing her to establish that her divorce has been formal and official and that she was free to marry someone else. Jesus, as always, goes beyond the letter of the Law to its intent:

5 But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. 6 But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

This reply suggests that the Law was written for man or was shaped for the heart of man. That is, God's law is absolute; human law is relative; in this case, human law does not represent the absolute but exists due to inclinations of the human heart. As always, human law is issued to constrain human errancy. The purpose of marriage, as Jesus points out, is to bring two people together into one unity joined by God; much later, Malachi is to say that God hates divorce:

14 You ask, "Why does he not?" [accept offerings and sacrifices] Because the Lord was a witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 15 Did not one God make her? Both flesh and spirit are his. And what does the one God desire? Godly offspring. So look to yourselves, and do not let anyone be faithless to the wife of his youth. 16 For I hate † divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts.

According to Jesus, the original intention for humans was laid out in Genesis 1.27 and in Genesis 2.24:

27 So God created humankind in his image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

*Oxford annotation* says the following about image: *Image, likeness*, refer not to physical appearance but to relationship and activity. *Humankind* is commissioned to manifest God's rule on earth, on the analogy of a child who represents a parent (see [Genesis 5.3](#)).

The Genesis 2.24 reference describes the unity of man and woman:

24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

The point, perhaps, of all this is that original intentions meant the marriage bond to be indissoluble, as unbreakable as a blood relationship; the argument seems to be that Jesus replies that the male has no right to break the partnership, irregardless of legal considerations. It also needs to be remembered that adultery--not the issue in question here--was traditionally punished by death (Leviticus 20.10), ending the marriage bond without recourse to divorce proceedings. It will be recalled that this was the situation warranting John the Baptist's criticism of Herodious who used Roman law, to sever her union with Philip and to marry Herod Antipas.

One needs to be careful about reading too much in this Christianized discussion of the Law:

The evangelists, writing some 40–70 years after Jesus' death, turned a negative attitude toward the Law (or the Jewish understanding of it) into the touchstone of Christian identity. This tendency makes for considerable confusion when one tries to reconstruct the views of the historical Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth, living and working in a predominantly Jewish environment, very likely had his own views on the correct interpretation of Torah, and these views may well have differed from those of his contemporaries. Argument about the Law between Jews was and is a timeless Jewish occupation: controversy implies inclusion. Transposed to a gentile context, however, argument can seem like repudiation.

Thus Mark's Jesus turns an unexceptional observation (people are morally defiled by what they do or say, not by what they eat, [Mark 7.15–23](#)) into a repudiation of the Law regarding kosher food ("Thus he declared all foods clean"; [Mark 7.19](#)). John's Jesus condemns his Jewish audience as sons of the lower cosmos and children of the devil ([John 8](#)): the Law, characterized throughout as that "of Moses" is, implicitly, not "of God," from whom comes grace, peace, and the Son ([John 1.16](#); [John 7.19–24](#)). In his Sermon on the Mount, Matthew's Jesus presents his intensification of Torah ethics as if in contradistinction to Torah and Jewish tradition ("You have heard it said ... but I say"; [Matthew 5](#)). Luke, although retaining the theme of Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus both in his Gospel and in Acts, nonetheless wishes to present the new movement as continuous with a Jewish view of biblical revelation. Consequently he edits out or softens many of Mark's anti-Law statements. And all the Gospels, no matter how strong their individual polemic against Jews and Judaism (See [Anti-Semitism](#)), and hence the Law, still present a Jesus who worships at synagogue on the Sabbath, observes Temple sacrifice, pilgrimage holidays, and Passover rituals, and whose followers, honoring the Sabbath, come to his tomb only on the Sunday after his death (*Oxford Companion*).

In private, the disciples follow-up and re-ask the question relative to the laws of divorce; this time, Jesus tells them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; 12 and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." In Palestine, a woman was not allowed to divorce her husband. Jesus here does not contradict the existing Law of Moses.

Probably no scene in the Gospels has been more lifted out of context to illustrate the gentleness of Jesus than the one of him blessing children. Jesus does not depart from the business at hand; he is still teaching about the Kingdom of God. Using the children, he insists that one must receive the Kingdom of God as would a child, and "To receive the kingdom as a child is to depend in trustful simplicity on what God offers." Children accept gifts to them without thought of desert or merit on their part.

Jesus, leaving on a journey, is next confronted by a young rich man who wants to know what he can do to inherit

eternal life or God's Kingdom? He is asked, what did Moses say do? When he replies that he has kept Moses' laws, then he is challenged to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor. This, the young man cannot do. Jesus uses the occasions to instruct his disciples about what it means to serve God's Kingdom:

29 Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

For some, this promise seems rash and misses the point of the suffering and often lack of material things experienced by people who follow the way of Jesus. What, however, the Christian inherits is God's spiritual Kingdom now--all the houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, and children, and fields that are a part of this kingdom. But they also inherit persecutions now and in the age to come eternal life. Nowhere does Jesus promise anyone that they are to receive any more materially than anyone else simply because they follow him.

Between childhood and adulthood, simplicity is lost; spiritual satisfaction competes with material gain. This makes the above story of the rich young man complimentary to the blessing the children episode. God's gift is a free gift, but the act of accepting the gift may be costly in its consequences.

We see here, too, obsequiousness, on the part of the young man who is rebuked by Jesus for addressing him as "Good teacher." Only God is absolutely good; we have no indication the young man here meant anything about the divinity of Jesus. When Jesus reminds this man of the law, he reports all too easily that he has kept it, indicating a lack of understanding of the full requirements of these laws. Jesus immediately pinpoints exactly what is keeping this young man from completing his request for eternal life. As the young man goes away sorrowful, Jesus remarks on a Proverb of how difficult it is for a camel to go through a needle's eye, applying this to the difficulty the young man has encountered. With God, of course, all things are possible by definition.

Jesus now turns again to what is foremost on his mind: this is the third conversation about what awaited him in the Passover celebration.

32 They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, 33 saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; 34 they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again."

The reader will note that the term Son of Man is used here; he is to be handed over to the Jews (chief priests and scribes) and condemned, then handed over to the Gentiles, who will kill him; he will be resurrected after three days. It should be noted that the ideas of God-man and resurrection are not concepts unique to the Jews or to Jesus at this point. Jesus has already called attention to himself, although it would seem he attempted to prevent this, by the gatherings and healings; he has been beset by Pharisees and Sadducees relative to his purity in observing the law; additionally, his following has attracted the suspicion of Roman rulers. A concept familiar at this time, one may wish to reflect upon, is that a God-man is someone, already seen in Alexander the Great, who restores state. Jesus has gone about pronouncing the Kingdom of God.

The disciples, obvious in their next request, have not understood what Jesus' instructions have meant all along. In the Messianic kingdom, James and John request to sit in favored places. In the first place, it's not clear that James and John have accepted the invisible nature of God's Kingdom:

38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" 39 They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

While they have already been instructed about the inevitable requirement of suffering, they have ignored the essential requirement that one inheriting the Kingdom of God now does so in this world by taking on its mortal burdens. Furthermore, James, who is according to Acts 12.2 killed with the sword, and John, who is exiled to Patmos, unaware of what their own futures will require from them. Jesus points to the invisible rather than earthly kingdom when he says "to sit at my right hand or my left is not mine to grant." Is the implication that this honor is to be achieved by life which the disciples have not yet lived? And would not Jesus gone on to have reminded them of earlier teaching such as the one about who would be the wife honored to sit by her husband in heaven? It's clear the disciples have as much difficulty understanding Jesus' teaching as the crowds. This section ends with the sobering reminder of Jesus' example as servant: "45 For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

It's interesting that the last healing Mark chooses to record is that of Bartimaeus in Jericho, a blind beggar, who acknowledges him as Son of David:

As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Mark reports Jesus as standing very still upon being addressed in this manner; Jesus next responds by having the disciples call Bartimaeus over to him. Bartimaeus springs up, when asks what he wants, replies, "my sight," and is told by Jesus his faith has made him well. Could Bartimaeus have known Isaiah 61.1?

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,

the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.

They will be called oaks of righteousness,

the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

4 They shall build up the ancient ruins,

they shall raise up the former devastations;

they shall repair the ruined cities,

the devastations of many generations.

This time, the one healed is not forbidden to proclaim what has happened. This comes at the point of entry into Jerusalem for the Passover celebration.

## Chapter 11

1: And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,

2: And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.

3: And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.

4: And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.

5: And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?

6: And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

7: And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.

8: And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way.

9: And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

10: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

11: And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

12: And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

13: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

14: And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

15: And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

16: And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

17: And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

18: And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

19: And when even was come, he went out of the city.

- 20: And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.
- 21: And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.
- 22: And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.
- 23: For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.
- 24: Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.
- 25: And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.
- 26: But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.
- 27: And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,
- 28: And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?
- 29: And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.
- 30: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.
- 31: And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?
- 32: But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.
- 33: And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

## Interpretation 11

Summary Jesus, coming from the direction of Bethany on the east side of the Mount of Olives, prepares to enter Jerusalem; the entry is clearly staged as the accomplishment of an act and certainly the end of a journey. The disciples are sent to bring a colt upon which Jesus will ride into the city: he is proclaimed Lord in the tradition of the "coming kingdom of David." On first entering Jerusalem, he enters the temple, looks around and leaves. He is next reported as cursing a fig tree which has leaves but not fruit. This is followed by a return to and cleansing of the temple. After this cleansing, the narration returns to the fig tree and the reason for the curse, emphasizing the power of God over faith. In Jerusalem, Jesus is now confronted by Pharisees, scribes, and elders questioning his authority. Jesus deflects this question to one about whether John the Baptist had been authorized by heaven or by men.



What does one make of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, coming in the eleventh chapter of Mark, signaling the end of the opening events and journey into the Holy City?

### **Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

11 When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples <sup>2</sup> and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" <sup>4</sup> They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, <sup>5</sup> some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" <sup>6</sup> They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. <sup>7</sup> Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. <sup>8</sup> Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup> Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

11 Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Remember, Jesus has just been proclaimed Messiah in the tradition of David. Now, suddenly, he sends his disciples to find a colt that has never been ridden and instructs them to untie it and bring it to him. This event, of course, signals for Christians the last week in the life of Christ. For Jews, this event continues the lead-in to the celebration of Passover. What is one to expect? Advocates of tradition go back to Zechariah 9:9:

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you;

triumphant and victorious is he,

humble and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

When was Zechariah written? codified? Almost everyone recognizes it as post-exile (after the Babylonian captivity). Let's look at the *Oxford annotation*:

Zechariah, whose prophecies date from 520 to 518 b.c. and are found in [Zechariah 1–8](#), was contemporary with Haggai ([Ezra 5.1](#); [Ezra 6.14](#)). He shared Haggai's zeal for a rebuilt temple, a purified community, and the coming of the messianic age (see "[Introduction to Haggai](#)"). Like Haggai also, Zechariah forms a link between earlier prophecy (especially Ezekiel) and mature apocalyptic thought ([Daniel 7–12](#)). But Zechariah differs from his contemporary in the form and presentation of his message, employing the literary style of night visions and dialogues between God, seer, and interpreting angel. With him, therefore, both the form and imagery of Jewish apocalyptic thought are significantly developed.

[Zechariah 9–14](#), which nowhere claims to be from Zechariah, portrays nothing of the early Persian period but speaks rather of the Greeks ([Zechariah 9.13](#)). Instead of Joshua and Zerubbabel, unnamed shepherds lead the community. Instead of peace and rebuilding, there are expectations of universal warfare and the siege of Jerusalem. Style, vocabulary, and theological ideas differentiate these chapters from Zechariah's work. Although they may contain some earlier bits, they were written during the Greek period, principally in the fourth and third centuries b.c., by unknown authors. Since the eschatological and messianic themes found in the first section are here further elaborated, the authors are spiritual disciples of Zechariah. The pictures of the messianic Prince of Peace and the Good Shepherd smitten for the flock are used in the New Testament in order to describe the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In the Greek period, the fourth and third centuries BCE, eschatology and Messianism have intensified. Jesus is now placed in this tradition of expectation: as Prince of Peace and Good Shepherd. His own understanding and prediction of the Passion has been that he will be smitten for the flock. The Romans, by the era of Jesus, have replaced the Greeks; not being particularly religious, they have accepted hellenized religion. Multiple gods are familiar; they often seem to be humans made into gods. They symbolize forces of nature, and the ordinary mortal

procedure is to sacrifice and pray to them in order to incur favorable human outcomes. The Romans in this era are generally tolerant of the religions but suspect anything which is contrary to political allegiance. Only when religion calls attention to itself as being in opposition to current rule is there likely to be a political backlash which includes overt overriding of rebellious cults. To be proclaimed, even symbolically, as involved in any overthrow of contemporary rule in Jerusalem is judged to be in opposition to the established hegemony. So, here comes Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a colt. The outcome is expected, although it is not immediate. Jesus simply journeys into Jerusalem, ends up in the temple, and walks out.

Next, Mark records Jesus as again entering into the temple and acting immediately to clean it up:

15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; 16 and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17 He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written,

'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'?

But you have made it a den of robbers."

18 And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. 19 And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

It needs to be clear here that the temple is permitting the Jewish obligatory shekel a year (from every male adult) to be used for taxes. The Greek and Roman money must be changed into Tyrian currency. Additionally, the last part of verse fifteen indicates people are carrying baggage from their pilgrimage into the temple's outer court. Jesus is, also, fulfilling scripture; the first scripture alluded to is Isaiah 56:

6 And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,

to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,

and to be his servants,

all who keep the Sabbath, and do not profane it,

and hold fast my covenant—

7 these I will bring to my holy mountain,

and make them joyful in my house of prayer;

their burnt offerings and their sacrifices

will be accepted on my altar;

for my house shall be called a house of prayer

for all peoples.

8 Thus says the Lord God,

who gathers the outcasts of Israel,

I will gather others to them

besides those already gathered

This reference also clearly indicates that Gentiles are coming to the temple and finding it to be used for business rather than prayer. The next reference is from Jeremiah, but to understand the implications clearly, one needs to recognize that Jeremiah is prophesying the destruction of the temple. The Oxford annotation makes clear the connection between the apostasy of Judah and the destruction of the temple:

**7.10–12:** As *Shiloh* ([Jeremiah 7.12](#), eighteen miles north of Jerusalem), the earlier central shrine, was destroyed (around 1050 b.c. in the days of Samuel; compare [1 Samuel 4–6](#); [Psalm 78.56–72](#)), so also *this house*, desecrated by idolatry, will be destroyed ([Jeremiah 7.10](#); [Jeremiah 7.11](#); compare [Matthew 21.13](#)). Immediately following this sermon, Jeremiah was arrested (see [Jeremiah 26.8](#)).

Now, read the entire section from Jeremiah:

7 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 2 Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the Lord. 3 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you † in this place. 4 Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is † the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord."

5 For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, 6 if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, 7 then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever.

8 Here you are, trusting in deceptive words to no avail. 9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, 10 and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, "We are safe!"—only to go on doing all these abominations? 11 Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight? You know, I too am watching, says the Lord. 12 Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. 13 And now, because you have done all these things, says the Lord, and when I spoke to you persistently, you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, 14 therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your ancestors, just what I did to Shiloh. 15 And I will cast you out of my sight, just as I cast out all your kinsfolk, all the offspring of Ephraim.

Like Jeremiah, Jesus will be arrested shortly after this cleaning of the temple. The reader should recall, too, that Jesus had entered the temple when he first came into Jerusalem but merely observed and left. His look must have been profoundly sad as his eyes swept through the Court of the Gentiles.

Mark next records what seems to be a bizarre event: Jesus curses a fig tree. Why? The first answer is, of course, natural: the fig tree has leaves, an indication of at least green fruit. The fig tree shows leaves in March followed by edible knobs which drop off before the true figs form. Beneath the leaves, however, nothing is found. Symbolically, Jesus has had this sad reality demonstrated in every city he has visited, and has heard it realized all too often in the religious hierarchy. Jesus has wanted to see the invisible written into the physical manifestations; what he has observed is outward piety (show) and little substance. He, thus, curses this instance of hypocrisy in the natural order. This, of course, causes one to wonder if in the natural and mortal order hypocrisy is not the thin lacquer between the absolute and real. Jesus is further saying prophetically that the Jews with their rituals have failed to produce genuine spirituality. The withering of the fruitless fig tree becomes a prophetic symbol of the

doom which is coming to the Jewish nation.

Jesus is now confronted by what appears to be an official delegation from the Sanhedrin made up of chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. They want to know what his authority is for acting as he has.

27 Again they came to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him 28 and said, "By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?"

They know obviously he has not been authorized by the Sanhedrin. Jesus turns the tables by stopping them short:

29 Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin? Answer me." 31 They argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 32 But shall we say, 'Of human origin'?"—they were afraid of the crowd, for all regarded John as truly a prophet. 33 So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

If they reply that John had been authorized from heaven, then they will be forced to acknowledge that John had also said one greater than himself was to succeed; to answer that John's authority had come from earth would have been to raise the wrath of the crowd. Jesus, therefore, has answered the question without actually having said anything!

## Chapter 12

1: And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

2: And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

3: And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.

4: And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.

5: And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.

6: Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

7: But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.

8: And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

9: What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

10: And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

11: This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

12: And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

13: And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.

14: And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?

15: Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it.

16: And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's.

17: And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that

are God's. And they marvelled at him.

18: Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

19: Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

20: Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.

21: And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise.

22: And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also.

23: In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.

24: And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?

25: For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

26: And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

27: He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

28: And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

29: And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

30: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

31: And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32: And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

33: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34: And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

35: And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?

36: For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

37: David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

38: And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,

39: And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:

40: Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

41: And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

42: And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

43: And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

44: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

## Interpretation 12

Summary Chapter twelve continues the discussion of Jesus' authority, beginning with a parable of a rich landlord who had rented his vineyard to some farmers in agreement for a portion of the vineyard's produce. The landlord sends servants to claim the rent, but they are abused, some wounded, and some even killed. The landlord next sends his son to claim payment; the son, also, is killed. The landlord himself, now with government backing, will come authorized to take what is his. This leads directly into the discussion of paying Caesar's poll-tax. This is a political question, and it is followed by a theological question concerning the resurrection. Jesus grounds his answer in scripture; the next question about which commandment is greatest is genuine and raised by a teacher of the law. Jesus asks the next question, directing it to the teachers of the law, asking them concerning the messianic title Son of David. The last two episodes both discuss the sincerity of the act: the scribes are condemned for

outward show while the widow is commended for giving everything she has.



To understand the parable of the vineyard in Mark twelve, one must first do some background reading. Isaiah's vineyard is interpreted clearly to talk about God's relationship to the nation of Israel. In this case, the vineyard has been planted and tended to by God so that nothing else could have been provided. The vineyard has not, however, yielded grapes so is to be destroyed. Isaiah then interprets the parable:

7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts

is the house of Israel,

and the people of Judah

are his pleasant planting;

he expected justice,

but saw bloodshed;

righteousness,

but heard a cry!

In this parable in Mark, too, the application is clearly to what is about to happen to Jerusalem in 70 CE when the temple is destroyed.

9 What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. 10 Have you not read this scripture:

'The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

11 this was the Lord's doing,

The Jews standing about realize now that this parable has been told against them; they would like to arrest Jesus, but they are afraid to do so because they suspect the crowd will turn against him. They simply leave.

One should probably recognize that this parable of the absent landlord is familiar to the people listening to Jesus. If it is recalled that the masses of people were poor and that land was owned by the wealthy but attended by the poor, one will recognize resentment directed against prevailing conditions in Galilee. Many estates in Galilee at this time were owned by foreign landlords and tended to by Galilean peasants.

Next, Jesus is badgered by Herodians who have joined the Pharisees and asked about paying the taxes due Caesar:

13 Then they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to trap him in what he said. 14 And

they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? 15 Should we pay them, or should we not?" But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it." 16 And they brought one. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." 17 Jesus said to them, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him.

Jesus recognizes that these loyal to Caesar and the Pharisees are merely attempting to test him. The provincial poll-tax being addressed has been paid by the Jews since CE 6 and is extremely unpopular; it reminds the Jews that they are a subject people. If Jesus denies the legitimacy of the tax, those who observe and report officially to the Caesar are likely to implicate him in rebellion to authority; on the other hand, his saying to pay the taxes would alienate him from the people. As long as Caesar is demanding money which bears his image, then a people who have acknowledged their subservience should pay the tax; however, Caesar, has not right to demand anything that belongs to God. Jesus has once again adroitly missed the trap, and the people are utterly amazed.

The conversation has now been directed to spiritual matters, and the priests and Sadducees now attempt to make belief in the resurrection look ridiculous; remembering that the Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection, one hears a smugness in their question:

18 Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him a question, saying, 19 "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that 'if a man's brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, the man † shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.' 20 There were seven brothers; the first married and, when he died, left no children; 21 and the second married her and died, leaving no children; and the third likewise; 22 none of the seven left children. Last of all the woman herself died. 23 In the resurrection † whose wife will she be? For the seven had married her."

As has been the case before, though, Jesus points out that these outwardly pious people have missed the very implication of spirituality; Jesus provides scriptural authority for the belief and anchors it in its very different reality:

24 Jesus said to them, "Is not this the reason you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? 25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 26 And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the story about the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 He is God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong."

Jesus alludes to God's revelation of Himself to the living Moses:

4 When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

In this revelation, God reveals His relationship to men who are no longer alive: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. The relationship is present, implying God's continuing care for these individuals. The Jews have not yet begun to understand that Jesus defines life spiritually: He is God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong." In this case, it is to be implied that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have been raised by the power of God into life. The power of God effects resurrection.

Another scribe, having been an observer of the earlier conversation, comes forward now and asks what the greatest commandment is. The Jews, of course, know the answer, the Shema of Deuteronomy, since they recite it daily:

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

Jesus goes well beyond the requirement and tells them what the second great commandment is, linking his answer to Leviticus 19:18:

but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

His full answer, as recorded in Mark, bears quoting fully:

"The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Heart, soul, and strength are familiar to the Jewish audience; added here, however, is mind which reflects the hellenistic dichotomizing of body and mind but also emphasizes that loving God is a complete act. The scribe who has asked the question now summarizes what he has heard:

2 Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; 33 and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

Jesus has not addressed burnt offerings; this comes from the scribe; the reply of Jesus, however, confirms the truth of the scribe's observation: "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

Next, Jesus is again teaching in the temple; he addresses their messianic expectation:

35 While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? 36 David himself, by the Holy Spirit, declared,

'The Lord said to my Lord,

"Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet.'" '

37 David himself calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?" And the large crowd was listening to him with delight.

At issue here is the same one addressed earlier in the question of resurrection: the mistaking of flesh for spirit. The messianic expectation that has developed is that David's earthly kingdom will be established; Jesus has, from the beginning, addressed the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of man. He points out that the scripture has had David acknowledge the messiah as Lord, not son.

The last two episodes in this chapter of Mark address the issue of sincerity in act. The scribes are condemned for hypocrisy, and the widow is commended for genuine commitment. The scribes wear the traditional flowing robes marking their profession and the deference they expect others to show them. They, however, extort funds from those who are needy, and they engage in long and showy prayers. They carry out acts of injustice under the very guise of religion:

38 As he taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, 39 and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! 40 They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

The poor widow, on the other hand, gives everything she has, holding nothing back:

44 For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

That others have contributed out of abundance makes her contribution of all she has, meager in comparison, even more significant.

## Relevant Reading

### Isaiah 5

#### The Song of the Unfruitful Vineyard

5 Let me sing for my beloved

my love-song concerning his vineyard:

My beloved had a vineyard

on a very fertile hill.

2 He dug it and cleared it of stones,

and planted it with choice vines;

he built a watchtower in the midst of it,

and hewed out a wine vat in it;

he expected it to yield grapes,

but it yielded wild grapes.

3 And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem

and people of Judah,

judge between me

and my vineyard.

4 What more was there to do for my vineyard

that I have not done in it?

When I expected it to yield grapes,

why did it yield wild grapes?

5 And now I will tell you

what I will do to my vineyard.

I will remove its hedge,

and it shall be devoured;

I will break down its wall,

and it shall be trampled down.

6 I will make it a waste;

it shall not be pruned or hoed,

and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;

I will also command the clouds

that they rain no rain upon it.

7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts

is the house of Israel,

and the people of Judah

are his pleasant planting;

he expected justice,

but saw bloodshed;

righteousness,

but heard a cry!

### **Social Injustice Denounced**

8 Ah, you who join house to house,

who add field to field,

until there is room for no one but you,

and you are left to live alone

in the midst of the land!

9 The Lord of hosts has sworn in my hearing:

Surely many houses shall be desolate,  
large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.

10 For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath,  
and a homer of seed shall yield a mere ephah. †

11 Ah, you who rise early in the morning  
in pursuit of strong drink,  
who linger in the evening

to be inflamed by wine,

12 whose feasts consist of lyre and harp,  
tambourine and flute and wine,  
but who do not regard the deeds of the Lord,  
or see the work of his hands!

13 Therefore my people go into exile without knowledge;  
their nobles are dying of hunger,  
and their multitude is parched with thirst.

14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite  
and opened its mouth beyond measure;  
the nobility of Jerusalem † and her multitude go down,  
her throng and all who exult in her.

15 People are bowed down, everyone is brought low,  
and the eyes of the haughty are humbled.

16 But the Lord of hosts is exalted by justice,  
and the Holy God shows himself holy by righteousness.

17 Then the lambs shall graze as in their pasture,  
fatlings and kids † shall feed among the ruins.

18 Ah, you who drag iniquity along with cords of falsehood,  
who drag sin along as with cart ropes,

19 who say, "Let him make haste,  
let him speed his work  
that we may see it;  
let the plan of the Holy One of Israel hasten to fulfillment,  
that we may know it!"

20 Ah, you who call evil good  
and good evil,  
who put darkness for light  
and light for darkness,  
who put bitter for sweet  
and sweet for bitter!

21 Ah, you who are wise in your own eyes,  
and shrewd in your own sight!

22 Ah, you who are heroes in drinking wine  
and valiant at mixing drink,

23 who acquit the guilty for a bribe,  
and deprive the innocent of their rights!

### **Foreign Invasion Predicted**

24 Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble,  
and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,  
so their root will become rotten,  
and their blossom go up like dust;  
for they have rejected the instruction of the Lord of hosts,  
and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

25 Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people,  
and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them;  
the mountains quaked,  
and their corpses were like refuse  
in the streets.

For all this his anger has not turned away,  
and his hand is stretched out still.

26 He will raise a signal for a nation far away,  
and whistle for a people at the ends of the earth;  
Here they come, swiftly, speedily!

27 None of them is weary, none stumbles,  
none slumbers or sleeps,  
not a loincloth is loose,  
not a sandal-thong broken;

28 their arrows are sharp,  
all their bows bent,  
their horses' hoofs seem like flint,  
and their wheels like the whirlwind.

29 Their roaring is like a lion,  
like young lions they roar;  
they growl and seize their prey,  
they carry it off, and no one can rescue.

30 They will roar over it on that day,  
like the roaring of the sea.  
And if one look to the land—  
only darkness and distress;  
and the light grows dark with clouds.

## Chapter 13

- 1: And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!
- 2: And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
- 3: And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,
- 4: Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

- 5: And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you:  
6: For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.  
7: And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.  
8: For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.  
9: But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.  
10: And the gospel must first be published among all nations.  
11: But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.  
12: Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.  
13: And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.  
14: But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:  
15: And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:  
16: And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.  
17: But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!  
18: And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.  
19: For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.  
20: And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.  
21: And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not:  
22: For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.  
23: But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.  
24: But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,  
25: And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.  
26: And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.  
27: And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.  
28: Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near:  
29: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.  
30: Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.  
31: Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.  
32: But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.  
33: Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.  
34: For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.  
35: Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:  
36: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.  
37: And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

## Interpretation 13

Summary This chapter in Mark is known as the "little apocalypse." As the disciples and Jesus are coming out of the temple, one of the disciples remarks concerning the large buildings and large stones. Jesus replies by saying that all will be destroyed. Jesus and his disciples cross the Kidron Valley in order to get to the Mount of Olives. There, the disciples ask when the temple will be destroyed and ask for signs of this coming event. Jesus mentions

that many will come saying "I am" and will gain followers. Wars and rumors of war will signal the end. The disciples are told that before the end, nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. Birth pangs of the day of the Lord will be signaled by earthquakes and famines.

Next, the disciples hear probably what they do not want to hear: they themselves will be brought before councils and beaten in the synagogues; they will stand before governors and kings where they will be asked to testify of their commitments. Before the end, the Gospel must be proclaimed to all nations. The disciples are told, furthermore, not to try to prepare for the trials relative to what to say in their own defense; rather, the Holy Spirit will speak on their behalf. Brothers, fathers, and children will rise against each other with children having their own parents put to death. The disciples are told they will be hated but will be saved if they endure until the end.

The end will be signaled by "desolating sacrilege" in the temple itself, and the religious will flee to the mountains. At this time of flight, people will not take time to take anything from their houses, including coats; those who are pregnant will be pitied for their condition; hopefully, they will be spared having this happen in the winter. The disciples are told the suffering will be more intense than any they've seen since the beginning of the world, and there will never be greater suffering. God himself will cut short mortal days for the sake of his elect; if, in fact, people hear others proclaiming themselves Messiah, they are not to believe them; for another sign of the day of the Lord will be false prophets and messiahs. The disciples, having been instructed, are to stay alert and not be led astray.

The suffering will be followed by a darkened sun and moon; stars will fall from the heavens, and the heavens themselves will be shaken. At this time the Son of Man will come in the clouds with great power and glory. He will send out angels and gather the elect from the four winds and the ends of earth and heaven.

Christ recalls the lesson the fig tree which he has earlier cursed for bearing leaves but no fruit. Symbolically, once again, another sign, this time of summer, will be that the fig tree puts out leaves. When all these things have been seen, then the day of the Lord will be near; in fact, this generation, Christ tells his disciples, will not pass away until these things come to pass. He continues, heaven and earth will pass away but not my words.

The disciples are told to keep alert, for they will not know when the end is to come; this end, neither the angels nor the Son knows, but only the Father. The disciples are told to keep awake:

34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 35 Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, 36 or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

The power of numbers! Coincidentally, this apocalyptic chapter is thirteen, giving us an easy handle whereby to remember this troublesome chapter, probably one of the most often debated. When will the day of the Lord come! As the readers have been asked to know scripture before as they read Mark, it's probably most instructive to recall Old Testament passages which are very similar in tone and prediction to chapter thirteen of Mark. Recall first Isaiah 13.10 used to describe the judgment of God upon Babylon; in fact, these passages should be read in entirety.

9 See, the day of the Lord comes,

cruel, with wrath and fierce anger,

to make the earth a desolation,

and to destroy its sinners from it.

10 For the stars of the heavens and their constellations  
will not give their light;  
the sun will be dark at its rising,  
and the moon will not shed its light.

Isaiah strikes a similar tone when he describes the judgment of God upon Edom:

34 Draw near, O nations, to hear;

O peoples, give heed!

Let the earth hear, and all that fills it;  
the world, and all that comes from it.

2 For the Lord is enraged against all the nations,  
and furious against all their hoards;  
he has doomed them, has given them over for slaughter.

3 Their slain shall be cast out,  
and the stench of their corpses shall rise;  
the mountains shall flow with their blood.

4 All the host of heaven shall rot away,  
and the skies roll up like a scroll.

All their host shall wither  
like a leaf withering on a vine,  
or fruit withering on a fig tree.

5 When my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens,  
lo, it will descend upon Edom,

One can't miss here the almost formulaic utterance: the day of the Lord, the Lord's rage against nations, the fleeing to the mountains; the earth, a desolation; the heavens, rotting away; the stars and constellations not giving light; the sun and moon darkened.

Now, consider Ezekiel 32.7 describing God's judgment upon Egypt:

7 When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens,  
and make their stars dark;

I will cover the sun with a cloud,  
and the moon shall not give its light.  
8 All the shining lights of the heavens  
I will darken above you,  
and put darkness on your land,  
says the Lord God.

Also, consider Joel 2; Joel is talking about God's judgment upon Israel:

2 Blow the trumpet in Zion;

sound the alarm on my holy mountain!  
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,  
for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near—  
2 a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness!  
Like blackness spread upon the mountains  
a great and powerful army comes;  
their like has never been from of old,  
nor will be again after them  
in ages to come.

3 Fire devours in front of them,  
and behind them a flame burns.  
Before them the land is like the garden of Eden,  
but after them a desolate wilderness,  
and nothing escapes them.

This is the day of the Lord, much like Isaiah 19: 1-3; this time, the prophecy is relative to Egypt:

### **An Oracle concerning Egypt**

19 An oracle concerning Egypt.

See, the Lord is riding on a swift cloud

and comes to Egypt;  
the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence,  
and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.  
2 I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians,  
and they will fight, one against the other,  
neighbor against neighbor,  
city against city, kingdom against kingdom;  
3 the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out,

What should be obvious by now is that the Old Testament supplies ample evidence of such apocalyptic expectation. John Shelby Spong, following through upon his hypothesis that the order of Mark is really an order of liturgical reading, says the following:

As we noted previously, the annual reading of the Torah had begun anew on the first Sabbath of Nisan with the

book of Genesis, so the Torah lesson for that Sabbath would be the early Genesis story of Noah and the flood.

There the theme being expressed was that of God's judgment on the wickedness of human life. It was a total

judgment, reminiscent of Armageddon, when all the world would be destroyed. This Torah reading on that Sabbath

was supplemented, at least in the earliest Jewish lectionaries that we can locate, with a reading from the early

portion of the Jewish scriptures known as the former prophets, namely, the story of Joshua cross the Jordan river.

In that text, the Kingdom of God was about to dawn for the desert-wandering Jews. They were entering the Promised

Land. Again, following the earliest known lectionaries, the lesson for that Sabbath, taken from the prophetic cycle of Isaiah,

was about the coming day of the Lord at the end of time. So, from a variety of angles, the theme among the Jews

of this pre-Passover Sabbath was the end of the world (*Liberating the Gospels*, 77).

What we do know about Mark 13 is that Jerusalem is to fall in 70 CE, not unlike events upon the horizon in the old testament, certainly close enough at hand to suggest that this generation (a generation being forty years) would

not pass away until all had been fulfilled. An intelligent person could have surveyed first-century events and have predicted the probability of a Roman show of power. Certainly, after the fall of the temple in 70 CE, Christianity moves forward into increased world-wide evangelism.

God's judgment upon earth follows both a contemporary and absolute time: that is, Babylon, Edom, Egypt, and Israel were judged. Each cycle repeated itself with a renewal and subsequent fall away from commitment. God's absolute judgment when the Kingdom of God would be definitively established is, perhaps, always a matter of future event at the same time that it is being currently realized. Jesus, perhaps, did not set out to do more than reform the legalistic and ritualistic "Jewish" religion of his day; the outgrowth, however, was Christianity.

What we do recognize in Mark 13 is that it records the last week. We have already observed the cleaning up of the temple in chapter eleven; this is followed by the cursing of the unproductive fig tree, also in eleven. Prior to these events, we have observed Jesus approach Jerusalem from Jericho, approaching the Mount of Olives. Did Jesus go to Jerusalem to die?

The purpose of the trip is stated in Mark's three passion predictions ([Mark 8.31](#); [Mark 9.31](#); [Mark 10.33–34](#)). It is generally agreed that these predictions in their present form are prophecies after the event and therefore reflect a knowledge of the passion story (stage II). But they may well contain an authentic nucleus (stage I), such as "the Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men" ([Mark 9.31](#)), where we have an Aramaic play on words (Son of man/men). Jesus hardly went up to Jerusalem in order to die; that, it has been suggested, would be tantamount to suicide. But he may well have realized that death would be the inevitable outcome of his mission (Oxford Companion).

We know that he has ridden into Jerusalem in the manner prophesied and expected in the tradition of Zechariah. The people have proclaimed "Hosanna to the highest." This "hosanna" is interpreted as "Save now." This cry may have been a plea to God to save the people now that the Messiah had appeared among them.

As they depart the temple, the disciples have been right to exclaim about the size of the buildings and the stones:

**1:** *The temple*, begun by Herod the Great, was as yet unfinished. *What large stones*, most of them were 37½ feet long; [Matthew 24.1 n.](#) 13.18 feet wide, and 12 feet thick. **2:** [Luke 19.43–44](#); [Mark 14.58](#); [Mark 15.29](#); [John 2.19](#); [Acts 6.14](#). This temple was destroyed a.d. 70 (Oxford Annotated).

The desolating sacrilege well could define exactly what was happening within the temple, God's house intended to be a house of prayer:

**13.14:** [Daniel 9.27](#); [Daniel 11.31](#); [Daniel 12.11](#). *The desolating sacrilege*, the intrusion of Gentile practices into the temple (Oxford Annotated).

It should be remembered that the Romans had permitted their taxes to be paid by the money coming into the temple; although Roman money was used as the medium of exchange throughout the land, this money had to be exchanged for Hebrew money within the temple. This set up quite the scene for exploitation and abuse. What we know, too, is that these utterances concerning the destruction of the temple come just prior to the Passover with its set of expectations:

The tractate *Pesa'im* in the Mishnah provides a description of the way that the rabbis (about 200 CE) understood Passover to have been celebrated before the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE). Many of the features reflected in *Pesa'im* are thus characteristic of the observance at the time of Jesus (See [Lord's Supper](#)), and some have continued in Jewish tradition to the present. The following elements in the celebration are noteworthy.

The people brought their Passover animals to the Temple in the late afternoon and, because of the numbers of worshipers, were admitted to the sanctuary in three separate groups. The worshipers slaughtered their animals and the priests caught the blood and tossed it against the altar. The animals

were flayed and cleaned in the Temple courtyard, with the required fat and internal portions being burned on the altar ([Leviticus 3.3–4](#)). While each group was performing these functions, the Levites sang the Egyptian Hallel psalms ([Psalm 113–118](#)) and repeated them if time allowed ([Pesáú. 5.5–10](#)).

*The animals were carried from the Temple precincts and cooked for the Passover meal. Cooking was done by roasting so as not to break any bone in the animal (Pesáú. 7.1,11; see [Exodus 12.46](#); [John 19.36](#)).*

*At the meal, everyone ate at least a portion of the Passover animal. The flesh was eaten along with varied herbs (Pesáú.ú. 2.6), unleavened bread, a dip (úřrôset)rôset composed of pounded nuts and fruits mixed with vinegar, and four cups of wine. After the second cup, a son asked the father, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" and the father instructed the son on the basis of [Deuteronomy 26.5–11](#). Between the second and third cups, [Psalm 113](#) (or [Psalm 113–114](#)) was sung. After the fourth cup, the Hallel was concluded. At the conclusion of the meal, the people departed but not to join in revelry (Pesáú. 10.1–8).*

*The people sought to celebrate the meal as if they themselves had come out of Egypt—"out of bondage to freedom, from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to festival day, and from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption" (Pesáú.ú. 10.5) (Oxford Companion).*

*What follows in Mark is the plot to arrest Jesus, the betrayal agreement, the Last Supper, the agony in the Garden of Gethesamene, the examination of Christ by Caiphas, the high priest, Peter's denial, the trial of Jesus before Pilate, his mockery and crucifixion; this is followed by burial, resurrection, and post resurrection appearances.*

## *Relevant Readings*

### *Isaiah 13*

#### **Proclamation against Babylon**

**13** The oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw.

2 On a bare hill raise a signal,

cry aloud to them;

wave the hand for them to enter

the gates of the nobles.

3 I myself have commanded my consecrated ones,

have summoned my warriors, my proudly exulting ones,

to execute my anger.

4 Listen, a tumult on the mountains

as of a great multitude!

Listen, an uproar of kingdoms,

of nations gathering together!

The Lord of hosts is mustering

an army for battle.

5 They come from a distant land,

from the end of the heavens,

the Lord and the weapons of his indignation,

to destroy the whole earth.

6 Wail, for the day of the Lord is near;

it will come like destruction from the Almighty! †

7 Therefore all hands will be feeble,

and every human heart will melt,

8 and they will be dismayed.

Pangs and agony will seize them;

they will be in anguish like a woman in labor.

They will look aghast at one another;

their faces will be aflame.

9 See, the day of the Lord comes,

cruel, with wrath and fierce anger,

to make the earth a desolation,

and to destroy its sinners from it.

10 For the stars of the heavens and their constellations

will not give their light;

the sun will be dark at its rising,

and the moon will not shed its light.

11 I will punish the world for its evil,

and the wicked for their iniquity;

I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant,

and lay low the insolence of tyrants.

12 I will make mortals more rare than fine gold,  
and humans than the gold of Ophir.

13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,  
and the earth will be shaken out of its place,  
at the wrath of the Lord of hosts  
in the day of his fierce anger.

14 Like a hunted gazelle,  
or like sheep with no one to gather them,  
all will turn to their own people,  
and all will flee to their own lands.

15 Whoever is found will be thrust through,  
and whoever is caught will fall by the sword.

16 Their infants will be dashed to pieces  
before their eyes;  
their houses will be plundered,  
and their wives ravished.

17 See, I am stirring up the Medes against them,  
who have no regard for silver  
and do not delight in gold.

18 Their bows will slaughter the young men;  
they will have no mercy on the fruit of the womb;  
their eyes will not pity children.

19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms,  
the splendor and pride of the Chaldeans,  
will be like Sodom and Gomorrah  
when God overthrew them.

20 It will never be inhabited  
or lived in for all generations;

Arabs will not pitch their tents there,  
shepherds will not make their flocks lie down there.  
21 But wild animals will lie down there,  
and its houses will be full of howling creatures;  
there ostriches will live,  
and there goat-demons will dance.  
22 Hyenas will cry in its towers,  
and jackals in the pleasant palaces;  
its time is close at hand,  
and its days will not be prolonged.

## Isaiah 34

### Judgment on the Nations

**34** Draw near, O nations, to hear;

O peoples, give heed!

Let the earth hear, and all that fills it;

the world, and all that comes from it.

2 For the Lord is enraged against all the nations,

and furious against all their hoards;

he has doomed them, has given them over for slaughter.

3 Their slain shall be cast out,

and the stench of their corpses shall rise;

the mountains shall flow with their blood.

4 All the host of heaven shall rot away,

and the skies roll up like a scroll.

All their host shall wither

like a leaf withering on a vine,

or fruit withering on a fig tree.

5 When my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens,  
lo, it will descend upon Edom,  
upon the people I have doomed to judgment.

6 The Lord has a sword; it is sated with blood,  
it is gorged with fat,  
with the blood of lambs and goats,  
with the fat of the kidneys of rams.

For the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah,  
a great slaughter in the land of Edom.

7 Wild oxen shall fall with them,  
and young steers with the mighty bulls.  
Their land shall be soaked with blood,  
and their soil made rich with fat.

8 For the Lord has a day of vengeance,  
a year of vindication by Zion's cause. †

9 And the streams of Edom † shall be turned into pitch,  
and her soil into sulfur;  
her land shall become burning pitch.

10 Night and day it shall not be quenched;  
its smoke shall go up forever.  
From generation to generation it shall lie waste;  
no one shall pass through it forever and ever.

11 But the hawk † and the hedgehog † shall possess it;  
the owl † and the raven shall live in it.  
He shall stretch the line of confusion over it,  
and the plummet of chaos over † its nobles.

12 They shall name it No Kingdom There,  
and all its princes shall be nothing.

13 Thorns shall grow over its strongholds,  
nettles and thistles in its fortresses.

It shall be the haunt of jackals,  
an abode for ostriches.

14 Wildcats shall meet with hyenas,  
goat-demons shall call to each other;  
there too Lilith shall repose,  
and find a place to rest.

15 There shall the owl nest  
and lay and hatch and brood in its shadow;  
there too the buzzards shall gather,  
each one with its mate.

16 Seek and read from the book of the Lord:  
Not one of these shall be missing;  
none shall be without its mate.  
For the mouth of the Lord has commanded,  
and his spirit has gathered them.

17 He has cast the lot for them,  
his hand has portioned it out to them with the line;  
they shall possess it forever,  
from generation to generation they shall live in it.

## Ezekiel 32

### Lamentation over Pharaoh and Egypt

**32** In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me: 2 Mortal, raise a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him:

You consider yourself a lion among the nations,

but you are like a dragon in the seas;  
you thrash about in your streams,  
trouble the water with your feet,  
and foul your † streams.

3 Thus says the Lord God:

In an assembly of many peoples  
I will throw my net over you;  
and I † will haul you up in my dragnet.

4 I will throw you on the ground,  
on the open field I will fling you,  
and will cause all the birds of the air to settle on you,  
and I will let the wild animals of the whole earth gorge themselves with you.

5 I will strew your flesh on the mountains,  
and fill the valleys with your carcass. †

6 I will drench the land with your flowing blood  
up to the mountains,  
and the watercourses will be filled with you.

7 When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens,  
and make their stars dark;  
I will cover the sun with a cloud,  
and the moon shall not give its light.

8 All the shining lights of the heavens  
I will darken above you,  
and put darkness on your land,

says the Lord God.

9 I will trouble the hearts of many peoples,  
as I carry you captive † among the nations,  
into countries you have not known.

10 I will make many peoples appalled at you;

their kings shall shudder because of you.

When I brandish my sword before them,

they shall tremble every moment

for their lives, each one of them,

on the day of your downfall.

11 For thus says the Lord God:

The sword of the king of Babylon shall come against you.

12 I will cause your hordes to fall

by the swords of mighty ones,

all of them most terrible among the nations.

They shall bring to ruin the pride of Egypt,

and all its hordes shall perish.

13 I will destroy all its livestock

from beside abundant waters;

and no human foot shall trouble them any more,

nor shall the hoofs of cattle trouble them.

14 Then I will make their waters clear,

and cause their streams to run like oil, says the Lord God.

15 When I make the land of Egypt desolate

and when the land is stripped of all that fills it,

when I strike down all who live in it,

then they shall know that I am the Lord.

16 This is a lamentation; it shall be chanted.

The women of the nations shall chant it.

Over Egypt and all its hordes they shall chant it,

says the Lord God.

### **Dirge over Egypt**

17 In the twelfth year, in the first month, † on the fifteenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came

to me:

18 Mortal, wail over the hordes of Egypt,  
and send them down,  
with Egypt † and the daughters of majestic nations,  
to the world below,  
with those who go down to the Pit.  
19 "Whom do you surpass in beauty?  
Go down! Be laid to rest with the uncircumcised!"

20 They shall fall among those who are killed by the sword. Egypt † has been handed over to the sword; carry away both it and its hordes. 21 The mighty chiefs shall speak of them, with their helpers, out of the midst of Sheol: "They have come down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, killed by the sword."

22 Assyria is there, and all its company, their graves all around it, all of them killed, fallen by the sword. 23 Their graves are set in the uttermost parts of the Pit. Its company is all around its grave, all of them killed, fallen by the sword, who spread terror in the land of the living.

24 Elam is there, and all its hordes around its grave; all of them killed, fallen by the sword, who went down uncircumcised into the world below, who spread terror in the land of the living. They bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit. 25 They have made Elam † a bed among the slain with all its hordes, their graves all around it, all of them uncircumcised, killed by the sword; for terror of them was spread in the land of the living, and they bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit; they are placed among the slain.

26 Meshech and Tubal are there, and all their multitude, their graves all around them, all of them uncircumcised, killed by the sword; for they spread terror in the land of the living. 27 And they do not lie with the fallen warriors of long ago † who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war, whose swords were laid under their heads, and whose shields † are upon their bones; for the terror of the warriors was in the land of the living. 28 So you shall be broken and lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are killed by the sword.

29 Edom is there, its kings and all its princes, who for all their might are laid with those who are killed by the sword; they lie with the uncircumcised, with those who go down to the Pit.

30 The princes of the north are there, all of them, and all the Sidonians, who have gone down in shame with the slain, for all the terror that they caused by their might; they lie uncircumcised with those who are killed by the sword, and bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit.

31 When Pharaoh sees them, he will be consoled for all his hordes—Pharaoh and all his army, killed by the sword, says the Lord God. 32 For he † spread terror in the land of the living; therefore he shall be laid to rest among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword—Pharaoh and all his multitude, says the Lord God.

## Joel 2

2 Blow the trumpet in Zion;

sound the alarm on my holy mountain!

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,  
for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near—  
2 a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness!  
Like blackness spread upon the mountains  
a great and powerful army comes;  
their like has never been from of old,  
nor will be again after them  
in ages to come.

3 Fire devours in front of them,  
and behind them a flame burns.  
Before them the land is like the garden of Eden,  
but after them a desolate wilderness,  
and nothing escapes them.

**4 They have the appearance of horses,  
and like war-horses they charge.**

**5 As with the rumbling of chariots,  
they leap on the tops of the mountains,  
like the crackling of a flame of fire  
devouring the stubble,  
like a powerful army  
drawn up for battle.**

**6 Before them peoples are in anguish,  
all faces grow pale. †**

**7 Like warriors they charge,  
like soldiers they scale the wall.**

**Each keeps to its own course,  
they do not swerve from † their paths.**

**8 They do not jostle one another,**

each keeps to its own track;  
they burst through the weapons  
and are not halted.

9 They leap upon the city,  
they run upon the walls;  
they climb up into the houses,  
they enter through the windows like a thief.

10 The earth quakes before them,  
the heavens tremble.

The sun and the moon are darkened,  
and the stars withdraw their shining.

11 The Lord utters his voice  
at the head of his army;  
how vast is his host!  
Numberless are those who obey his command.

Truly the day of the Lord is great;  
terrible indeed—who can endure it?

12 Yet even now, says the Lord,  
return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

13 rend your hearts and not your clothing.

Return to the Lord, your God,  
for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,  
and relents from punishing.

14 Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,  
and leave a blessing behind him,  
a grain offering and a drink offering  
for the Lord, your God?

**15 Blow the trumpet in Zion;**

**sanctify a fast;**

**call a solemn assembly;**

**16 gather the people.**

**Sanctify the congregation;**

**assemble the aged;**

**gather the children,**

**even infants at the breast.**

**Let the bridegroom leave his room,**

**and the bride her canopy.**

**17 Between the vestibule and the altar**

**let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep.**

**Let them say, "Spare your people, O Lord,**

**and do not make your heritage a mockery,**

**a byword among the nations.**

**Why should it be said among the peoples,**

**'Where is their God?' "**

### **God's Response and Promise**

**18 Then the Lord became jealous for his land,**

**and had pity on his people.**

**19 In response to his people the Lord said:**

**I am sending you**

**grain, wine, and oil,**

**and you will be satisfied;**

**and I will no more make you**

**a mockery among the nations.**

**20 I will remove the northern army far from you,**

and drive it into a parched and desolate land,  
its front into the eastern sea,  
and its rear into the western sea;  
its stench and foul smell will rise up.

Surely he has done great things!

21 Do not fear, O soil;  
be glad and rejoice,  
for the Lord has done great things!

22 Do not fear, you animals of the field,  
for the pastures of the wilderness are green;  
the tree bears its fruit,  
the fig tree and vine give their full yield.

23 O children of Zion, be glad  
and rejoice in the Lord your God;  
for he has given the early rain † for your vindication,  
he has poured down for you abundant rain,  
the early and the later rain, as before.

24 The threshing floors shall be full of grain,  
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

25 I will repay you for the years  
that the swarming locust has eaten,  
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,  
my great army, which I sent against you.

26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,  
and praise the name of the Lord your God,  
who has dealt wondrously with you.

And my people shall never again be put to shame.

27 You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,  
and that I, the Lord, am your God and there is no other.

And my people shall never again  
be put to shame.

### God's Spirit Poured Out

28 †Then afterward  
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;  
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
your old men shall dream dreams,  
and your young men shall see visions.  
29 Even on the male and female slaves,  
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.

30 I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. 32 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

## Isaiah 19

### An Oracle concerning Egypt

19 An oracle concerning Egypt.

See, the Lord is riding on a swift cloud  
and comes to Egypt;  
the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence,  
and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.  
2 I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians,  
and they will fight, one against the other,  
neighbor against neighbor,  
city against city, kingdom against kingdom;  
3 the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out,  
and I will confound their plans;

they will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead

and the ghosts and the familiar spirits;

4 I will deliver the Egyptians

into the hand of a hard master;

a fierce king will rule over them,

says the Sovereign, the Lord of hosts.

5 The waters of the Nile will be dried up,

and the river will be parched and dry;

6 its canals will become foul,

and the branches of Egypt's Nile will diminish and dry up,

reeds and rushes will rot away.

7 There will be bare places by the Nile,

on the brink of the Nile;

and all that is sown by the Nile will dry up,

be driven away, and be no more.

8 Those who fish will mourn;

all who cast hooks in the Nile will lament,

and those who spread nets on the water will languish.

9 The workers in flax will be in despair,

and the carders and those at the loom will grow pale.

10 Its weavers will be dismayed,

and all who work for wages will be grieved.

11 The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish;

the wise counselors of Pharaoh give stupid counsel.

How can you say to Pharaoh,

"I am one of the sages,

a descendant of ancient kings"?

12 Where now are your sages?

Let them tell you and make known

what the Lord of hosts has planned against Egypt.

13 The princes of Zoan have become fools,

and the princes of Memphis are deluded;

those who are the cornerstones of its tribes

have led Egypt astray.

14 The Lord has poured into them †

a spirit of confusion;

and they have made Egypt stagger in all its doings

as a drunkard staggers around in vomit.

15 Neither head nor tail, palm branch or reed,

will be able to do anything for Egypt.

16 On that day the Egyptians will be like women, and tremble with fear before the hand that the Lord of hosts raises against them. 17 And the land of Judah will become a terror to the Egyptians; everyone to whom it is mentioned will fear because of the plan that the Lord of hosts is planning against them.

### **Egypt, Assyria, and Israel Blessed**

18 On that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the Lord of hosts. One of these will be called the City of the Sun.

19 On that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the center of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border. 20 It will be a sign and a witness to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt; when they cry to the Lord because of oppressors, he will send them a savior, and will defend and deliver them. 21 The Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians; and the Egyptians will know the Lord on that day, and will worship with sacrifice and burnt offering, and they will make vows to the Lord and perform them. 22 The Lord will strike Egypt, striking and healing; they will return to the Lord, and he will listen to their supplications and heal them.

23 On that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.

24 On that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, 25 whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage."

## Chapter 14

1: After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.

2: But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.

3: And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.

4: And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?

5: For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

- 6: And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.
- 7: For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.
- 8: She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.
- 9: Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.
- 10: And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.
- 11: And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.
- 12: And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?
- 13: And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.
- 14: And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?
- 15: And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.
- 16: And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.
- 17: And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.
- 18: And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.
- 19: And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?
- 20: And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.
- 21: The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.
- 22: And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.
- 23: And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.
- 24: And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.
- 25: Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.
- 26: And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.
- 27: And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.
- 28: But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.
- 29: But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.
- 30: And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.
- 31: But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.
- 32: And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.
- 33: And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;
- 34: And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.
- 35: And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.
- 36: And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.
- 37: And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?
- 38: Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.
- 39: And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.
- 40: And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him.
- 41: And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
- 42: Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.
- 43: And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude

with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

44: And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely.

45: And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him.

46: And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

47: And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

48: And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me?

49: I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

50: And they all forsook him, and fled.

51: And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him:

52: And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

53: And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

54: And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.

55: And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.

56: For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.

57: And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying,

58: We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.

59: But neither so did their witness agree together.

60: And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?

61: But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

62: And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

63: Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?

64: Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

65: And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

66: And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest:

67: And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.

68: But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.

69: And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.

70: And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.

71: But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.

72: And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crew twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

## Interpretation 14

**Summary** Two days before the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the chief priests and scribes are looking for a way in stealth to have Jesus killed; they are, however, afraid of the crowds following him, believing any incident with "their Messiah" could cause them to riot. Jesus has retreated to the house of Simon, a leper whom he has healed, and is resting; a woman comes with a costly jar of unguent and anoints his head. Because the ointment was expensive, some observing become angry at the woman.

Events develop rapidly, as narrated by Mark:

10 Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to

them. 11 When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

Next, we have the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover Lamb is slain. The disciples ask Jesus where he would like to go to celebrate the Passover; they are instructed

, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, 14 and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 15 He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." 16 So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

This day pushes on into evening, and while they are eating, Jesus predicts that one of them present will betray him. He identifies this person as one of the twelve who is to betray the Son of Man and says it would be better if that man had not been born.

The next session has come to be recognized as the institution of the Last Supper:

22 While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. 24 He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Jesus indicates he will next drink of the fruit of the vine only in the kingdom of God. Finishing the dinner, Jesus goes with his disciples once again to the Mount of Olives. Jesus predicts that they will all become deserters, that he himself will be struck but only to be raised up. Peter denies that he could be capable of such desertion.

Next, Jesus prays in Gethsemane. Peter, James, and John, instructed to wait, begin to be agitated and restless, sensing events about to come it would seem. Jesus himself reveals a degree of emotional upheaval:

34 And he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake."

Jesus returns from praying three times only to find his disciples sleeping:

"Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

Jesus himself seems to have a premonition of what is about to befall, for he has addressed his Father, asking if possible that the cup he is to drink be taken from him:

"Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want."

Such is not, however, to be the case; he is to drink the bitter dregs. Judas arrives with a crowd holding swords and clubs, among them, the chief priests, scribes, and elders. Judas addresses Jesus as "Rabbi" and betrays him with a kiss. Jesus reminds this religious group that he has been with them for days in the temple teaching and that they have not arrested him. One follower has hastily donned only linen cloth and no outer cloak; in the turmoil of the moment, he loses his linen coat and runs from the scene naked.

Jesus is taken to the high priest, chief priests, elders, and scribes. The council and chief priests are looking for a reason to put Jesus to death, but among the testimonies against him, much is revealed and nothing is consistent. When Jesus is first questioned, he is quiet; next, though, he is asked outright: "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus replies, "I am; and 'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.'" The high priest tears his clothes at this blasphemy and turns Jesus over to the crowds, all condemning him as deserving death, blindfolding him, spitting on him, and commanding him to

prophesy.

Chapter fourteen ends with the ever adamant Peter's denial. As predicted, Peter denies Jesus, denying, also, that he himself is a Galilean. On hearing the cock crow after his third denial, Peter remembers that Jesus has told him he, too, will forsake.

If the Passion story was written before the rest of Mark, and scholars seem to think it was, then Mark would have prefixed the narrative tradition of the Passion with the tradition of Jesus. It is commonly agreed that Mark is the earliest Gospel and that it was used for the other synoptics. The framework for the narrative is quite straight forward: the conspiracy of the authorities against Jesus, Judas' agreement to betray Jesus, preparation for the Passover, mention of the traitor, prophecy of Peter's denial, and Jesus being taken captive (Edwin Freed, *The New Testament: A Critical Introduction*, Wadsworth 1991: p. 113). Certain basic issues emerge in the narrative; for example, the *Mishnah* (published in 200 CE) would suggest that a trial on the day of a Jewish festival runs counter to Jewish law. Even the manner of the crucifixion is problematic: archaeological evidence indicates one nail would be driven through both heel bones. A seat would have been fastened on the upright part of the cross to prevent a quick death. The traditional view is, of course, that Jesus had his hands nailed to the horizontal bark of the cross. In another area, Jesus is resurrected; the nature, however, physical or spiritual, is debated. Evidence exists for both a physical and spiritual resurrection. Other questions might include the following: why is there an anointing at Bethany which interrupts the narrative of conspiracy against Jesus? Why is the name of Judas not mentioned in the story of the traitor? Why would a criminal like Barabbah be released instead of Jesus? Why does Mark, unlike Matthew, Luke, and John, not contain any narratives of Jesus' resurrection. Whatever else is said about Mark, the passion narrative is the climax to his Gospel, which ends as it began, with a confession that Jesus is the "Son of God."

What is unique in Mark is that he presents Jesus as often speaking privately to his disciples. He also presents Jesus as being conscious of his Messiahship and of being the Son of God. Jesus has become aware of his uniqueness at his baptism, but this fact continues to be revealed throughout the narrative. Mark, as pointed out above, also begins and ends this Gospel with the theme of Jesus as the Son of God, and this becomes his theme.

Why were the scribes and priests looking for a way to kill Jesus? We should note that this is not a new development; recall Mark 3.6 and Mark 12.12; in the first, Jesus has healed a withered hand on the Sabbath, and the second comes after the story of the wicked tenants which those present begin to see as applied against them:

6 The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

12 When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away.

We note here that the conspiracy in the first case is with the Herodians; the second indicates the fear of the crowd following Jesus. Whatever else Jesus has provoked, he has certainly criticized the existing Jewish religious piety. He has seen it as having more show than sincerity. It has, also, ostracized too many in the community, stigmatizing them as falling short of the law. Jesus has consistently demonstrated compassion based on a thorough understanding of human nature and spiritual realities. He has attracted followers from those who have been marginalized by the temple advocates. The priests and scribes are enough aware of Jesus' popularity to want to postpone any public confrontation.

Who is the woman who anoints the head of Jesus? All we know is that she is a woman from Bethany, that she anoints the head of Jesus with apparently quite expensive ointment; nard, one of the ingredients, was imported from India. This event and the event of Judas Iscariot's first contact with the chief priests set the stage for the Passion. The Passion then unfurls quickly; it culminates in the crucifixion and death and burial of Jesus. We know that it is evening when the disciples gather with Jesus for the Passover:

17 When it was evening, he came with the twelve. 18 And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." 19 They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, "Surely, not I?" 20 He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread † into the bowl † with me. 21 For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born."

Jesus at the Passover meal predicts his betrayal, interpreting the bread and wine of that meal as his body and blood. The meal concludes with a hymn, and Jesus and his disciples go out to the Mount of Olives. This is apparently a grove of olive trees containing an olive press. Since this is the first watch of the night, we conclude it to be about 9:00 p.m. At some garden within the Mount of Olives, Jesus goes apart from his disciples to pray, taking Peter, James, and John, his inner circle with him. We find out that they do not keep watch with him even one, two, or three hours. Probably about 12:00 p.m., they leave the garden. This means the betrayal comes at the darkest part of night. Jesus is led away by the chief priests, elders, and scribes in the dark of night; early in the morning, Peter has already made his dramatic three times denial, matching the the three hours you could not pray. Jesus has been betrayed by Judas Iscariot, possibly for both monetary and political reasons. Judas could have tired of waiting for Jesus to assume the Messiahship role expected of him. At any rate, when Jesus is asked directly if he is the Messiah, he replies with apparent knowledge of Daniel 7:

I saw one like a human being  
 coming with the clouds of heaven.  
 And he came to the Ancient One  
 and was presented before him.  
 14 To him was given dominion  
 and glory and kingship,  
 that all peoples, nations, and languages  
 should serve him.  
 His dominion is an everlasting dominion  
 that shall not pass away,  
 and his kingship is one  
 that shall never be destroyed.

The high priest interprets this as blasphemy: according to the *Oxford Companion*, blasphemy is defined in the following way:

**Blasphemy.** Speech that is abusive to humans or derogatory to God. Blasphemy against humans occurs when people speak words harmful to one another ([Matthew 15.19](#); [Colossians 3.8](#); NRSV: "slander"). Blasphemy also occurs when a person speaks against God in a way that fails to recognize the sacredness and honor of God's person and name. According to [Leviticus 24.10–16](#), it was

punishable by death.

Blasphemy was also used to describe a claim to a divine prerogative. According to [Mark 2.7](#) (par.), Jesus was accused of blasphemy when he claimed to forgive sins; see also [John 10.33–36](#); [Mark 14.64](#).

The gospel writers also describe Jesus' opponents as blasphemous when they mocked him ([Mark 15.29](#); [Luke 22.65](#)). Similarly, 1 Timothy says that Paul blasphemed Jesus when he persecuted the church ([1 Timothy 1.13](#)), and that those who deserted the gospel were also guilty of blasphemy ([1 Timothy 1.20](#)).

In a passage that has elicited much debate, the synoptic Gospels ([Mark 3.28–29](#) par.) speak of blasphemy against the (Holy) Spirit as a sin that cannot be forgiven. The context indicates that this sin is not committed unintentionally by Jesus' followers, but is ascribed to the adversaries of Jesus, who had attributed his success to an evil spirit.

That Jesus has said he is the Messiah has apparently been interpreted as claiming divine prerogative. Interpreted as deserving death, Jesus is subjected to physical abuse and buffoonery. What follows quickly is Peter's denial.

## Chapter 15

1: And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

2: And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.

3: And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing.

4: And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee.

5: But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.

6: Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.

7: And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

8: And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.

9: But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

10: For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.

11: But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

12: And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?

13: And they cried out again, Crucify him.

14: Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

15: And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

16: And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.

17: And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,

18: And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!

19: And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.

20: And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

21: And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

22: And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

23: And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

24: And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

25: And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

26: And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

27: And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.  
 28: And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.  
 29: And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,  
 30: Save thyself, and come down from the cross.  
 31: Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.  
 32: Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.  
 33: And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.  
 34: And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?  
 35: And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.  
 36: And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.  
 37: And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.  
 38: And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.  
 39: And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.  
 40: There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;  
 41: (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.  
 42: And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,  
 43: Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.  
 44: And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.  
 45: And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.  
 46: And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.  
 47: And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

## Interpretation 15

Summary The following morning, the Sanhedrin confirms its decision and takes Jesus before Pilate. He is arraigned before Pilate, Judea's fifth procurator, CE 26-36. Jesus is said to have proclaimed himself king of the Jews, which would have implicated him in a political rebellion. Pilate suspects Jesus' popularity is the real reason for his being arraigned. A Jewish nationalist, Barrabas, is released in accordance with Passover tradition, even though the people have had their choice of Jesus or Barrabas. Those who have been permitted to be present cry out for the death of Jesus, probably indicated they are a Jerusalem following associated with the Sanhedrin. Jesus is sentenced to crucifixion preceded by scourging. For the claim of king of the Jews, which Jesus has not made, he is mocked by the soldiers in a tradition of the "king" game in which he receives a crown of thorns, a scepter, and a mock robe. Simon of Cyrene carries the cross of Jesus to Golgotha, where he is crucified with two thieves. The victims are offered the opportunity to have their senses dulled by drugged wine; Jesus refuses the opiate. A written notice of the charge against the victims is written on a banner and placed on the cross: Jesus is said to be King of the Jews. He is taunted by passers-by. Jesus, in agony, cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He is offered wine vinegar and utters, "It is finished." At that moment, the curtain of the temple is reported to have been torn from top to bottom. A non-commissioned officer in charge confesses that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. This is the climax of the Gospel. We are told that Mary Magdalene and the mother of James the young look on the crucifixion from afar. Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Council, asks to be allowed to bury Jesus; he, no doubt, has been a sympathizer to the Kingdom of God to come. Joseph wrapped the body of Jesus in linen and laid it in a tomb, with Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus looking on. The traditional tomb closing occurs with a huge stone rolled across the door of the cave.

In Mark 15, divine power pours itself into the world. Remember, the baptism of Jesus has been marked by the sky's splitting; at his death, the temple veil is torn from top to bottom. Nothing any less decisive than an epiphany of the nature of Sinai is occurring here. The light of God comes to rest in that place where heaven and earth seem to come together. For Moses, this happened on Mount Sinai, where the definitive absolute commandments were revealed by the hand of God. These commandments have been housed in the ark and carried until a temple is constructed. Recall the history of that ark:

As the years went by this object became ever-more venerated. It symbolized the presence of the living God at one particular spot on earth; for the God who dwelled "in the high and holy place" was also present at the ark in the midst of his people. As a result, later generations embellished descriptions of it in their traditions, seeing it as overlaid with gold both within and without ([Exodus 25.10–16](#)). The ark was transportable; it could be carried on poles overlaid with gold, which passed through rings on its side. It was considered to be of such sanctity that were an unauthorized person to touch it, even accidentally, this infraction would be punishable by death ([2 Samuel 6.6](#)).

The ark seems at one time to have contained only the two tablets of the law ([1 Kings 8.9](#)), but according to other traditions ([Hebrews 9.4](#)) it contained also Aaron's rod that budded ([Numbers 17.1–10](#)) and a golden urn holding manna ([Exodus 16.32–34](#)).

The history of the ark parallels many of the vicissitudes of Israel. It was carried by the sons of Levi on the wilderness wanderings ([Deuteronomy 31.9](#)); borne over the Jordan by the priests ([Joshua 8.1](#)); captured by the Philistines ([1 Samuel 4](#)); brought to Jerusalem by David ([2 Samuel 6](#); [1 Chronicles 13.3–14](#); [1 Chronicles 15.1–18](#)). After being kept in a tentlike sanctuary (See [Tabernacle](#)), it was finally installed in the holiest chamber of Solomon's Temple.

The ark had a cover or lid. Its name (Hebr. *kapporet*) is actually a theological term (cf. *kippûr*, "to purify, atone"), so we do not know what this cover looked like ([Leviticus 16.2](#); [Leviticus 16.13–15](#)). Martin Luther described it in his German Bible as the "mercy seat" because the Lord "sat" enthroned over it in mercy, invisibly present where the wingtips of two cherubim met above it, guarding the divine presence. So the ark represented for Israel the localized presence of God in judgment, mercy, forgiveness, and love; and because it contained the Ten Commandments, it was a visible reminder that their life was to be lived in obedience to the expressed will of God. Since the Ten Commandments were incised on stone so as to last for all time, Israel carried in her midst God's demands for total loyalty and obedience to himself and for social justice and love of neighbor.

The ark is thought to have been captured when Jerusalem fell in 587/586 BCE, and nothing is known of its later history. Later legend reports that Jeremiah rescued it and hid it on Mount Nebo ([2 Maccabees 2.4–8](#); but cf. [Jeremiah 3.16](#)) (*Oxford Companion*).

What we have in Mark, among other things, is a wonderfully compounded Kingdom of Christ in relation to the Kingdom of David. Christ is not David's son, but his Lord. There is both continuity and discontinuity between the two kingdoms. Israel had been baptized into Moses in the cloud and sea; later, Paul, who carries the Christian message forward, is to baptize into Christ. It seems clear that the Christian interpretation of the cross is that the divine has entered into history and turned its course decisively (John Drury in "Mark" in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode. *Harvard University Press*, 1987: 410).

In the concluding chapter of Mark, the tradition of the Jews will have been completely transformed in Jesus as the new temple embraced by the heavenly light of God. Recall the transfiguration: Moses and Elijah, both men who stand with Jesus have experienced unusual deaths: Moses died alone and was buried by God; Elijah was taken by a fiery chariot directly into divine presence. Each of these Hebrew heroes had conquered death. Just as Moses went up Sinai with three intimates (Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu), Jesus at the transfiguration is accompanied by

three disciples. In both cases, we have a cloud, and in both cases, they stayed for forty days.

Christians came to believe that Jesus was nothing less than the new dwelling place of God, and that Jesus had himself become the ultimate and final sacrifice that rendered additional temple sacrifices irrelevant. They began to argue that Jesus had replaced the temple. This theme grew in intensity when the temple was destroyed in 70 CE. So the idea that the light of God had actually come to rest in Jesus expanded in the tradition (Spong, 79-79).

But what does one come to make of this narrative finally. As human, the story is poignant: a man dies for his beliefs in the most agonizing way possible. Even those present at his condemnation find him without evil: 14 Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" What he has proclaimed consistently is a difference between the realized Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man. He has seen himself as God and man. For this blasphemy—even though others before him have claimed themselves one with God—he is condemned and crucified. Moments prior to death, he asks the agonizing, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" and he dies uttering, "It is finished." He expired. Then, wonderfully, the temple veil is rent from top to bottom, signaling that God at last has fully revealed Himself and that the entry into the Holy of Holies will always, hence forth, be mortal being to God with no priestly intermediary. The notion of intermediary itself should be studied. In Revelation, for example, the finite and infinite are at first separated by a sea of glass; in the end, there will be no more sea between the two realms.

The vision of the eternal is always in the realm of the prophet, a spokesperson for God, a priest, and sometimes a king. Never before, however, have the three roles come together so decisively in one person. In the person of Jesus, the Son of Man has, indeed, become the Son of God, as proclaimed at the baptism, the transfiguration, and again at the resurrection.

## Chapter 16

- 1: And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.
- 2: And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.
- 3: And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?
- 4: And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.
- 5: And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.
- 6: And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.
- 7: But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.
- 8: And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.
- 9: Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.
- 10: And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.
- 11: And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.
- 12: After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.
- 13: And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.
- 14: Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.
- 15: And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.
- 16: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.
- 17: And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;
- 18: They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

19: So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

20: And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

## Interpretation 16

Summary When the Sabbath is over, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome come to the tomb early in the morning to anoint the body of Jesus; on the way, they have wondered about how they will remove the huge rock that covers the front of the tomb. Arriving, they see that the stone has already been rolled away; inside, they see a young man in white, and they become alarmed. This young man hastens to reassure these women, telling them they seek Jesus who has been crucified, but he has risen. He then tells them to go to the disciples and tell them, Peter in particular, that Jesus has gone into Galilee before them. The women are seized by terror and amazement, are afraid, and they flee.

The short ending of Mark is brief:

[[And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterward Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. ]]

Christians are grateful for the longer ending which has Jesus appear to several and then to ascend:

### Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

9 [[Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. 10 She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. 11 But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

### Jesus Appears to Two Disciples

12 After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. 13 And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

### Jesus Commissions the Disciples

14 Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. † 15 And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news † to the whole creation. 16 The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes in their hands, † and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."

### The Ascension of Jesus

19 So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it. ]]

Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, but when she goes to his disciples and reveals this appearance, they don't believe her, remembering that she is, after all, the one from whom Jesus has cast out seven demons. Jesus next appears to two disciples walking in the country; they, too, go back and tell the rest, being no more believed than

Mary Magdalene. Now, Jesus appears to the eleven while they are sitting at a table and upbraids them for their lack of faith, an all too common occurrence in Mark. Nonetheless, Jesus tells them they are to carry on the mission, taking the good news to the whole creation. Interestingly, in a book which has played hard into the Jewish need for signs, the disciples are told signs will accompany them: they will cast out demons, speak in tongues, pick up snakes, and be unaffected by any poisonous drinks. They will lay their hands upon the sick who will then recover.

Now, Jesus is taken up into heaven, where he is given the preferred place on the right hand of God. While God works with the disciples, they go into the world and begin to proclaim the good news, their message confirmed by signs.

What does one finally make of the Gospel of Mark? Certainly, the last chapter gives us our traditional Easter story, tied intimately into the Jewish Passover. Jesus has become the paschal lamb. Concerning the ending of Mark, we do well to consult the *Oxford Annotated Bible*:

**16.9–20: The traditional close of the Gospel of Mark.** Nothing is certainly known either about how this Gospel originally ended or about the origin of [Mark 16.9–20](#), which, because of the textual evidence as well as stylistic differences from the rest of the Gospel, cannot have been part of the original text of Mark. Certain important witnesses to the text, including some ancient ones, end the Gospel with [Mark 16.8](#). Though it is possible that the compiler of the Gospel intended this abrupt ending, one can find hints that he intended to describe events after the resurrection: for example, [Mark 14.28](#) looks forward to an account of at least one experience of the disciples with Jesus in Galilee after the resurrection, while the friendly reference to Peter ([Mark 16.7](#)) may anticipate the recounting of the otherwise unrecorded moment of reconciliation between Peter and his Lord (compare [Luke 24.34](#); [1 Corinthians 15.5](#)). If accounts such as these were originally part of Mark's Gospel, the loss of them took place very shortly after the Gospel was written, under circumstances beyond present knowledge. Many witnesses, some ancient, end the Gospel with [Mark 16.9–20](#), thus showing that from early Christian times these verses have been accepted traditionally and generally as part of the canonical Gospel of Mark. A variety of other manuscripts conclude the Gospel with the shorter ending, either alone or followed by [Mark 16.9–20](#), thus indicating that different attempts were made to provide a suitable ending for the Gospel. The longer ending may have been compiled early in the second century as a didactic summary of grounds for belief in Jesus' resurrection, being appended to the Gospel by the middle of the second century. On the Christian belief in continuing unrecorded memories about Jesus in the first century see [Luke 1.1–2](#); [John 20.30](#); [John 21.25](#); [Acts 20.35 n.](#); [1 Corinthians 15.3](#); also compare [Matthew 28.20](#); [John 16.12–33](#); [Revelation 1.12–16 n.](#); [Revelation 2.18](#).

**16.9–18: Post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. 9–10:** Mary is associated with other women in [Mark 16.1](#), [Mark 16.7–8](#) and parallels; she is apparently alone in [John 20.1–2](#); [John 20.11–19](#). *Seven demons*, [Luke 8.2](#). **11:** [Luke 24.11](#); [Luke 24.22–25](#); [John 20.19–29](#); [1 Corinthians 15.5](#). Here, as in [John 20.19–29](#), the disciples are convinced of the truth of Jesus' resurrection by their own immediate experience with him, though they should have heeded the witness of others as later generations must do ([John 20.29](#)). **12–13:** [Luke 24.12–35](#). **13:** Compare [Luke 24.34](#).

**16.14–18:** [Matthew 28.19](#); [Luke 24.47](#). **16:** [Acts 2.37–42](#); [Acts 10.47–48](#); [Romans 10.9](#). **17–18:** The reality of faith in believers' lives as they respond to the apostolic witness is signified by events that both correspond with biblically recorded happenings in the lives of the apostles and conform to apostolic statements about the gifts of the Spirit (for example, [1 Corinthians 12.8–11](#); [1 Corinthians 12.28](#); [1 Corinthians 14.2–5](#); [Hebrews 2.3–4](#)): exorcism ([Acts 8.6–7](#); [Acts 16.18](#); [Acts 19.11–20](#)); new tongues (see [Acts 2.4–11 n.](#); [Acts 10.46](#); [Acts 19.6](#); [1 Corinthians 12.10](#); [1 Corinthians 12.28](#); [1 Corinthians 14.2–33](#)); healing ([Acts 28.8](#); [1 Corinthians 12.9](#); [James 5.13–16](#)). Instances of picking up snakes and drinking poison, without injury to the believer in either case, lack New Testament parallels. However, the former resembles the harmless accidental attack upon Paul in [Acts 28.3–6](#), and the latter appears occasionally in Christian literature from the second century onward.

**16.19–20: Jesus' exaltation. 19:** For the concept of Jesus' exaltation, [Philippians 2.9–11](#); [Hebrews](#)

1.3; for the language *was taken up*, Acts 1.2; Acts 1.11; Acts 1.22; 1 Timothy 3.16 (seemingly a Christian hymn); for the image of the *right hand of God*, Psalm 110.1 n.; Acts 7.55; Hebrews 1.3. **20:** Mark 16.17–18; Hebrews 2.3–4.

Taken from the above, note at least these movements:

1. The disciples have at least one experience after the resurrection with Jesus in Galilee. Remember, Galilee is in the north of Palestine.
2. Peter, in the traditional role of one who has denied Christ, seems to be reconciled.
3. The longer ending of Mark may have been compiled in the second century.
4. Jesus' work with the disciples suggests immediate experience is necessary for belief; others can report, but the conviction comes from within a relationship.
5. Finally, the image of the right hand of God is clearly Jesus' exalted position. You may want to read all of Psalms 110. In particular, remember at least these words:

4 The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind,

"You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." †

5 The Lord is at your right hand;

The theme in Mark is clear: Jesus is the Son of God, stated both in the prologue (1.1) and in the unfolding of the Gospel (1.11; 9.7; 3.11; 5.7; 12.6; 14.61). He has been recognized by the heavenly Father, those who possess supernatural knowledge, and by himself. The climax comes when a Roman official also proclaims him as Son of God (15.39).

## Chronological Chart of New Testament Rulers

# Chronological Tables of Rulers during New Testament Times (Oxford Companion)

## ROMAN EMPERORS

27 b.c.–a.d. 14

Augustus

a.d. 14–37

Tiberius

a.d. 37–41

Caligula

a.d. 41–54

Claudius

a.d. 54–68

Nero

a.d. 68–69

Galba; Otho; Vitellius

a.d. 69–79

Vespasian

a.d. 79–81

Titus

a.d. 81–96

Domitian

27 b.c.–a.d. 14

Augustus

a.d. 14–37

Tiberius

a.d. 37–41

Caligula

a.d. 41–54

Claudius

a.d. 54–68

Nero

a.d. 68–69

Galba; Otho; Vitellius

a.d. 69–79

Vespasian

a.d. 79–81

Titus

a.d. 81–96

Domitian

## HERODIAN RULERS

37–4 b.c.

Herod the Great, king of the Jews

4 b.c.–a.d. 6

Archelaus, ethnarch of Judea

4 b.c.–a.d. 39

Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea

4 b.c.–a.d. 34

Philip, tetrarch of Ituraea, Trachonitis, etc.

a.d. 37–44

Herod Agrippa I, from 37 to 44 king over the former tetrarchy of Philip, and from 41 to 44 over Judea, Galilee, and Perera

a.d. 53–about 100

Herod Agrippa II, king over the former tetrarchy of Philip and Lysanias, and from 56 (or 61) over parts of Galilee and Perera

37–4 b.c.

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a.d. 53–about 100

Herod Agrippa II, king over the former tetrarchy of Philip and Lysanias, and from 56 (or 61) over parts of Galilee and Perera

## **PROCURATORS OF JUDEA AFTER THE REIGN OF ARCHELAUS TO THE REIGN OF HEROD AGRIPPA I**

a.d. 6–8

Coponius

a.d. 9–12

M. Ambivius

a.d. 12–15

Annius Rufus

a.d. 15–26

Valerius Gratus

a.d. 26–36

Pontius Pilate

a.d. 37

Marullus

a.d. 37–41

Herennius Capito

a.d. 6–8

Coponius

a.d. 9–12

M. Ambivius

a.d. 12–15

Annius Rufus

a.d. 15–26

Valerius Gratus

a.d. 26–36

Pontius Pilate

a.d. 37

Marullus

a.d. 37–41

Herennius Capito

## **PROCURATORS OF PALESTINE FROM THE REIGN OF HEROD AGRIPPA I TO THE JEWISH REVOLT**

a.d. 44–about 46

Cuspius Fadus

a.d. about 46–48

Tiberius Alexander

a.d. 48–52

Ventidius Cumanus

a.d. 52–60

M. Antonius Felix

a.d. 60–62

Porcius Festus

a.d. 62–64

Clodius Albinus

a.d. 64–66

Gessius Florus

### **Relevant Reading**

### **Psalms 110**

## Assurance of Victory for God's Priest-King

*Of David. A Psalm.*

1 The Lord says to my lord,

"Sit at my right hand

until I make your enemies your footstool."

2 The Lord sends out from Zion

your mighty scepter.

Rule in the midst of your foes.

3 Your people will offer themselves willingly

on the day you lead your forces

on the holy mountains. †

From the womb of the morning,

like dew, your youth † will come to you.

4 The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind,

"You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." †

5 The Lord is at your right hand;

he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.

6 He will execute judgment among the nations,

filling them with corpses;

he will shatter heads

over the wide earth.

7 He will drink from the stream by the path;

therefore he will lift up his head.



[ [Home](#) ]

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[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Word Text](#)

### The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)
[Kingdom of God](#)
[Wilderness](#)
[Temple](#)
[Search](#)

Summary The first chapter of Mark opens with a declaration of who Jesus Christ is: the Son of God, written about by Isaiah as one who has been prepared for by his messenger; the messenger is to make straight the paths of the Lord. John is introduced as the messenger, and there follows the account of people going out to John to be baptized, coming from Judea and Jerusalem and being baptized in the Jordan for the forgiveness of sins. He tells his followers that while he baptizes with water, the one who follows will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Shortly, Jesus of Nazareth of Galilee is baptized, sees the heavens opening and the Spirit descending. A voice from heaven acknowledges him. Jesus then departs into the wilderness for forty days. When the narrative picks up, the reader learns John has been arrested; Jesus goes into Galilee preaching, "The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Passing by the Sea of Galilee, (other names are Sea of Tiberias and Lake of Gennesaret. It is 12¾ miles long by 7½ miles wide. Jesus calls Simon and Andrews, fishermen brothers, and then brothers James and John, sons of Zebedee, also fishermen in the work of mending their nets. These four accompany Jesus into Capernaum, where Jesus immediately begins teaching in the synagogue, astonishing those who listened with his authority. He heals a man of unclean spirit, who acknowledges him as Jesus of Nazareth, the "Holy One of God." This further amazes those who observe that this man has authority over evil, and thus, his fame spreads. At Simon's house, Jesus and His followers find Simon's mother-in-law with a fever; Jesus takes her by the hand, and she is healed. By sundown, others have gathered: the sick and those possessed with demons--in fact, the whole city, it would seem. The demons acknowledge Jesus as authority. How long the day was is not revealed, but very early the next morning, Jesus departs to pray, pursued by Simon and others. With little respite, Jesus says, "Let us go on to

the next towns...to preach...for that is why I came." Throughout Galilee, Jesus continues to preach in synagogues and to cast out demons. In the process, he heals a leper, who talked freely and spread the news of his healing with the result that Jesus was so beset by crowds that he could not freely enter into the cities but had to stay in the country. It should be noted that Jesus does not oppose current religious practice: he says, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."



The beginning of Mark is simple and direct: 1: The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Who is this Son of God? The following verses are pertinent:

Mt.2:15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son."

As "son of God," **Jesus fulfills prophecy**--in this case, the prophecy of Hosea:

**15:** *Out of Egypt . . .*, a quotation from **Hosea 11.1**, where the reference is to Israel (compare **Exodus 4.22**). **18:** Quoted from **Jeremiah 31.15**. *Rachel*, wife of Jacob, died in childbirth and according to **Genesis 35.16–20** was buried near Bethlehem. *Ramah*, north of Jerusalem, was the scene of national grief (**Jeremiah 40.1**) inflicted by an enemy. (all notes in this study are taken from the Oxford annotated Bible or the Oxford Companion).

Mt.3:17 and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

He is also the **Son of God**.

Mt.8:29 And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"

He is **acknowledged as having authority over evil**, the evil spirits:

Ideas about demons in the Hebrew Bible are too diverse to be systematized. Animistic notions may be discerned in the recognition of spirits inhabiting trees, animals, mountains, rivers, and storms. Allusions are found to belief in fertility deities, or in divine beings, who, through sinning, lost their heavenly home ([Genesis 6.1–4](#); See [Sons of God](#)). More often the narratives focus upon the role of evil spirits in producing erratic and unexpected behavior; they arouse explosive jealousies ([Numbers 5.14](#)), powerful desires for vengeance ([Judges 9.23](#)), or shocking mental confusions ([1 Samuel 16.14](#)). The words of a prophet could be attributed to lying spirits sent by God ([1 Kings 22.22](#)). The worship of idols could be explained by the influence of such spirits on the gullible ([Hosea 4.12](#)).

In the New Testament, though, the picture is different. References are much more numerous, reflecting developments in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Attitudes are more unified, reflecting the influence of stories about Jesus. Now demons are viewed as evil by nature, since they are obedient servants of Satan who is the ultimate adversary of God. Their power to deceive and torment is viewed as coterminous with "this evil age," so that any restriction on their movements is viewed as an intrusion of a new age.

It was the authority of Jesus over demons that posed this possibility. According to the Gospels, that authority was first demonstrated when Jesus overcame Satan's most persuasive offers.

Lu.1:35 And the angel said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

The Hebrew *ben* and Aramaic *bar*, "son," designate not only a male descendant but also a relationship to a community, a country, a species (e.g., animals), etc. "Son of God" can thus mean both a mythological figure of divine origin, a being belonging to the divine sphere (such as an angel), or a human being having a special relationship to a god. In antiquity, son of god was used predictively of kings begotten by a god (in Egypt) or endowed with divine power (in Mesopotamia). In the

Roman period, it also was used in the East as a title for the emperor.

In the synoptic Gospels we may observe how the title Son of God has penetrated into the traditions about the life of Jesus. In Mark, it is used only by God and the demons (cf. [Mark 1.11](#); [Mark 9.7](#); [Mark 3.11](#); [Mark 5.7](#)); the one time it is used by a human ([Mark 15.39](#)), the past tense ("was") suggests a distinction between the confession of the centurion to the deceased Jesus, and later on, to the risen Lord. In Matthew we also find it in the confessions of the disciples ([Matthew 14.33](#); [Matthew 16.16](#); cf. also [Matthew 26.63](#)), in the story of the temptation ([Matthew 4.3](#); [Matthew 4.6](#)), and the story of the mocking at the cross ([Matthew 27.43](#); cf. also [Matthew 11.27](#)). In Luke, it is mostly found in traditional material; the idea of a virgin birth probably does not belong here. In John, the Son of God, together with the title the Son, plays a central role in depicting Jesus as being one with the Father (e.g., [John 3.35–36](#) and [John 1.18](#); [John 10.30](#)).

The relationship of Christ is, according to Mark, then that of being **a human being/servant identified with God**, or said in another way, God-presence lived out in the life of a human being. The two are so closely identified as to become **one: that is, the Son is God**.

It's interesting to note that the recognition of the Jesus-Son of God relationship is made from the eternal domain, not the temporal, being announced by God and demons. I suspect this is because language is itself incapable of doing more than simply hinting at a God outside the space/time box. Note in this initial chapter the early healing and confession of the man with the unclean spirit:

23: And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,  
 24: Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, **the Holy One of God**.  
 25: And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.  
 26: And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

Jesus is here **the "Holy One of God."** This is clearly the message of Mark: Jesus is the Son of God or Jesus is the "Holy One of God." What this should mean is that Mark is to be read as presenting a revelation of God in relationship to Jesus Christ. The Jews are expecting the Kingdom of God to be introduced in an earthly kingship; interestingly, while Jesus downplays this role, his works reveal exactly the beginning of this "invisible" Kingdom of God initiated into the life of human beings.

Everywhere he goes, he must combat the eagerness with which people seek to see him in the role of earthly king. This should be understood as the reason why his acts are accompanied by his own urging that they be kept secret. For the Jewish writer Mark, Jesus is placed solidly in the tradition of his ancestry which is to include Moses and Joshua; in Christianity, he is to be identified as God.

Other verses continue to testify to Jesus as the Son of God: John sees him as the only Son of God and rebukes those who would accuse Jesus of blasphemy by confessing his appropriate title.

Jn.1:34 And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.

Jn.3:18 He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned

already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Jn.9:35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, Do you

believe in the Son of man?

Jn.10:36 do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are

blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?

John further has Martha acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God proclaimed:

Jn.11:27 She said to him, Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of

God, he who is coming into the world.

The early church, also, acknowledge Jesus in the same way, as Son of God:

Ac.9:20 And in the synagogues immediately he proclaimed Jesus, saying, He is the Son

of God.

And once the early church as established itself, not to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Son of God is to "profane the covenant and to outrage the Spirit of grace, while to confess Him is to abide in God with Him:

Heb.10:29 How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has

spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified,

and outraged the Spirit of grace?

1Jn.4:15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.



One appropriately compares the title Son of God to the other gospel use, Son of Man:

While Jesus' career evoked messianic hopes among his followers and fears among his enemies, stage I material shows him reluctant to assert any overt messianic claim. The self-designation he uses is son of man. This is so widely attested in the gospel tradition and occurs (with one or two negligible exceptions) only on the lips of Jesus himself, that it satisfies the major tests of authenticity. It occurs in all primary strata of the gospel tradition (Mark, Q, Special Matthew, Special Luke, and the pre-Gospel tradition in John). It is not attested as a messianic title in earlier Judaism and occurs only once outside the gospels (apart from citations of [Psalm 8.5–7](#)), in [Acts 7.56](#). So there should be no reasonable doubt that it was a characteristic self-designation of the historical Jesus. It is not a title but means "human one," and it is best understood as a self-effacing self-reference. It is used in contexts where Jesus spoke of his mission, fate, and final vindication. (Oxford Companion).

Even more revealing of the role Jesus is to play is the scriptural tradition with which Mark begins:

2: As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

3: The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4: John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

John clearly is the messenger who is to prepare "the way of the Lord." The scriptural tie is to the books of Isaiah and Malachi. Malachi reads thus:

3.1: Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

4.4: Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

5: Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

It's clear that John is to be identified with Elijah as the messenger indicated by Malachi, not the name of a person but a name meaning "my messenger." Jesus is securely located within the tradition of Jewish predecessors. It should be recalled that Zechariah, preceding Malachi, proclaims that the Lord of Hosts will return to Jerusalem to initiate the Kingdom of God. Mark is aware of this tradition and places Jesus Christ clearly as this Lord of Hosts. Baptized by John, he is immediately declared as God's revelation: 1.11: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

In summary, the Son of God designation seems to have undergone some metamorphosis: used at first to designate divine being or a human being in special relationship to a divine figure; a king who has his kingdom from God; God as Father and His followers as sons of God; the pious or suffering righteous; connected to the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus; Jesus' unique addressing of God as Father and a connection with the kingship relationship:

The origin of the title seems, in the first place, to be Jesus' unique addressing God as father (see especially [Mark 14.36](#), where the Aramaic *abba* is preserved), and second, its connection with kingship ideology in view of the conviction that Jesus was the anticipated son of David. Yet characteristically in the New Testament it stands beside the usage of the phrase sons of God, referring to those whom Jesus has brought to salvation ([Romans 8.14–21](#); [Romans 9.8](#); [Romans 9.26](#); [Galatians 3.26](#); [Matthew 5.9](#); [Matthew 5.45](#); [John 1.12](#); [1 John 3.1](#)). (ON)



Mark continues to place Jesus clearly in relation to the Jewish understanding of their tradition by having Jesus immediately leave his baptism and move into the wilderness: 1.12: And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. 13: And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

The full import of the wilderness can be gleaned from 280 references to it (see side link). What should immediately come to mind is Moses and the wilderness experience. The new revelation of God in Jesus, like the old, was to be heralded by a wilderness experience which would precede entry into the Promised Land. Moses, as we will recall, is followed by Joshua in Hebrew tradition; here, too, an understanding of the name Jesus reveals how he is seen tied into existing history: Jesus is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Yeshua or Joshua. The tradition of biblical heroes is Moses-Joshua-Jesus. Furthermore, Mark tells us that Jesus is ministered to by angels. In the wilderness, the exodus family is dependent upon God's ministrations, being fed by manna; in Mark, twice, Jesus feeds the crowds with bread and fish of miraculous source. In the wilderness, also, Jesus is being urged to turn aside from his mission of serving and ultimately suffering.



From the wilderness Jesus emerges announcing the Kingdom of God: 1.14 Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15: And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

It should be noted that the message is that "the kingdom of God is at hand." How immediate "at hand" is can be seen by looking carefully at other verses in Mark (the reader may want to follow the Kingdom of God link in the side bar.):

Mk.1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom of God** is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."

Mk.4:11 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret **of the kingdom of God**, but for those outside everything is in parables; [the secret is known.]

Mk.4:26 And he said, "The **kingdom of God** is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground,

Mk.4:30 And he said, "With what can we compare the **kingdom of God**, or what parable shall we use for it?

Mk.9:1 And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the **kingdom of God** has come with power." [need not taste death to see that the kingdom of God has come.]

Mk.9:47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter the **kingdom of God** with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell,

Mk.10:14 But when Jesus saw it he was indignant, and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the **kingdom of God**."

Mk.10:15 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the **kingdom of God** like a child shall not enter it."

Mk.10:23 And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the **kingdom of God!**"

Mk.10:24 And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the **kingdom of God!**"

Mk.10:25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye **of** a needle than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God.**"

Mk.12:34 And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the **kingdom of God.**" And after that no one dared to ask him any question. [not far from kingdom of God]

Mk.14:25 Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again **of** the fruit **of** the vine until that day when I drink it new in the **kingdom of God.**"

Mk.15:43 Joseph **of** Arimathe'a, a respected member **of** the council, who was also himself looking for the **kingdom of God**, took courage and went to Pilate, and asked for the body **of** Jesus.

Jesus clearly is to inaugurate this Kingdom of God. In other Gospels, the identification of Jesus and the Kingdom is Christianized, making it the: **Radical Message: The Kingdom of God Is in the Midst of You (Lu.17:21 nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the **kingdom of God** is in the midst of you.)**)

I have argued, and continue to argue, that the radical message of Jesus is the Kingdom of God is now; this should not overshadow the idea that the Kingdom of God is progressively being shaped. I'm firmly convinced that Jesus, the egalitarian, walked among humankind proclaiming them to be children of God. Because he

understood the Kingdom of God to be spiritual, his message was misunderstood by the religious elite, who poured over the scriptures relative to their promise of a Messiah, or anointed one, who would, they believed, restore an earthly Israel. Here, too, the message of Jesus was the radical one that Israel would be restored as one among many nations making up the Kingdom of God in its ultimately realized spiritual state. Jesus' conception of the kingdom is not one of outward cataclysmic outward triumph over evil but rather the announcement of the rule of God in people's hearts.

In Mark, the role of Jesus is to announce the Kingdom of God. Following Jesus through the early activities recorded in Mark will reveal that everywhere Jesus is met by amazement relative to his authority and power; what is forgotten is that the one doing the amazing is, also, the one proclaiming the new message in the role of servant of God.

Mk:1:27: And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

Mk:2:12: And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

Mk:6:51: And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

Mk:9:15: And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.

Mk:10:32: And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

Mk:14:33: And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;

Mk:16:8: And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

The amazement is appropriately placed, for here is a "[Servant of God](#)" who

downplays his role as God and assumes the more demanding task of administering to human need; he goes about healing people physically and mentally. Anyone reading Mark will have to be impressed with Jesus as a man walking among humankind, reaching out, touching, healing, ministering. Mark 10. 45 is quite clear about how Jesus sees his message: "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." Here is a human being who is willing to give his life totally to serving others.



He is also one who knows scriptural traditions backwards and forwards, as is indicated in the eleventh chapter of Mark when he cleans the temple; the allusion is to both Jeremiah and Isaiah:

11.15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; 16 and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17 He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nation But you have made it a den of robbers.'"

*Isaiah 56 I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. 6 And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant— 7 these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.*

*Jeremiah 7. 11 Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight? You know, I too am watching, says the Lord.*

Earlier in this same chapter, Jesus had entered the temple and looked around only to leave:

11: And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve."

What must have gone through the mind of Jesus as he took in fully the scene of temple and its busy commerce. Meant as the entry point of the Divine Presence, the temple evidenced compromises within the Levitical priesthood which Jesus must have found disappointingly obvious. One only need to remember that the ark, the Shekinah, the Holy Spirit, Urim and Thummin (used for divine consultation), and the sacred fire are already missing from the second temple. What Jesus observes is continued corruption within the house of God. It should be noted that in Mark the structure is the the early work of Jesus in Galilee (including the commissioning and recognition of his role as Son of God and the calling and instruction of his disciples), the journey to Jerusalem (and entry into the temple), and the last week. His presence in the temple has already been suggested by his active work within the synagogues; the synagogues, it should be noted, result from the exile and the needs of a people distanced from their centralized sanctuary. In the synagogues, Jesus is busy healing and overcoming evil presence with good. He is also busy with cleaning.

John Shelby Spong in *Liberating the Gospels* (Harper Collins, 1996) has argued convincingly that Mark is structured relative to the Jewish observance of their festivals. He sees Mark as beginning with the Jewish New Year and covering six and a half months of the liturgical calendar, through the celebration of Passover; the order then is New Year, Atonement, Tabernacles, Dedication, and Passover. If Spong is right, and I suspect he is, then the implication would be that Jesus follows a traditional and expected path into Jerusalem; what is radically different is that, eventually, everything Jewish will be interpreted by Christians differently: Jesus will become the Paschal lamb, and the Passover will become the Christian passion.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ] [ [Kingdom of God](#) ] [ [Wilderness](#) ] [ [Temple](#) ]

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[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Word Text](#)

### The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)
[Search](#)

Summary Jesus continues his mission in Galilee, controversy following him; this chapter opens in Capernaum, a city on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee, a fishing village of not more than one thousand in the first century. He creates controversy by healing a paralytic and telling him his sins are forgiven. The scribes accuse him of blasphemy. He calls the tax collector Levi, son of Alphaeus, to follow him, again causing the scribes to cite him for the offense of eating with sinners. Next, the people generally see that Jesus and his disciples are not fasting like his predecessor John the Baptist and followers, and they want to know why; Jesus replies in the parables of the bridegroom and new wine in old wineskins. His disciples again cause offense when they pluck from corn on the Sabbath and eat. This time, Jesus responds by telling his critics that the Sabbath is made for humankind, not humankind for the Sabbath. He bases himself authoritatively in scripture, citing I Samuel 21.1-6 and the example of David and his companions eating from the bread of Presence.



Largely, the controversies in Galilee mark Jesus knowledgeable of scriptural traditions but resisting the current pious and legal interpretations. He is in Capernaum, his home town. Characteristically, people have crowded around him, in this case so many that the small house has no room for them and not even when they crowd at the front door. Determined, some seeking aid for a paralytic dig through the roof and lower the man whom Jesus, on seeing their faith, says "your sins are

forgiven." Scribes in the gathered turn to each other, whispering among themselves that he has blasphemed in indicating he can forgive sins. Dwelling houses in Palestine usually had a flight of stone steps built on the outside and leading to *the roof*, which was flat and made probably of sticks and packed earth (ON). Apparently, the scribes see Jesus as claiming divine prerogative. Jesus perceived in his spirit what the whispering was about and confronted them openly by asking them why they raised such questions in their hearts. Is it easier, he asked, to say your sins are forgiven or to tell the paralytic to take up his mat and walk? He continues by referring to himself as the Son of Man and telling the paralytic to take up his mat, to walk, and go home. Characteristically, those gathered marvel once again relative to the marvelous results they behold. Jesus is clear: "the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." Concerning the title, Oxford notes delineates at least two meanings:

*Son of Man*, a title which Jesus used of himself, probably seemed to his listeners to carry either of two meanings: (a) that Jesus called himself a typical human being in accordance with the common meaning of *son of* (see [Matthew 5.45 n.](#)); or (b) that Jesus (contrary to the humble conditions of his daily life) linked himself to the prophesied figure of [Daniel 7.13–14](#) who was popularly regarded as the coming Messiah (see [Acts 7.56 n.](#)). Jesus nowhere fully discloses his own understanding of the term (but see [Mark 8.32 n.](#)). However, each meaning by itself, as well as both together (see [Matthew 25.29 n.](#)), could have appealed to him. It was also characteristic of him to speak in such a way as to oblige his hearers to determine their own personal attitudes toward him as part of the process of understanding his words (see [Matthew 13.3 n.](#)).

The verses alluded to in Daniel describe the Son of Man in the following way: 13 "As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. 14 To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed."



Tax collectors in Jesus' day were no more liked than tax collector today:

Both Greek states and Rome had only a rudimentary civil service and budgeting process. Hence minor taxes were regularly sold to a private

company, which would pay the agreed price to the treasury and collect (in principle, at the fixed rate) from the taxpayers. These *teligai* had long been known and disliked in the Greek East (an Alexandrian comic poet calls them "birds of prey"). Roman *publicani*, while they always performed this service, had an essentially different origin. They were state contractors who would buy at auction both performance contracts (e.g., building contracts or contracts for army supplies) and collection contracts (as for taxes or the revenues of mines or ponds or forests). During the age of Roman expansion and public building, in the Middle Republic, they made most of their money from the former and, as Polybius tells us, they widely distributed prosperity among Roman citizens. This changed when the reformer Gaius Gracchus in 123 bce entrusted them with the collection of the principal tax (the tithe on produce) of the province of Asia, which Rome had just acquired, and also with staffing the criminal courts, which tried senators for mal-administration and, in due course, for other crimes. This vastly increased the scale of their undertakings, and made them a major power in the state, though they always narrowly defended their economic interests. Their power in the courts was temporarily removed by Sulla (81 bce), but was soon essentially restored. As a result, governors and their staffs, instead of regulating their activities, tended to become their partners—often in collusion with the provincial upper class, which could pass the burden on to those below—in grossly exploiting the provinces, especially in the east, where Pompey introduced the Asian system to all the new provinces he organized, including Syria (OC)

In the late Republic, the power of the *publicani* led to major abuses, which we know from Cicero's speeches. Illegal extra charges were widely added, and permitted by the governor, and violence was used to extort compliance. Although there was more control under Augustus, this is the background to what we find in Judea. The Jews soon hated the Roman occupation even more than they had hated Archelaus, whose deposition they had demanded. Native collectors of taxes were now seen as collaborators with the oppressor, using his backing for their illegal profits. The problem was apparently worse in Judea than elsewhere, presumably because of the religious element in the national resistance; it is interesting that the "publicans" appear only in the Gospels, not in the rest of the New Testament, even though they were of course active in all the provinces. They are regularly coupled with sinners (note that where [Matthew 5.46](#) has "publicans" [Luke 6.32](#) has "sinners"), with prostitutes, and with gentiles (OC)

Jesus clearly is not worried about his social reputation when he befriends Levi and makes him a follower. On this occasion, when questioned by the scribes, he replies

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." By his act, though, he sets himself apart from the accepted social order and pointedly positions himself with the lower class.



Jesus next calls attention to himself and his disciples by not fasting; John the Baptist and his followers had managed to escape this level of social scrutiny by fasting in the accepted tradition.

Fasting in connection with prayer, penitence, and preparation for new ventures has been practiced from early times in many cultures and religions. The Bible recognizes it as regular in mourning for the dead ([1 Samuel 31.13](#)), expressions of penitence ([Nehemiah 9.1](#)), intercession ([2 Samuel 12.16](#)), and prayer for God's aid ([Judges 20.26](#)). Fasting was undertaken for personal reasons ([Psalm 25.13](#)), as a national act in the face of calamity ([Joel 2.15](#)), or as a periodic liturgical observance ([Zechariah 8.19](#)); normally it involved abstinence from all food to show dependence on God and submission to his will. The great national and liturgical fast was that of the Day of Atonement ([Leviticus 16.29–34](#)), but fasting was generally recognized, especially after the exile, as a meritorious pious practice and as a potent aid to prayer ([Tobit 12.8](#); [Luke 2.37](#)). Later, the author of [Isaiah 58](#) claimed that if fasting was to be of value, it must be accompanied by compassion and a concern for social justice (ON).

The Pharisees fasted on Mondays and Thursdays. Jesus reminds them that scripturally, not fasting can sometimes be sound: his disciples have him with them; he uses the metaphor of the bridegroom, signifying a time when joy is the appropriate expression. He also remains firmly aware of his mission to move beyond the current religious observances: his "new wine" cannot be poured into old wineskins, which would burst from the fermentation.



The Pharisees next observe Jesus' disciples eating corn in the fields on the Sabbath and attack Jesus through their act. Jesus demonstrates superior scriptural knowledge and reminds the Pharisees that David himself had suspended the rules and eaten from the bread of the Presence. Jesus clearly does not ascribe to any rules ethic where the rule always holds regardless of circumstance; he clearly sides with the act and reminds his critics that the Sabbath is for humankind, not humankind for the Sabbath.

Jesus uses, it would seem, the process of civil disobedience. He knows the law and traditions and sees in them the purpose of serving the greater needs of humankind. He is clearly opposed to a purely legalistic keeping of laws. In the face of the religious establishment, however, he seems clearly defiant. It should not be overlooked that these religious leaders are indeed pious; for Jesus, though, something more than piety is necessary. One must go beyond the mere law in meeting the contingencies of a pressing humanity.

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[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Word Text](#)

### The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)
[Jewish Sects](#)
[Search](#)

Summary The Pharisees conspire with the Herodians against Jesus because he heals a man's withered hand on the Sabbath. Questioning their legal and ritualistic piety, Jesus challenges them: "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" The fame of Jesus has apparently grown because Mark next records him as being surrounded by a throng near the Sea of Galilee; because the press of the crowd is so great, he asks his disciples to take him out upon the sea in a boat. Unclean spirits fell down before him and proclaimed "You are the Son of God!" Jesus admonished those healed not to make him known. From the sea, Jesus goes up into the mountains where he appoints the twelve:

16 So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

He next returns home with a crowd following him. His family describes Jesus as having gone mad; the scribes say he has been infected by Beelzebul and demons. Jesus points out to the scribes that it is illogical that he would be infected by Beelzebul at the same time that he is casting out Satan; a divided kingdom, Jesus reminds them, is a kingdom which will not stand. This section concludes with a warning about blasphemy of the Holy Spirit:

28 "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and

whatever blasphemies they utter; 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" — 30 for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

This chapter concludes with word that Jesus' mother and brothers are asking for him; Jesus responds by saying that everyone gathered there are his brothers and sisters: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."



In this chapter, as everywhere in Mark, Jesus is active:

a favorite word in Mark is the Greek word meaning *immediately* or *at once* or *then*, which occurs about forty times in sixteen chapters. On the other hand, Mark records fewer words of Jesus than does any of the other Gospels; it contains one collection of sayings in the form of a discourse ([Mark 13](#)) and a few parables (e.g. [Mark 4](#)). Oxford Handbook

Jesus continues teaching, preaching, and healing in Galilee, and in going about his work, he continues to tangle with the religious establishment. The first controversy is over the Sabbath, with the Pharisees conspiring with the Herodians. We will recall that what is done on the Sabbath has already been an issue in the second chapter of Mark: The Pharisees observed Jesus' disciples eating corn in the fields on the Sabbath and attacked Jesus through their act. Jesus demonstrated superior scriptural knowledge and reminded the Pharisees that David himself had suspended the rules and eaten from the bread of the Presence. Jesus clearly did not ascribe to any rules ethic where the rule always holds regardless of circumstance; he clearly sided with the act and reminded his critics that the Sabbath is for humankind, not humankind for the Sabbath. In this round, Jesus asks, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" His critics are silent. Jesus is clearly doing good by healing the withered hand. Jesus, acting by the principle stated in [Mark 2.27](#), equates acts to meet human need with acts *lawful . . . on the Sabbath* (*Oxford Annotated*).



With a multitude now pressing about him, Jesus seeks solitude and distance in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. He has done the good work of healing many with diseases and unclean spirits:

"Spirit" translates words that in both Hebrew and Greek mean "wind" ([Genesis 8.1](#); cf. [Genesis 1.1](#)) or "breath" ([Genesis 6.17](#); [Ezekiel 37.5](#)), as well as vital essence. Biblical writers do not normally combine the two terms to designate the totality of human nature. The body/soul dichotomy that so fascinated Greek philosophy is not generally presupposed, even when the two terms occur in close proximity; thus, [Matthew 26.41](#) is not a real exception to this rule (*Oxford Companion*).

The unclean spirits recognize the one casting them out as the "Son of God." Jesus rebukes them not to make him known, reminding the reader once again that Jesus sees his mission as different from that of the expected Messiah; he is the servant walking among and healing humankind, reaching out with a gentle touch, a caring heart.



Next, Jesus appoints the twelve:

13 He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, † to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, 15 and to have authority to cast out demons. 16 So he appointed the twelve: † Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Concerning his disciples, *Oxford Companion* reminds us of their humanity:

The somewhat amorphous group called disciples constitutes a vital feature of all the Gospel narratives, but the authors used the term to communicate different aspects of being a follower of Jesus. In Mark the disciples are agents of instruction for the author, but as negative examples. They teach the audience or readers, but mostly through the

things they do wrong or fail to understand. The constant questions and concerns of the disciples, particularly in the central section of Mark's gospel, provide an opportunity for the author to explain the purpose of Jesus' mission and the hidden meanings of his teaching. Discipleship in Mark involves fear, doubt, and suffering, as [Mark 8.31](#), [Mark 9.31](#), and [Mark 10.33](#) make explicit; nowhere is this more poignantly captured than in the character of Simon Peter. The disciples in Mark, whomever this broad term may include, never fully understand and never quite overcome their fear and apprehensions. There is actually the hint in Mark that the disciples' fear is in some sense the beginning of wisdom.

A question asked by *Oxford Companion* is significant: Did Jesus consciously act as if he were establishing the new Israel by selecting twelve representatives? The symbolic significance of the number twelve is difficult to miss. Readers will want to look at the complete number symbolism described in the *Oxford Companion*; concerning twelve, it says the following:

**Twelve**, like seven, is a number of completeness and perfection. This number in particular must not always be taken literally. Israel always comprised more tribes than the twelve that were actually counted, and the counting of the twelve was not always uniform ([Genesis 49](#); [Joshua 13–19](#); [Revelation 7.7–8](#)), but the twelve meant "all Israel." It was regarded as important that there were twelve apostles and that their number should be complete, but the lists do not quite tally (See [Twelve, The](#)). The twenty-four elders ([Revelation 4.4](#)) clearly represent all Israel and the whole church. The twelve cornerstones and gates of the new Jerusalem not only link the city with the tribes of Israel and the apostles, but also signify its divine perfection, as do its measurements of 12,000 stadia square and its walls of 144 cubits. The 144,000 of [Revelation 7](#) and [Revelation 14](#) in each case mean that the number is complete and not one of the elect is lost; in [Revelation 7](#) John hears the 144,000 from Israel (all Israel) being counted, but sees "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (the redeemed gentiles).

These twelve live intimately with Jesus, adopt his mission and his way of life.



In this chapter's final section, Jesus reveals the cost of his mission. His mother and brothers, concerned for his safety given the intense emotions which have been aroused around him, also begin to fear for his sanity. The Pharisees have previously recognized his powers but attributed them to Beelzebul or Satanic forces.

The Phoenician god at Ekron consulted by King Ahaziah ([2 Kings 1.2–18](#)). The name in Hebrew means "Lord of Flies," but no evidence exists for a Philistine god who either drove off flies or gave oracles through their buzzing. The Hebrew form is probably a derogatory transformation of Baal-zebul, which appears in Ugaritic texts meaning "Lord Baal," but could also be understood as "Master of the Heavenly House" (cf [Matthew 10.25](#)). In Aramaic, Beel-zebul may have been construed as "Lord of Dung," Beel-zebub possibly as "Enemy." During the Greco-Roman period, Beel-zebul came to be used for a leader among the demons opposed to God. Jesus denies that he casts out demons by authority of Beelzebul, the ruler of demons ([Matthew 12.24–27](#) par.). Some translations employ Beelzebub in the New Testament passages, following the text of 2 Kings. Christian interpreters identified Beelzebul with Satan on the basis of the Gospel passages (*Oxford Companion*).

Jesus, aware of his mission to humankind as more pressing than his family's concern, replies "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ] [ [Jewish Sects](#) ]

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[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Word Text](#)

### The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)

Summary In chapter four of Mark, Jesus speaks in parables: the parable of the sower, the lamp under the bushel basket, the parable of the growing seed, and the parable of the mustard seed. The chapter concludes with a word about the use of parables and a demonstration of Jesus' authority over natural forces.

[Search](#)


Recall Matthew thirteen concerning the use of parables:

10 Then the disciples came and asked him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" 11 He answered, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 13 The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.'

Here, clearly, the purpose of parables has to do with the kingdom of heaven. Mark records a similar purpose: 10 When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. 11 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret † of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; 12 in order that 'they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may

indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.' " In a later section in this chapter of Mark, the explanation is added: 33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; 34 he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples. Readers need simply to recall that the teachings of Jesus in Galilee have been accompanied by controversy. Parables in picturesque images use analogy to refer to a similar but different reality. Jesus used parables to illustrate truth with daily life; although drawn from daily life, they may be exaggerated. The parables of Jesus are generally used to illustrate; here in Mark, however, they seem to be used to conceal. One rightfully asks why Jesus would want to conceal and why he would not desire that people "turn again and be forgiven." The following general uses of parables are cited in *Oxford Companion*:

Parables served a useful purpose in concealing Jesus' message from those hostile to him: by his parables he could publicly teach about the kingdom of God, but the representatives of the Roman empire could find nothing in them that was seditious. A third reason Jesus taught in parables was to disarm his listeners and allow the truth of the divine message to penetrate their resistance. Often hearers could be challenged to pass judgment on a story before discovering that in so doing they had in fact condemned themselves (cf. [2 Samuel 12.1–4](#); [Matthew 21.28–31](#); [Luke 7.36–50](#)). A fourth reason for the use of parables was to aid memory: since Jesus' listeners preserved his teachings by memorizing them, the memorable quality of the parables proved useful.

Since Jesus in proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is near at hand has everywhere faced challenge and opposition, it would seem appropriate to think that, perhaps, he does have in mind here a softening of the seditious. He teaches about the Kingdom of God publicly without arousing overt anger or suspicion of his motives.



The first parable provided is that of the sower.

3 "Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. 8 Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain,

growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." 9 And he said, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

In this case, Jesus himself interprets the parable for his disciples; we need to note that he is alone with the twelve and other believers:

13 And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. 16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. 17 But they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. † 18 And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. 20 And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

Jesus is about the work of instructing his followers. There is clearly here the sense of those inside and those outside: truth is revealed but comprehended only by those initiated.



On the heels of Jesus' words about mystery and those initiated into truth revealed comes the next parable:

21 He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lamp stand? 22 For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. 23 Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" 24 And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you. 25 For to those who have, more will be given; and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."

If this is applied to the previous parable, it would seem to suggest that Jesus is not in the business of hiding light: what is hidden will be disclosed; what is secret will

come to light. These lines suggest the mystery exists relative to timing: hidden now, will be disclosed; what is secret now, will come to light. The obstruction to understanding is, ironically, the very means of understanding: the mental structure of time. Little wonder that Jesus should say, "Pay attention." He goes on to speak even more directly: what you give, you will get; those having will get more, and those without anything will discover even that taken. If one begins with possessing truth revealed, then more will be gotten; if one begins without revealed truth, even what he has will be taken. How simple! The parable works on two levels--the invisible kingdom coming into being and the existing, but disappearing temporal kingdom.



Jesus, still speaking of the Kingdom of God turns to the parable of the growing seed:

26 He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, 27 and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. 28 The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

He's direct here in talking about the Kingdom of God and the mystery of its growth--the point is that "how it [the kingdom] grows," one does not know. Even organic life is not understood in impulse, but only in manifest result: the stalk, the head, the full grain. These parables are not unrelated: Jesus began by talking about a sower, then talked about parables as not being anything more than a "timed" disclosure, and moves now to the idea of the germinating seed or the invisible made visible in time.



The Kingdom of God, if one credits the connected argument, begins with twelve and a few followers, a very small number. This time, the figurative image is the mustard seed.

Thus, in addition to fertility, abundance, and continuity, plants are used to represent life's frailty, brevity, and transitory nature ([Isaiah 40.6–8](#); [Job 14.2](#); [Psalm 90.6](#); [1 Peter 1.24](#)). Biblical symbolism draws also on the characteristics of individual plants, such as the great height and longevity of the cedar tree ([Psalm 92.12](#); see similarly the parable of Jotham, [Judges 9.8–15](#), and the parable of the mustard seed, [Matthew 13.31–32](#)). The New Testament is replete with agricultural imagery; see, for example, [Mark 4.3–8](#); [Mark](#)

4.26–29; Matthew 9.37–38; Luke 13.6–9. (*Oxford Companion*)

The mustard seed grows very quickly, in a matter of weeks, from the smallest of seeds into a ten to twelve foot bush. As the mustard seed becomes the greatest bush, so will the Kingdom of God become the greatest kingdom.



Having used details from nature in these parables, it's not surprising to find this argument logically culminating in a demonstration of Jesus' authority or control over the natural or temporal world:

35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." 36 And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. 37 A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" 39 He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. 40 He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" 41 And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

I'm struck by the very human cry, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" This is the mortal cry in all days and all ages. Jesus responds, as he has throughout Mark, by acting, "He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still.'" What follows is dead calm. The disciples are probably even more afraid now; at first, they had been confronted only by natural and temporal powers; now, they are in the presence of the spiritual manifest, and they are afraid and filled with awe. They ask, even though Mark has answered this in the beginning and will continue to answer it through the passion and resurrection. "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" The answer, though not supplied here, is simple: he is the Son of God, and the Kingdom of God is even now being revealed among humankind.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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## Bible Studies **Jeanie C. Crain** <http://crain.english.mwsc.edu>

[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Word Text](#)

### The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)
[Search](#)

Summary Jesus performs two acts in Mark five: he heals the Gerasene demoniac and raises Jairus' daughter from the dead. The Gerasene demoniac has long dwelt in tombs, restrained by shackles and chains; he immediately recognizes Jesus as "Son of the Most High God." From here, Jesus proceeds to the other side of the sea, a great crowd gathered around him, to be approached by Jairus, a leader of the synagogue. He says, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." Jesus goes with him. Inserted into this story is the account of the woman with a hemorrhage. Having suffered from the disease for twelve years, she is desperate to touch the garments of Jesus in hopes of being healed. Jesus is immediately aware of her touch:

30 Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" 31 And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?' " 32 He looked all around to see who had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

By the time Jesus reaches Jairus' daughter, she is dead. Jesus tells the mourners the little girl is not dead but sleeping and is laughed at; stung, perhaps, by the lack of faith, Jesus proceeds alone, says, "Little girl, get up!" 42 And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. This is followed then by the admonition not to tell

anyone what has been witnessed. Practical, Jesus tells them to give the little girl something to eat.



The place of the Gerasenes, according to Luke, is across from Sea of Galilee. The probable location is Kersa, later called Gersa, on the east coast of the Sea of Galilee. What is interesting in this account is that Jesus in once again contesting unclean spirits. This time, recognizing Jesus, the spirits settled into nearby two thousand swine which rush suicidally into the sea. Not only are swine recognized as unclean animals traditionally, they seem to be a feature of Decapolis, a federation of about ten cities in eastern Palestine. The story immediately accounts for a huge gentile population. The demoniac is one of the many sad faces of humanity encountered by the humanitarian Jesus: 5 Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones. This time, the people beg Jesus to leave their village, afraid of the power he has manifested; the demoniac, however, begs to get in the boat with Jesus but is refused. He is instructed rather to 'Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you.' 20 And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed."



The next crucial performance is the demonstration of God's power over death:

### **A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed**

21 When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. 22 Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet 23 and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." 24 So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. 25 Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. 26 She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. 27 She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." 29 Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. 30 Immediately

aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" 31 And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?' " 32 He looked all around to see who had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

35 While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" 36 But overhearing † what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." 37 He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. 38 When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." 40 And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" 42 And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. 43 He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Jesus is again best by a great crowd when he is approached by Jairus, who tells him his daughter is at death but that he believes that if Jesus were to come and lay his hands on her, she would be made well. Sensing incredible faith, Jesus goes with him. From the crowds, though, a desperate woman presses in to touch his garments; ill for twelve years, she has only her faith and hope that what she has heard of this man is true. When she touches him, Jesus immediately feels power going out from him. He turns on the crowd, "Who touched me?" The woman is afraid but knows he addresses her; in fear and trembling, she gratefully falls before him. Jesus tells her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease.

In the meantime, Jairus' daughter has died; Jesus, nonetheless, knowing death is a temporary state, says she is only sleeping; he is greeted by general laughter. Proving his point, however, alone, he commands the young girl to get up, and she does so. As she walks about, the crowd falls back in amazement of this new manifestation of power over death itself. Jesus, practical to the core, instructs them to get her some food.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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Last modified: June 05, 2000

## Bible Studies **Jeanie C. Crain** <http://crain.english.mwsc.edu>

[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Word Text](#)

### The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)
[Synagogue](#)
[Search](#)

Jesus is back in his hometown Nazareth, twenty miles from Capernaum, with his disciples; once again, he is in the synagogues teaching. The people's reaction is again astonishment, and they ask concerning his wisdom, recognizing Jesus as the son of Mary and brother of James, Jose, Simon, and Judas, and having sisters. For whatever reasons, these people take offense, and Jesus remarks that a prophet is without honor only in his own country, their own kin, and their own house. He is prevented from healing except for a few sick; Jesus himself is now the one who is amazed at the people's unbelief.

Jesus goes through the villages teaching, calls the twelve and sends them out two by two; they are instructed to take nothing for their journey except for staff, sandals, and two tunics--no money, no bag, and no bread. They are granted authority over unclean spirits and told to shake off the dust of their feet as a testimony against them at any place they are unwelcomed. They are to stay at the house they enter until they leave. The message proclaimed by the disciples is repentance; their work is that of healing by anointing with oil. They also cast out demons. The disciples have taken up the same mission as that of Jesus: proclaiming the kingdom.

We learn that Herod has learned of Jesus with some saying he is Elijah or a prophet. Herod is afraid he is John the Baptist whom he has beheaded returned from the dead. Herod, of course, is the one had John beheaded as a result of reprimand for Herod's having married Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Herod recognized that John was a righteous man but relented to his wife's manipulations through his daughter who had pleased him by dancing and made the request inspired by her mother. John's head is presented to Herod's daughter on a platter who, in turn,

presented it to her mother. John's disciples, upon hearing of the execution, claim the body and place it in a tomb.

The disciples returned to Jesus from their mission with stories of what they have done; like Jesus, they are beset by people's comings and goings, and Jesus recognizes they need to find a deserted place and rest. They are observed leaving by boat, and the people beat them to their destination. Coming ashore, Jesus sees the crowd and feels compassion for the bewildered and helpless people and begins to teach. At a late hour, the disciples wonder if they should send the people away; instead, they are instructed to take the five loaves and two fish they have and feed the people. They do so, and the people sitting in hundreds and fifties, eat and are full. Even after five thousand have eaten, twelve baskets of food remain.

The disciples leave before Jesus, going by boat to the other side of the lake Bethsaida. In the evening, the disciples are in a boat with a storm approaching; Jesus from the land sees them and is about to pass them, walking on the water, but gets into the boat and the winds abate. The disciples are terrified, thinking Jesus is a ghost, and are even more unsettled by the winds dying down; Jesus tells them to take heart and not be afraid.

The cross over to Gennasaret, south of Capernaum, where they are immediately recognized by the crowds. They continue rushing into the region and bringing the sick for healing. As Jesus travels in villages, cities and marketplaces, and farms, the crowds struggle to get close enough to touch his clothes, for in doing so, many are healed.



Jesus is still continuing his ministry amidst controversy in the Galilean area. The people are more attracted by the physical healing than they are for spiritual, the work Jesus really wants to do. Still, even for physical healing, faith is first required. What must be remembered is that Jesus sees his work as bringing about the Kingdom of God; he is concerned that miracles will create misunderstanding about this mission and hinder his work. Despite the healings, Jesus begins to be rejected in his home town and even by his own family. His disciples, likewise, when he comes walking on the sea in the early morning, between three and six, lack the necessary faith to understand Jesus' actions. Among the people are those who believe in his power to heal, and they compete to touch the fringes of his coat. The *Oxford Annotated Bible* reminds us that the fringes indicate "the blue twisted threads at the four corners of male garments, as a reminder to obey God's commandments (Numbers 15.38–40)." The appropriate scriptures are found in Numbers 15 and Deuteronomy 22:

37 The Lord said to Moses: 38 Speak to the Israelites, and tell them to make fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generations and to put a blue cord on the fringe at each corner. 39 You have the fringe so that, when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and not follow the lust of your own heart and your own eyes. 40 So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and you shall be holy to your God. 41 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God.

12 You shall make tassels on the four corners of the cloak with which you cover yourself.

This detail indicates Jesus knows and observes the Jewish law.

Jesus is found in his characteristic roles in this chapter--as teacher, healer, and a man who retreats to pray. He is also a man of compassion who cannot ignore the physical suffering of people; he walks through the crowds touching, healing, and feeding. His compassion is active.

Herod's promise to his daughter is rash: "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." The reader will recall a similarly rash promise in the Old Testament in Judges 11 by Jephthah: 30 And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord, and said, "If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, 31 then whoever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be the Lord's, to be offered up by me as a burnt offering." It would seem that rash promises, whether to God or to our own family, have similar tragic outcomes. Herod ends up having John the Baptist, whom he fears, protects, is perplexed by and knows to be a righteous and holy man, beheaded; Jephthah, who has made his vow to sacrifice to God whatever comes first out of his house after battle, ends up sacrificing his virgin daughter:

34 Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah; and there was his daughter coming out to meet him with timbrels and with dancing. She was his only child; he had no son or daughter except her. 35 When he saw her, he tore his clothes, and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low; you have become the cause of great trouble to me. For I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot take back my vow." 36 She said to him, "My father, if you have opened your mouth to the Lord, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, now that the Lord has given you vengeance against your enemies, the Ammonites." 37 And she said to her father, "Let this thing be done for me: Grant me two months, so that I may go and wander † on the mountains, and bewail my virginity, my companions and I." 38 "Go," he said and sent her away for two months. So she

departed, she and her companions, and bewailed her virginity on the mountains. 39 At the end of two months, she returned to her father, who did with her according to the vow he had made. She had never slept with a man. So there arose an Israelite custom that 40 for four days every year the daughters of Israel would go out to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.

One can hardly miss the parallel in Judges: this is a human sacrifice. John's life is also being sacrificed as will be the life of Christ by the end of Mark. Christ is, however, to be the sacrifice atoning for all human shortcomings.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ] [ [Synagogue](#) ]

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## Bible Studies Jeanie C. Crain <http://crain.english.mwsc.edu>

[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)
[Daniel 7](#)

Summary Mark seven records three events or actions: a controversy about observing the tradition of the elders initiated by the Pharisees and scribes; the Syrophenician woman who asks for a demon to be cast out of her daughter; and the healing of a deaf man. The Pharisees notice that Jesus' disciples are eating without first having washed their hands, and they ask Jesus why they are not observing the tradition of the elders. Jesus calls them hypocrites, telling them that they abandon God while holding on to human tradition. He tells them that nothing outside a person going in can defile but only what is inside coming out defiles.

### Search

The Syrophenician woman is Greek and Gentile; this begins the movement of Jesus from Galilee into the north and into Gentile territory. Though recognizing herself Greek and understanding Jesus' mission to the Jews, this woman, nonetheless, asks for healing for her daughter, which Jesus performs at a distance.

Jesus is in Decapolis when he heals the deaf man; this is the area where the man indwelt by many demons had witnessed to the authority of Jesus, recognizing him as the Son of God, the place called the region of the Gerasenes. Decapolis consisted of ten cities, mostly Gentile. Jesus addresses this deaf man in Aramaic, indicating he is probably Jewish even though in a Gentile region.



How radical is the message of Jesus? In the controversy in this chapter about his disciples not washing their hands, Jesus overturns tradition in one swift stroke by declaring all foods clean. To

understand fully, as even the disciples do not, one needs to remember that the tradition of the elders included a body of legislation which prescribed detailed applications of the Law of Moses. Jesus, like the Sadducees, rejected this additional legislation, even though the practice of the Sadducees in many ways coincided with that of the tradition. Jesus characterizes this legislation as a human creation, standing in antithesis to the commands of God. This legislation, though designed with the good intention of helping people uphold the Law of Moses, had the counter effect of causing them to break it; for example, Jesus cited the responsibility that children had to support and care for their parents, using Exodus 20.12 and 21.17 which speak of honoring and not cursing.

9 Then he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.' 11 But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban' (that is, an offering to God †)— 12 then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, 13 thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this."

Jesus knows that resources which could have been used to support elderly mothers and fathers is being promised instead to the upkeep of the temple; he sees this as outward piety, which, in reality, varies from the intent of the law itself. From such hypocrisy, Jesus moves to the human tradition of washing the hands, arguing that ritual cleansing or abstaining from foods would not alter the state of the heart, the real root of moral evil.



As always, one needs to read closely to determine fully what the story is relative to Jesus' action. When the Syrophenician woman comes and bows at Jesus' feet, asking that he exorcise a demon from her daughter, Jesus says, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." 28 But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Jesus uses a figure of speech, indicating Jews in the word "children." The Greek woman recognizes the common "dogs" for Gentiles and responds by urging that even children drop crumbs whereby dogs are fed.



Note that Jesus commands the deaf man's ears to be opened.

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 He took him

aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. 34 Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." 35 And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 Then Jesus † ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

His speech impediment is probably the result of not hearing; Jesus takes him away from the crowds into a more private area, lays his hands on--for he would not have heard words--looks up to heaven in a visible prayer and asks that the ears be opened. At the same time, the deaf man is also made to speak. Recall Isaiah 35.5, 6: "4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.' 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6 then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ] [ [Daniel 7](#) ]

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## Bible Studies Jeanie C. Crain <http://crain.english.mwsc.edu>

[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Word Text](#)

### The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)
[Search](#)

Summary In Gentile territory, in the region of Decapolis, southeast of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus imparts bread to four thousand. Although Jesus has been up to this time manifesting authority in many ways, the Pharisees demand a sign from heaven. Jesus refuses. Jesus next speaks metaphorically about leaven ( yeast) bread to his disciples, who misunderstand. Jesus becomes vexed at his disciples for their worry about a lack of bread. And finally, Jesus heals a blind man at Bethsaida, not completely the first time, but only after laying his hands a second time upon him. Following this, Jesus' journey seriously turned from the north to Jerusalem. In spite of Peter's protest, Jesus now begins to teach his disciples about his true Messiahship and the cost of discipleship.



Remarkably, Jesus in much the same ways as he fed the five thousand in chapter six, now feeds four thousand in Gentile territory. This time, he takes seven loaves and a few fish versus five loaves and two fishes. Recall, in the previous feeding, the disciples found twelve baskets remaining after the people had eaten. Now, the basket used is big enough for a grown man to stand in. As Jesus imparts bread to the Jews, does he now impart bread to the Gentiles--with a demonstration that enough is left over for others. Is this already the universalizing of the Kingdom of God to all humankind?



Getting in a boat and journeying to Dalmanutha, a place not identified which Matthew replaced with Magadan, Jesus is confronted with Pharisees who begin to argue with him; they want a sign from heaven. As happens before, Jesus sighs deep in his spirit (whereas in contrast human beings ask in their hearts), knowing the Pharisees are testing him, and asks "Why does this generation ask for a sign?" He tells them *this* generation will not receive a sign then gets in a boat and leaves, cross again to the other side.



In the boat, Jesus, despite having in the disciples presence already fed both Jews and Gentiles, finds his disciples again concerned about bread. This time, they have brought with them only one loaf. In what seems to the disciples a non-sequitur, Jesus tells his disciples to beware the yeast of Pharisees; he goes on to say, be aware, also, of the yeast of Herod. In the first case, what may be alluded to is the hypocrisy or false religiosity of the Pharisees; in the second case, Jesus addresses irreligion. The disciples, apparently yet, do not understand that Jesus is using a figure of speech. They see a connection in their asking about bread and yeast, but they fail to understand what it means as applied to the Pharisees and Herod. Jesus now, perhaps impatiently, asks them, why are you still talking about bread?

Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? 18 Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" They said to him, "Twelve." 20 "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" And they said to him, "Seven." 21 Then he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"



Jesus and his disciples next find themselves again in Bethsaida. When a blind man is brought to him for healing, Jesus takes him by the hand and leads him out of the village. The reader will recall that in the previous system Jesus healed a man who was deaf and mute. Jesus applied saliva in that case to get the man's attention, perhaps; this time, he uses a similar technique. In instances of healing, Jesus has placed emphasis upon the people's faith. This time, it takes two attempts for this

man to recover his sight. On the first try, he reports he can see but that people look like trees walking. "25 Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 Then he sent him away to his home, saying, 'Do not even go into the village.'" Jesus sends this man back to his own home.



Jesus continues his journey from the north of Palestine, headed now to Jerusalem. Preparation now is for the transfiguration which is to come in the next chapter. Emphasis is upon instruction. As John Shelby Spong in *Liberating the Gospels* remarks, Jesus in *Mark* has been up until this point involved with accounts of forgiveness, devil possession, the unclean leper, the paralytic--or involved with the sick, distorted, and unclean, or the hated, in the case of Levi. The Jewish New Year, according to Spong, is a call for repentance, followed by the Day of Atonement with its concern for cleanliness; this is to be followed by Tabernacles and Dedication, leading to the Passover. Spong's credible argument is that *Mark* is organized for liturgical reading. Massive crowds, like those at Sinai, gathered around Jesus, who sends twelve on a mission in the same way Moses sends twelve men to spy out the new land. Just as Moses teaches on blasphemy, Jesus teaches on blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Spong further argues that the parables of the sower and the seed growing, as well as the mustard seed, recall the fall festival. The story of transfiguration is told at the time of Dedication, the journey being reserved for instruction.

Certainly, in Caesarea, Phillipi, Jesus' tone to his disciples turns serious:

27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." 29 He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." † 30 And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

The disciples, the reader recalls, have sacrificed homes and livelihood to live in Jesus' presence, and they have taken up his message of the Kingdom of God. The time has come now for instruction in what this kingdom is to be. Previously, in chapter six, the question of who Jesus is had arisen with the context of Herod and John the Baptist:

Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." 15 But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of

the prophets of old." 16 But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

This time, Peter takes the initiative and declares that Jesus is the Messiah and is instructed not to tell anyone. Why the secrecy? Recall, the issue of Messiahship is fraught with political overtones. This political expectation included an agenda to expel the Roman legions from Palestine.



Against this expectation, Jesus begins now to reveal his real message: "the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." At least one follower, Peter, wants nothing to do with this new vision; Jesus rebukes him severely: "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

From this point forward, the message of Jesus is about the Kingdom of God as it must be realized on earth:

34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, † will save it. 36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Discipleship, like the Messiahship Peter wanted not to accept, must come, not by popular acclaim but by suffering, by taking up the cross. The cost of discipleship will demand abandoning self-centeredness, the loss of life--as mortal creatures, humans cannot avoid this--and possibly martyrdom, giving up any emphasis upon material goods, and a seeking of the God who, in chapter nine, will come with power.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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## Bible Studies **Jeanie C. Crain** <http://crain.english.mwsc.edu>

[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Word Text](#)

### The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)
[Search](#)

Summary Jesus, instructing the disciples, says some there will not die until God's kingdom has come with power. Following this, Mark records the transfiguration, Jesus going to the mountain accompanied by Peter, James, and John. Elijah and Moses appear and talk with Jesus. Peter wants to build three buildings--one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Jesus. The disciples are terrified; a voice from heaven testifies, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" As the disciples look around, they find no one there except for Jesus.

As they come down from the mountain, Jesus orders the disciples not to tell anyone what they have seen until the Son of Man has risen from the dead. The disciples do as they're told but question what Jesus has meant by dead. Jesus asks the disciples why the scribes say that Elijah must come first, and then he tells them that Elijah has already come, and they did to him what they pleased.

Around some scribes, a crowd has gathered and is arguing with them; the disciples have been unable to cast out a spirit from a boy who apparently has had a seizure. Jesus remarks on their lack of faith, momentarily sighing, "how much longer must I put up with you?" He questions how long the boy has had this condition and is told from childhood. The man who has brought his son to Jesus asks for pity, if he is able to do anything. Jesus picks up the doubt and replies, "If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes." The father says he believes and asks for help for his unbelief. Jesus commands the spirit which keeps the boy from speaking and hearing to come out; when the spirit comes out, the boy is left seemingly a corpse, and the people fear he is dead. Jesus, however, takes him by the hand, lifts him up, and he is able to stand. The disciples in a private moment ask Jesus why they have

been unable to exorcise the spirit, and Jesus tells them that this species can be cast out only by prayer.

Again passing through Galilee, Jesus tells the disciples not to tell anyone they're passing through; he is teaching his disciples that the Son of Man is to be betrayed, to be killed, and after three days, to rise again. The disciples do not understand but are afraid to ask Jesus to explain; instead, they argue about it among themselves. Jesus overhears the argument, and back in Capernaum, he asks them what the argument has been about. They are silent, not wanting to reveal that they have been arguing over who would be greatest in the Kingdom of God. Jesus knows, nonetheless, the content of the dispute and settles it: "36 Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 37 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'"

Jesus, by this time, has apparently inspired imitators, for John tells him of someone, not a follower, casting out devils in his name and asks if the man should be stopped. Jesus logically replies, "40 Whoever is not against us is for us." He then tells John that anyone giving even a cup of water to aid in the mission will be rewarded.

Likewise, the disciples are warned of the drastic consequences to those who obstruct the mission: better to have had a weight tied to them and drowned; better to lose a limb or even two legs and go maimed in this life than to suffer in hell hereafter; it would be better to enter into the hereafter with one eye than to see with both in this world and then be condemned in the next. Mark describes hell as a place "where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched." Jesus concludes by telling them that they are to live in peace with each other, and for that, they will need a preservative in themselves: salt to help them love and serve each other.



What Jesus meant by the kingdom coming in power has been debated; what is known is that the Holy Spirit descends at Pentecost; Christianity spreads throughout the Roman empire; and the event has been identified with the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. The transfiguration follows.



Traditionally, the place of transfiguration has been said to be Mount Tabor, ten miles southwest of the sea of Galilee; some argue the mountain is less than two thousand feet high and that since Jesus has just been in Capernaum, some place north of there would be more likely. To be transfigured means to have a non-earthly

appearance. Jesus is also said to have demonstrated to Peter, James, and John his pre-incarnate glory. With Jesus is seen Moses, the giver of the Law, and Elijah, an early prophet, authenticating Jesus as coming after them in the tradition and revelation of God. Peter wants to make shelters for all three, seemingly recognizing them as equal. God's visible answer is to remove Moses and Elijah and to declare authoritatively, "This is my Son whom I love; listen to him." The reader will recall that the same voice had manifest itself at Jesus' baptism to Jesus alone. Deuteronomy 18.15-19 speaks of a prophet with whom Jesus in this moment seems to be identified:

15 The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet † like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. 16 This is what you requested of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the Lord my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." 17 Then the Lord replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, † who shall speak to them everything that I command. 19 Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet † shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable.

Traditionally, then, the Jews have been taught to expect a prophet like Moses to appear. With this tradition invoked, the discussion turns to Elijah.



The disciples know that Malachi has predicted that Elijah would appear on earth before the Messiah; they question Jesus as to why he has not been preceded. In replying, Jesus clearly alludes to John the Baptist:

"Elijah is indeed coming first to restore all things. How then is it written about the Son of Man, that he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt? 13 But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written about him."

Jesus, once again, reminds his disciples that his mission is to suffer and be treated with contempt, the same message which he had given to them earlier which had aroused Peter's opposition. Everywhere in *Mark*, Jesus has been the ministering servant, the Son of Man walking among people. He has not allowed a deliberate belief in his having come to expel the Roman rule, a movement that he undoubtedly recognizes as dangerous even as he recognizes that prophecy will make him intricately apart of such conspiracy.



Once again, Jesus is pushed into healing by a distracted father seeking aid for his demon-possessed son. The disciples have attempted to meet the needs of this man and failed. An argument has resulted from the crowd, including scribes, who have surrounded and observed the humiliating failure. For the disciples, the failure is frustrating, if not tragic, and leaves them feeling helpless. Jesus comes from the immediately preceding transfiguration; the crowd is amazed. It will be remembered that the face of Moses was resplendent, and some such visible reminder of Jesus' proximity to God must have been evident. The words are swift as Jesus laments an unbelieving generation. The reader does well to recall Moses on his own mountain:

9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, 10 and they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. 11 God † did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; also they beheld God, and they ate and drank.

12 The Lord said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." 13 So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. 14 To the elders he had said, "Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them."

15 Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. 16 The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. 17 Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. 18 Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

To understand Jesus' words concerning an unbelieving generation, it's important to recall what Moses observed when he came down from the mountain:

32 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." 2 Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and

bring them to me." 3 So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4 He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, † and cast an image of a calf; and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" 5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord." 6 They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.

Previously, in Exodus twenty, when Moses had given the people the ten commandments, he had also warned them concerning unbelief:

22 The Lord said to Moses: Thus you shall say to the Israelites: "You have seen for yourselves that I spoke with you from heaven. 23 You shall not make gods of silver alongside me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold. 24 You need make for me only an altar of earth and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your offerings of well-being, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you. 25 But if you make for me an altar of stone, do not build it of hewn stones; for if you use a chisel upon it you profane it. 26 You shall not go up by steps to my altar, so that your nakedness may not be exposed on it."

Moses returns, of course, to find the children of Israel have made golden calves; Jesus returns to the humiliating defeat of his disciples. The disciples seemingly have lacked faith or prayer to overcome evil. Remember, in the sixth chapter of *Mark*, the disciples have been given power over evil; since three disciples have been on the mountain with Jesus, probably only nine disciples have been left to face the world.

Even Jesus' response to the distracted father is a rebuke for his lack of faith: "If you can" has injected doubt. The father, though, quickly recovers and asks for help for his disbelief.



The disciples of Jesus have apparently bought into the popular notions of the expected Messiah. Jesus reminds them he will be rejected and put to death. Finding the conception of death difficult to accept, the disciples deny it, choosing rather to argue fine points of theology among themselves. That they're afraid to ask anything farther is probably due to their being afraid to know. They turn instead to the argument of who is to be greatest in the Kingdom of God.



Walking ahead of his disciples, Jesus, nonetheless, has become aware of their disagreement. The disciples are reluctant to reveal what has really been the egotistical content of their discussion, even when they begin to suspect that Jesus knows. Compassionately, Jesus explains to them that greatness in God's Kingdom requires service to people. This had to do with do unto others as you would have them do unto you; do only what you can will into a universal act; do not do unto others what you would want done unto. Jesus punctuates his point by picking up a child and reminding his disciples 37 "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me." Service to others would be received as service to Jesus as service to Jesus would be regarded as service to God. Only then, relative to service, could greatness be determined; ironically, such service would preclude all questions of greatness.



Interestingly, after the disciples of Jesus fail in their attempts at exorcism, attention turns almost immediately to those who are not followers of Jesus who yet succeed in overcoming evil. Jesus criticizes John for wanting to prevent this, reminding him that such acts are not against God. It would be improbable that people acting in the name of Jesus would turn against him.



Jesus now moves into the final teaching of this time. He teaches that the smallest service done to another would be rewarded in eternity. The full brunt of warning is against becoming a stumbling block to young believers or converts: 42 "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, better were it..." Jesus clearly argues against encouraging sin in oneself or in others. It needs to be recalled that King Josiah stamped out the sacrifice of children to the God Molech (2 Kings 23.10): "10 He defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, so that no one would make a son or a daughter pass through fire as an offering to Molech." This hell, or Greek Gehenna, became for the Jews a vile association of the worst abominations. The fires here were literally always smoldering. Jesus tells his disciples that they must, in principle, be ready to undergo such testing in order to be spiritually purified and made like salt. The goodness of the disciples was, in fact, like salt in seasoning and purifying the world.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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## Bible Studies **Jeanie C. Crain** <http://crain.english.mwsc.edu>

[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Word Text](#)

### The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)
[Search](#)

Summary Jesus leaves Capernaum and goes to region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, considerably south in the direction of Jerusalem and east of the Jordan; he continues to instruct his disciples. He teaches about divorce, talks about the example of children, tells the story of the rich man, and once again, foretells his death and resurrection, hears a request from the brothers John and James about who in the kingdom would be allowed to sit on his right side, and then ends with the healing of Bartimaeus. The Pharisees initiate the discussion about divorce, and the disciples follow-up on the discussion. Following this discussion, Jesus takes into his arms the little children brought to him by their parents, blesses them, and says that of such is the Kingdom of God made. The children are followed by a rich young man who wants to know what he should do to enter God's kingdom; Jesus tells him to keep the law but, also, to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor, a requirement that the young man finds too difficult. This leads to a discussion of the difficulty they rich may have in attaining God's kingdom.

On the road on the way to Jerusalem, he tells his disciples he will be condemned by the chief priests and scribes, handed over to the Gentiles, be killed, and rise again after three days. James and John ask to sit on the right side of Jesus in the kingdom, an indication that they still misunderstand the mission about which Jesus has been teaching. Blind Bartimaeus exclaims for joy when he encounters Jesus, whom he recognizes as the Son of David, and asks to be healed of his blindness; Bartimaeus regains his sight and follows Jesus.



When the Pharisees initiate a discussion about marriage and divorce, Jesus uses it to teach his disciples a message about unity, the content which apparently escapes them since they follow up with much the same question as the Pharisees. Generally, Deuteronomy has said the following about divorce:

24 Suppose a man enters into marriage with a woman, but she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her, and so he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; she then leaves his house 2 and goes off to become another man's wife. 3 Then suppose the second man dislikes her, writes her a bill of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house (or the second man who married her dies); 4 her first husband, who sent her away, is not permitted to take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that would be abhorrent to the Lord, and you shall not bring guilt on the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a possession.

Jesus first asks the Pharisees what the Law says about a man's being able to divorce his wife; they reply, showing they know the scriptures, that the Law allows a man to write a certificate and dismiss the wife. The Pharisees, of course, are trying to trick Jesus into incriminating himself by the Mosaic law. The certificate issued is to protect the wife's interest, allowing her to establish that her divorce has been formal and official and that she was free to marry someone else. Jesus, as always, goes beyond the letter of the Law to its intent:

5 But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. 6 But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

This reply suggests that the Law was written for man or was shaped for the heart of man. That is, God's law is absolute; human law is relative; in this case, human law does not represent the absolute but exists due to inclinations of the human heart. As always, human law is issued to constrain human errancy. The purpose of marriage, as Jesus points out, is to bring two people together into one unity joined by God; much later, Malachi is to say that God hates divorce:

14 You ask, "Why does he not?" [accept offerings and sacrifices]  
Because the Lord was a witness between you and the wife of your

youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 15 Did not one God make her? Both flesh and spirit are his. And what does the one God desire? Godly offspring. So look to yourselves, and do not let anyone be faithless to the wife of his youth. 16 For I hate † divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts.

According to Jesus, the original intention for humans was laid out in Genesis 1.27 and in Genesis 2.24:

27 So God created humankind in his image,

in the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them.

*Oxford annotation* says the following about image: *Image, likeness*, refer not to physical appearance but to relationship and activity. *Humankind* is commissioned to manifest God's rule on earth, on the analogy of a child who represents a parent (see [Genesis 5.3](#)).

The Genesis 2.24 reference describes the unity of man and woman:

24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

The point, perhaps, of all this is that original intentions meant the marriage bond to be indissoluble, as unbreakable as a blood relationship; the argument seems to be that Jesus replies that the male has no right to break the partnership, irregardless of legal considerations. It also needs to be remembered that adultery--not the issue in question here--was traditionally punished by death (Leviticus 20.10), ending the marriage bond without recourse to divorce proceedings. It will be recalled that this was the situation warranting John the Baptist's criticism of Herodious who used Roman law, to sever her union with Philip and to marry Herod Antipas.

One needs to be careful about reading too much in this Christianized discussion of the Law:

The evangelists, writing some 40–70 years after Jesus' death, turned a

negative attitude toward the Law (or the Jewish understanding of it) into the touchstone of Christian identity. This tendency makes for considerable confusion when one tries to reconstruct the views of the historical Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth, living and working in a predominantly Jewish environment, very likely had his own views on the correct interpretation of Torah, and these views may well have differed from those of his contemporaries. Argument about the Law between Jews was and is a timeless Jewish occupation: controversy implies inclusion. Transposed to a gentile context, however, argument can seem like repudiation.

Thus Mark's Jesus turns an unexceptional observation (people are morally defiled by what they do or say, not by what they eat, [Mark 7.15–23](#)) into a repudiation of the Law regarding kosher food ("Thus he declared all foods clean"; [Mark 7.19](#)). John's Jesus condemns his Jewish audience as sons of the lower cosmos and children of the devil ([John 8](#)): the Law, characterized throughout as that "of Moses" is, implicitly, not "of God," from whom comes grace, peace, and the Son ([John 1.16](#); [John 7.19–24](#)). In his Sermon on the Mount, Matthew's Jesus presents his intensification of Torah ethics as if in contradistinction to Torah and Jewish tradition ("You have heard it said ... but I say"; [Matthew 5](#)). Luke, although retaining the theme of Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus both in his Gospel and in Acts, nonetheless wishes to present the new movement as continuous with a Jewish view of biblical revelation. Consequently he edits out or softens many of Mark's anti-Law statements. And all the Gospels, no matter how strong their individual polemic against Jews and Judaism (See [Anti-Semitism](#)), and hence the Law, still present a Jesus who worships at synagogue on the Sabbath, observes Temple sacrifice, pilgrimage holidays, and Passover rituals, and whose followers, honoring the Sabbath, come to his tomb only on the Sunday after his death (*Oxford Companion*).

In private, the disciples follow-up and re-ask the question relative to the laws of divorce; this time, Jesus tells them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; 12 and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." In Palestine, a woman was not allowed to divorce her husband. Jesus here does not contradict the existing Law of Moses.



Probably no scene in the Gospels has been more lifted out of context to illustrate the gentleness of Jesus than the one of him blessing children. Jesus does not depart from the business at hand; he is still teaching about the Kingdom of God. Using the

children, he insists that one must receive the Kingdom of God as would a child, and "To receive the kingdom as a child is to depend in trustful simplicity on what God offers." Children accept gifts to them without thought of desert or merit on their part.



Jesus, leaving on a journey, is next confronted by a young rich man who wants to know what he can do to inherit eternal life or God's Kingdom? He is asked, what did Moses say do? When he replies that he has kept Moses' laws, then he is challenged to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor. This, the young man cannot do. Jesus uses the occasions to instruct his disciples about what it means to serve God's Kingdom:

29 Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

For some, this promise seems rash and misses the point of the suffering and often lack of material things experienced by people who follow the way of Jesus. What, however, the Christian inherits is God's spiritual Kingdom now--all the houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, and children, and fields that are a part of this kingdom. But they also inherit persecutions now and in the age to come eternal life. Nowhere does Jesus promise anyone that they are to receive any more materially than anyone else simply because they follow him.

Between childhood and adulthood, simplicity is lost; spiritual satisfaction competes with material gain. This makes the above story of the rich young man complimentary to the blessing the children episode. God's gift is a free gift, but the act of accepting the gift may be costly in its consequences.

We see here, too, obsequiousness, on the part of the young man who is rebuked by Jesus for addressing him as "Good teacher." Only God is absolutely good; we have no indication the young man here meant anything about the divinity of Jesus. When Jesus reminds this man of the law, he reports all too easily that he has kept it, indicating a lack of understanding of the full requirements of these laws. Jesus immediately pinpoints exactly what is keeping this young man from completing his request for eternal life. As the young man goes away sorrowful, Jesus remarks on a Proverb of how difficult it is for a camel to go through a needle's eye, applying this

to the difficulty the young man has encountered. With God, of course, all things are possible by definition.



Jesus now turns again to what is foremost on his mind: this is the third conversation about what awaited him in the Passover celebration.

32 They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, 33 saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; 34 they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again."

The reader will note that the term Son of Man is used here; he is to be handed over to the Jews (chief priests and scribes) and condemned, then handed over to the Gentiles, who will kill him; he will be resurrected after three days. It should be noted that the ideas of God-man and resurrection are not concepts unique to the Jews or to Jesus at this point. Jesus has already called attention to himself, although it would seem he attempted to prevent this, by the gatherings and healings; he has been beset by Pharisees and Sadducees relative to his purity in observing the law; additionally, his following has attracted the suspicion of Roman rulers. A concept familiar at this time, one may wish to reflect upon, is that a God-man is someone, already seen in Alexander the Great, who restores state. Jesus has gone about pronouncing the Kingdom of God.



The disciples, obvious in their next request, have not understood what Jesus' instructions have meant all along. In the Messianic kingdom, James and John request to sit in favored places. In the first place, it's not clear that James and John have accepted the invisible nature of God's Kingdom:

38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" 39 They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is

for those for whom it has been prepared."

While they have already been instructed about the inevitable requirement of suffering, they have ignored the essential requirement that one inheriting the Kingdom of God now does so in this world by taking on its mortal burdens. Furthermore, James, who is according to Acts 12.2 killed with the sword, and John, who is exiled to Patmos, unaware of what their own futures will require from them. Jesus points to the invisible rather than earthly kingdom when he says "to sit at my right hand or my left is not mine to grant." Is the implication that this honor is to be achieved by life which the disciples have not yet lived? And would not Jesus gone on to have reminded them of earlier teaching such as the one about who would be the wife honored to sit by her husband in heaven? It's clear the disciples have as much difficulty understanding Jesus' teaching as the crowds. This section ends with the sobering reminder of Jesus' example as servant: "45 For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."



It's interesting that the last healing Mark chooses to record is that of Bartimaeus in Jericho, a blind beggar, who acknowledges him as Son of David:

As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Mark reports Jesus as standing very still upon being addressed in this manner; Jesus next responds by having the disciples call Bartimaeus over to him. Bartimaeus springs up, when asks what he wants, replies, "my sight," and is told by Jesus his faith has made him well. Could Bartimaeus have known Isaiah 61.1?

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,

and release to the prisoners;

2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,

and the day of vengeance of our God;

to comfort all who mourn;

3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—

to give them a garland instead of ashes,

the oil of gladness instead of mourning,

the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.

They will be called oaks of righteousness,

the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

4 They shall build up the ancient ruins,

they shall raise up the former devastations;

they shall repair the ruined cities,

the devastations of many generations.

This time, the one healed is not forbidden to proclaim what has happened. This comes at the point of entry into Jerusalem for the Passover celebration.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)
[Search](#)

Summary Jesus, coming from the direction of Bethany on the east side of the Mount of Olives, prepares to enter Jerusalem; the entry is clearly staged as the accomplishment of an act and certainly the end of a journey. The disciples are sent to bring a colt upon which Jesus will ride into the city: he is proclaimed Lord in the tradition of the "coming kingdom of David." On first entering Jerusalem, he enters the temple, looks around and leaves. He is next reported as cursing a fig tree which has leaves but not fruit. This is followed by a return to and cleansing of the temple. After this cleansing, the narration returns to the fig tree and the reason for the curse, emphasizing the power of God over faith. In Jerusalem, Jesus is now confronted by Pharisees, scribes, and elders questioning his authority. Jesus deflects this question to one about whether John the Baptist had been authorized by heaven or by men.



What does one make of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, coming in the eleventh chapter of Mark, signaling the end of the opening events and journey into the Holy City?

### Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

**11** When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples <sup>2</sup> and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" <sup>4</sup> They went away and found a colt tied near a door,

outside in the street. As they were untying it, 5 some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" 6 They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. 7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. 9 Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

11 Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Remember, Jesus has just been proclaimed Messiah in the tradition of David. Now, suddenly, he sends his disciples to find a colt that has never been ridden and instructs them to untie it and bring it to him. This event, of course, signals for Christians the last week in the life of Christ. For Jews, this events continues the lead-in to the celebration of Passover. What is one to expect? Advocates of tradition go back to Zechariah 9:9:

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you;

triumphant and victorious is he,

humble and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

When was Zechariah written? codified? Almost everyone recognizes it as post-exile (after the Babylonian captivity). Let's look at the *Oxford annotation*:

Zechariah, whose prophecies date from 520 to 518 b.c. and are found in [Zechariah 1–8](#), was contemporary with Haggai ([Ezra 5.1](#);

[Ezra 6.14](#)). He shared Haggai's zeal for a rebuilt temple, a purified community, and the coming of the messianic age (see "[Introduction to Haggai](#)"). Like Haggai also, Zechariah forms a link between earlier prophecy (especially Ezekiel) and mature apocalyptic thought ([Daniel 7–12](#)). But Zechariah differs from his contemporary in the form and presentation of his message, employing the literary style of night visions and dialogues between God, seer, and interpreting angel. With him, therefore, both the form and imagery of Jewish apocalyptic thought are significantly developed.

[Zechariah 9–14](#), which nowhere claims to be from Zechariah, portrays nothing of the early Persian period but speaks rather of the Greeks ([Zechariah 9.13](#)). Instead of Joshua and Zerubbabel, unnamed shepherds lead the community. Instead of peace and rebuilding, there are expectations of universal warfare and the siege of Jerusalem. Style, vocabulary, and theological ideas differentiate these chapters from Zechariah's work. Although they may contain some earlier bits, they were written during the Greek period, principally in the fourth and third centuries b.c., by unknown authors. Since the eschatological and messianic themes found in the first section are here further elaborated, the authors are spiritual disciples of Zechariah. The pictures of the messianic Prince of Peace and the Good Shepherd smitten for the flock are used in the New Testament in order to describe the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In the Greek period, the fourth and third centuries BCE, eschatology and Messianism have intensified. Jesus is now placed in this tradition of expectation: as Prince of Peace and Good Shepherd. His own understanding and prediction of the Passion has been that he will be smitten for the flock. The Romans, by the era of Jesus, have replaced the Greeks; not being particularly religious, they have accepted hellenized religion. Multiple gods are familiar; they often seem to be humans made into gods. They symbolize forces of nature, and the ordinary mortal procedure is to sacrifice and pray to them in order to incur favorable human outcomes. The Romans in this era are generally tolerant of the religions but suspect anything which is contrary to political allegiance. Only when religion calls attention to itself as being in opposition to current rule is there likely to be a political backlash which includes overt overriding of rebellious cults. To be proclaimed, even symbolically, as involved in any overthrow of contemporary rule in Jerusalem is judged to be in opposition to the established hegemony. So, here comes Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a colt. The outcome is expected, although it is not immediate. Jesus simply journeys into Jerusalem, ends up in the temple, and walks out.



Next, Mark records Jesus as again entering into the temple and acting immediately to clean it up:

15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; 16 and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17 He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written,

‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’?

But you have made it a den of robbers."

18 And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. 19 And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

It needs to be clear here that the temple is permitting the Jewish obligatory shekel a year (from every male adult) to be used for taxes. The Greek and Roman money must be changed into Tyrian currency. Additionally, the last part of verse fifteen indicates people are carrying baggage from their pilgrimage into the temple's outer court. Jesus is, also, fulfilling scripture; the first scripture alluded to is Isaiah 56:

6 And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,

to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,

and to be his servants,

all who keep the Sabbath, and do not profane it,

and hold fast my covenant—

7 these I will bring to my holy mountain,

and make them joyful in my house of prayer;

their burnt offerings and their sacrifices

will be accepted on my altar;

for my house shall be called a house of

prayer

for all peoples.

8 Thus says the Lord God,

who gathers the outcasts of Israel,

I will gather others to them

besides those already gathered

This reference also clearly indicates that Gentiles are coming to the temple and finding it to be used for business rather than prayer. The next reference is from Jeremiah, but to understand the implications clearly, one needs to recognize that Jeremiah is prophesying the destruction of the temple. The Oxford annotation makes clear the connection between the apostasy of Judah and the destruction of the temple:

**7.10–12:** As *Shiloh* ([Jeremiah 7.12](#), eighteen miles north of Jerusalem), the earlier central shrine, was destroyed (around 1050 b. c. in the days of Samuel; compare [1 Samuel 4–6](#); [Psalm 78.56–72](#)), so also *this house*, desecrated by idolatry, will be destroyed ([Jeremiah 7.10](#); [Jeremiah 7.11](#); compare [Matthew 21.13](#)). Immediately following this sermon, Jeremiah was arrested (see [Jeremiah 26.8](#)).

Now, read the entire section from Jeremiah:

**7** The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: **2** Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the Lord. **3** Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you † in this place. **4** Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is † the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord."

**5** For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, **6** if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, **7** then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever.

**8** Here you are, trusting in deceptive words to no avail. **9** Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal,

and go after other gods that you have not known, 10 and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, "We are safe!"—only to go on doing all these abominations? 11 Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight? You know, I too am watching, says the Lord. 12 Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. 13 And now, because you have done all these things, says the Lord, and when I spoke to you persistently, you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, 14 therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your ancestors, just what I did to Shiloh. 15 And I will cast you out of my sight, just as I cast out all your kinsfolk, all the offspring of Ephraim.

Like Jeremiah, Jesus will be arrested shortly after this cleaning of the temple. The reader should recall, too, that Jesus had entered the temple when he first came into Jerusalem but merely observed and left. His look must have been profoundly sad as his eyes swept through the Court of the Gentiles.



Mark next records what seems to be a bizarre event: Jesus curses a fig tree. Why? The first answer is, of course, natural: the fig tree has leaves, an indication of at least green fruit. The fig tree shows leaves in March followed by edible knobs which drop off before the true figs form. Beneath the leaves, however, nothing is found. Symbolically, Jesus has had this sad reality demonstrated in every city he has visited, and has heard it realized all too often in the religious hierarchy. Jesus has wanted to see the invisible written into the physical manifestations; what he has observed is outward piety (show) and little substance. He, thus, curses this instance of hypocrisy in the natural order. This, of course, causes one to wonder if in the natural and mortal order hypocrisy is not the thin lacquer between the absolute and real. Jesus is further saying prophetically that the Jews with their rituals have failed to produce genuine spirituality. The withering of the fruitless fig tree becomes a prophetic symbol of the doom which is coming to the Jewish nation.



Jesus is now confronted by what appears to be an official delegation from the Sanhedrin made up of chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. They want to know what his authority is for acting as he has.

27 Again they came to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him 28 and said, "By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?"

They know obviously he has not been authorized by the Sanhedrin. Jesus turns

the tables by stopping them short:

29 Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin? Answer me." 31 They argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?'" 32 But shall we say, 'Of human origin?'"—they were afraid of the crowd, for all regarded John as truly a prophet. 33 So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

If they reply that John had been authorized from heaven, then they will be forced to acknowledge that John had also said one greater than himself was to succeed; to answer that John's authority had come from earth would have been to raise the wrath of the crowd. Jesus, therefore, has answered the question without actually having said anything!

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Up](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Isaiah 13](#)[Isaiah 34](#)[Ezekiel 32](#)[Joel 2](#)[Isaiah 19](#)

Summary This chapter in Mark is known as the "little apocalypse." As the disciples and Jesus are coming out of the temple, one of the disciples remarks concerning the large buildings and large stones. Jesus replies by saying that all will be destroyed. Jesus and his disciples cross the Kidron Valley in order to get to the Mount of Olives. There, the disciples ask when the temple will be destroyed and ask for signs of this coming event. Jesus mentions that many will come saying "I am" and will gain followers. Wars and rumors of war will signal the end. The disciples are told that before the end, nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. Birth pangs of the day of the Lord will be signaled by earthquakes and famines.

Next, the disciples hear probably what they do not want to hear: they themselves will be brought before councils and beaten in the synagogues; they will stand before governors and kings where they will be asked to testify of their commitments. Before the end, the Gospel must be proclaimed to all nations. The disciples are told, furthermore, not to try to prepare for the trials relative to what to say in their own defense; rather, the Holy Spirit will speak on their behalf. Brothers, fathers, and children will rise against each other with children having their own parents put to death. The disciples are told they will be hated but will be saved if they endure until the end.

The end will be signaled by "desolating sacrilege" in the temple itself, and the religious will flee to the mountains. At this time of flight, people will not take time to take anything from their houses, including coats; those who are pregnant will be pitied for their condition; hopefully, they will be spared having this happen in the winter. The disciples are told the suffering will be more intense than any they've seen since the beginning of the world, and there will never be greater suffering. God himself will cut short mortal days for the sake of his elect; if, in fact, people hear others proclaiming themselves Messiah, they are not to believe them; for another sign of the day of the Lord will be false prophets and messiahs. The disciples, having been instructed, are to stay alert and not be led astray.

The suffering will be followed by a darkened sun and moon; stars will fall from the heavens, and the heavens themselves will be shaken. At this time the Son of Man will come in the clouds with great power and glory. He will send out angels and gather the elect from the four winds and the ends of earth and heaven.

[Search](#)

Christ recalls the lesson the fig tree which he has earlier cursed for bearing leaves but no fruit. Symbolically, once again, another sign, this time of summer, will be that the fig tree puts out leaves. When all these things have been seen, then the day of the Lord will be near; in fact, this generation, Christ tells his disciples, will not pass away until these things come to pass. He continues, heaven and earth will pass away but not my words.

The disciples are told to keep alert, for they will not know when the end is to come; this end, neither the angels nor the Son knows, but only the Father. The disciples are told to keep awake:

34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 35 Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, 36 or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."



The power of numbers! Coincidentally, this apocalyptic chapter is thirteen, giving us an easy handle whereby to remember this troublesome chapter, probably one of the most often debated. When will the day of the Lord come! As the readers have been asked to know scripture before as they read Mark, it's probably most instructive to recall Old Testament passages which are very similar in tone and prediction to chapter thirteen of Mark. Recall first Isaiah 13.10 used to describe the judgment of God upon Babylon; in fact, these passages should be read in entirety.

9 See, the day of the Lord comes,  
cruel, with wrath and fierce anger,  
to make the earth a desolation,  
and to destroy its sinners from it.

10 For the stars of the heavens and their constellations  
will not give their light;  
the sun will be dark at its rising,  
and the moon will not shed its light.

Isaiah strikes a similar tone when he describes the judgment of God upon Edom:

34 Draw near, O nations, to hear;  
O peoples, give heed!

Let the earth hear, and all that fills it;

the world, and all that comes from it.

2 For the Lord is enraged against all the nations,

and furious against all their hoards;

he has doomed them, has given them over for slaughter.

3 Their slain shall be cast out,

and the stench of their corpses shall rise;

the mountains shall flow with their blood.

4 All the host of heaven shall rot away,

and the skies roll up like a scroll.

All their host shall wither

like a leaf withering on a vine,

or fruit withering on a fig tree.

5 When my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens,

lo, it will descend upon Edom,

One can't miss here the almost formulaic utterance: the day of the Lord, the Lord's rage against nations, the fleeing to the mountains; the earth, a desolation; the heavens, rotting away; the stars and constellations not giving light; the sun and moon darkened.

Now, consider Ezekiel 32.7 describing God's judgment upon Egypt:

7 When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens,

and make their stars dark;

I will cover the sun with a cloud,

and the moon shall not give its light.

8 All the shining lights of the heavens

I will darken above you,

and put darkness on your land,

says the Lord God.

Also, consider Joel 2; Joel is talking about God's judgment upon Israel:

2 Blow the trumpet in Zion;

sound the alarm on my holy mountain!

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,

for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near—

2 a day of darkness and gloom,

a day of clouds and thick darkness!

Like blackness spread upon the mountains

a great and powerful army comes;

their like has never been from of old,

nor will be again after them

in ages to come.

3 Fire devours in front of them,

and behind them a flame burns.

Before them the land is like the garden of Eden,

but after them a desolate wilderness,

and nothing escapes them.

This is the day of the Lord, much like Isaiah 19: 1-3; this time, the prophecy is relative to Egypt:

### **An Oracle concerning Egypt**

19 An oracle concerning Egypt.

See, the Lord is riding on a swift cloud

and comes to Egypt;

the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence,  
and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.

2 I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians,  
and they will fight, one against the other,  
neighbor against neighbor,  
city against city, kingdom against kingdom;

3 the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out,

What should be obvious by now is that the Old Testament supplies ample evidence of such apocalyptic expectation. John Shelby Spong, following through upon his hypothesis that the order of Mark is really an order of liturgical reading, says the following:

As we noted previously, the annual reading of the Torah had begun anew on the first Sabbath of Nisan with the

book of Genesis, so the Torah lesson for that Sabbath would be the early Genesis story of Noah and the flood.

There the theme being expressed was that of God's judgment on the wickedness of human life. It was a total

judgment, reminiscent of Armageddon, when all the world would be destroyed. This Torah reading on that Sabbath

was supplemented, at least in the earliest Jewish lectionaries that we can locate, with a reading from the early

portion of the Jewish scriptures known as the former prophets, namely, the story of Joshua cross the Jordan river.

In that text, the Kingdom of God was about to dawn for the desert-wandering Jews. They were entering the Promised

Land. Again, following the earliest known lectionaries, the lesson for that Sabbath, taken from the prophetic cycle of Isaiah,

was about the coming day of the Lord at the end of time. So, from a variety of angles, the theme among the Jews

of this pre-Passover Sabbath was the end of the world (*Liberating the Gospels*, 77).

What we do know about Mark 13 is that Jerusalem is to fall in 70 CE, not unlike events upon the horizon in the old testament, certainly close enough at hand to suggest that this generation (a generation being forty years) would not pass away until all had been fulfilled. An intelligent person could have surveyed first-century events and have predicted the probability of a Roman show of power. Certainly, after the fall of the temple in 70 CE, Christianity moves forward into increased world-wide evangelism.

God's judgment upon earth follows both a contemporary and absolute time: that is, Babylon, Edom, Egypt, and Israel were judged. Each cycle repeated itself with a renewal and subsequent fall away from commitment. God's absolute judgment when the Kingdom of God would be definitively established is, perhaps, always a matter of future event at the same time that it is being currently realized. Jesus, perhaps, did not set out to do more than reform the legalistic and ritualistic "Jewish" religion of his day; the outgrowth, however, was Christianity.



What we do recognize in Mark 13 is that it records the last week. We have already observed the cleaning up of the temple in chapter eleven; this is followed by the cursing of the unproductive fig tree, also in eleven. Prior to these events, we have observed Jesus approach Jerusalem from Jericho, approaching the Mount of Olives. Did Jesus go to Jerusalem to die?

The purpose of the trip is stated in Mark's three passion predictions ([Mark 8.31](#); [Mark 9.31](#); [Mark 10.33–34](#)). It is generally agreed that these predictions in their present form are prophecies after the event and therefore reflect a knowledge of the passion story (stage II). But they may well contain an authentic nucleus (stage I), such as "the Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men" ([Mark 9.31](#)), where we have an Aramaic play on words (Son of man/men). Jesus hardly went up to Jerusalem in order to die; that, it has been suggested, would be tantamount to suicide. But he may well have realized that death would be the inevitable outcome of his mission (Oxford Companion).

We know that he has ridden into Jerusalem in the manner prophesied and expected in the tradition of Zechariah. The people have proclaimed "Hosanna to the highest." This "hosanna" is interpreted as "Save now." This cry may have been a plea to God to save the people now that the Messiah had appeared among them.

As they depart the temple, the disciples have been right to exclaim about the size of the buildings and the stones:

**1:** *The temple*, begun by Herod the Great, was as yet unfinished. *What large stones*, most of them were 37½ feet long; [Matthew 24.1 n.](#) 13.18 feet wide, and 12 feet thick. **2:** [Luke 19.43–44](#); [Mark 14.58](#); [Mark 15.29](#); [John 2.19](#); [Acts 6.14](#). This temple was destroyed a.d. 70 (Oxford Annotated).

The desolating sacrilege well could define exactly what was happening within the temple, God's house intended to be a house of prayer:

**13.14:** [Daniel 9.27](#); [Daniel 11.31](#); [Daniel 12.11](#). *The desolating sacrilege*, the

intrusion of Gentile practices into the temple (Oxford Annotated).

It should be remembered that the Romans had permitted their taxes to be paid by the money coming into the temple; although Roman money was used as the medium of exchange throughout the land, this money had to be exchanged for Hebrew money within the temple. This set up quite the scene for exploitation and abuse. What we know, too, is that these utterances concerning the destruction of the temple come just prior to the Passover with its set of expectations:

The tractate *PesaPesáúimim* in the Mishnah provides a description of the way that the rabbis (about 200 CE) understood Passover to have been celebrated before the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE). Many of the features reflected in *PesaPesáúimimim* are thus characteristic of the observance at the time of Jesus (See [Lord's Supper](#)), and some have continued in Jewish tradition to the present. The following elements in the celebration are noteworthy.

The people brought their Passover animals to the Temple in the late afternoon and, because of the numbers of worshipers, were admitted to the sanctuary in three separate groups. The worshipers slaughtered their animals and the priests caught the blood and tossed it against the altar. The animals were flayed and cleaned in the Temple courtyard, with the required fat and internal portions being burned on the altar ([Leviticus 3.3–4](#)). While each group was performing these functions, the Levites sang the Egyptian Hallel psalms ([Psalm 113–118](#)) and repeated them if time allowed (*Pesáú. 5.5–10*).

*The animals were carried from the Temple precincts and cooked for the Passover meal. Cooking was done by roasting so as not to break any bone in the animal (Pesáú. 7.1,11; see [Exodus 12.46](#); [John 19.36](#)).*

*At the meal, everyone ate at least a portion of the Passover animal. The flesh was eaten along with varied herbs (Pesáú.ú. 2.6), unleavened bread, a dip (úřrôset) rôset) composed of pounded nuts and fruits mixed with vinegar, and four cups of wine. After the second cup, a son asked the father, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" and the father instructed the son on the basis of [Deuteronomy 26.5–11](#). Between the second and third cups, [Psalm 113](#) (or [Psalm 113–114](#)) was sung. After the fourth cup, the Hallel was concluded. At the conclusion of the meal, the people departed but not to join in revelry (Pesáú. 10.1–8). 2.6), unleavened bread, a dip (úřrôset)rôset) composed of pounded nuts and fruits mixed with vinegar, and four cups of wine. After the second cup, a son asked the father, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" and the father instructed the son on the basis of rôset) composed of pounded nuts and fruits mixed with vinegar, and four cups of wine. After the second cup, a son asked the father, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" and the father instructed the son on the basis of [Deuteronomy 26.5–11](#). Between the second and third cups, [Psalm 113](#) (or [Psalm 113–114](#)) was sung. After the fourth cup, the Hallel was concluded. At the conclusion of the meal, the people departed but not to join in revelry (*Pesáú. 10.1–8*).*

*The people sought to celebrate the meal as if they themselves had come out of Egypt—"out of bondage to freedom, from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to festival day, and from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption" (Pesáú.ú. 10.5) (Oxford Companion).*

What follows in Mark is the plot to arrest Jesus, the betrayal agreement, the Last Supper, the agony in the Garden of Gethesamene, the examination of Christ by Caiphas, the high priest, Peter's denial, the trial of Jesus before Pilate, his mockery and crucifixion; this is followed by burial, resurrection, and post resurrection appearances.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ] [ [Isaiah 13](#) ] [ [Isaiah 34](#) ] [ [Ezekiel 32](#) ] [ [Joel 2](#) ] [ [Isaiah 19](#) ]

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## Bible Studies **Jeanie C. Crain** <http://crain.english.mwsc.edu>

[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Word Text](#)

### The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)
[Search](#)

Summary Two days before the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the chief priests and scribes are looking for a way in stealth to have Jesus killed; they are, however, afraid of the crowds following him, believing any incident with "their Messiah" could cause them to riot. Jesus has retreated to the house of Simon, a leper whom he has healed, and is resting; a woman comes with a costly jar of unguent and anoints his head. Because the ointment was expensive, some observing become angry at the woman.

Events develop rapidly, as narrated by Mark:

10 Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. 11 When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

Next, we have the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover Lamb is slain. The disciples ask Jesus where he would like to go to celebrate the Passover; they are instructed

, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, 14 and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 15 He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." 16 So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he

had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

This day pushes on into evening, and while they are eating, Jesus predicts that one of them present will betray him. He identifies this person as one of the twelve who is to betray the Son of Man and says it would be better if that man had not been born.

The next session has come to be recognized as the institution of the Last Supper:

22 While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. 24 He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Jesus indicates he will next drink of the fruit of the vine only in the kingdom of God. Finishing the dinner, Jesus goes with his disciples once again to the Mount of Olives. Jesus predicts that they will all become deserters, that he himself will be struck but only to be raised up. Peter denies that he could be capable of such desertion.

Next, Jesus prays in Gethsemane. Peter, James, and John, instructed to wait, begin to be agitated and restless, sensing events about to come it would seem. Jesus himself reveals a degree of emotional upheaval:

34 And he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake."

Jesus returns from praying three times only to find his disciples sleeping:

"Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

Jesus himself seems to have a premonition of what is about to befall, for he has addressed his Father, asking if possible that the cup he is to drink be taken from him:

"Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want."

Such is not, however, to be the case; he is to drink the bitter dregs. Judas arrives with a crowd holding swords and clubs, among them, the chief priests, scribes, and elders. Judas addresses Jesus as "Rabbi" and betrays him with a kiss. Jesus reminds

this religious group that he has been with them for days in the temple teaching and that they have not arrested him. One follower has hastily donned only linen cloth and no outer cloak; in the turmoil of the moment, he loses his linen coat and runs from the scene naked.

Jesus is taken to the high priest, chief priests, elders, and scribes. The council and chief priests are looking for a reason to put Jesus to death, but among the testimonies against him, much is revealed and nothing is consistent. When Jesus is first questioned, he is quiet; next, though, he is asked outright: "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus replies, "I am; and 'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.'" The high priest tears his clothes at this blasphemy and turns Jesus over to the crowds, all condemning him as deserving death, blindfolding him, spitting on him, and commanding him to prophesy.

Chapter fourteen ends with the ever adamant Peter's denial. As predicted, Peter denies Jesus, denying, also, that he himself is a Galilean. On hearing the cock crow after his third denial, Peter remembers that Jesus has told him he, too, will forsake.



If the Passion story was written before the rest of Mark, and scholars seem to think it was, then Mark would have prefixed the narrative tradition of the Passion with the tradition of Jesus. It is commonly agreed that Mark is the earliest Gospel and that it was used for the other synoptics. The framework for the narrative is quite straight forward: the conspiracy of the authorities against Jesus, Judas' agreement to betray Jesus, preparation for the Passover, mention of the traitor, prophecy of Peter's denial, and Jesus being taken captive (Edwin Freed, *The New Testament: A Critical Introduction*, Wadsworth 1991: p. 113). Certain basic issues emerge in the narrative; for example, the *Mishnah* (published in 200 CE) would suggest that a trial on the day of a Jewish festival runs counter to Jewish law. Even the manner of the crucifixion is problematic: archaeological evidence indicates one nail would be driven through both heel bones. A seat would have been fastened on the upright part of the cross to prevent a quick death. The traditional view is, of course, that Jesus had his hands nailed to the horizontal bark of the cross. In another area, Jesus is resurrected; the nature, however, physical or spiritual, is debated. Evidence exists for both a physical and spiritual resurrection. Other questions might include the following: why is there an anointing at Bethany which interrupts the narrative of conspiracy against Jesus? Why is the name of Judas not mentioned in the story of the traitor? Why would a criminal like Barabba be released instead of Jesus? Why does Mark, unlike Matthew, Luke, and John, not contain any narratives of Jesus' resurrection. Whatever else is said about Mark, the passion narrative is the climax to his Gospel, which ends as it began, with a confession that Jesus is the "Son of God."

What is unique in Mark is that he presents Jesus as often speaking privately to his disciples. He also presents Jesus as being conscious of his Messiahship and of being the Son of God. Jesus has become aware of his uniqueness at his baptism, but this fact continues to be revealed throughout the narrative. Mark, as pointed out above, also begins and ends this Gospel with the theme of Jesus as the Son of God, and this becomes his theme.



Why were the scribes and priests looking for a way to kill Jesus? We should note that this is not a new development; recall Mark 3.6 and Mark 12.12; in the first, Jesus has healed a withered hand on the Sabbath, and the second comes after the story of the wicked tenants which those present begin to see as applied against them:

6 The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

12 When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away.

We note here that the conspiracy in the first case is with the Herodians; the second indicates the fear of the crowd following Jesus. Whatever else Jesus has provoked, he has certainly criticized the existing Jewish religious piety. He has seen it as having more show than sincerity. It has, also, ostracized too many in the community, stigmatizing them as falling short of the law. Jesus has consistently demonstrated compassion based on a thorough understanding of human nature and spiritual realities. He has attracted followers from those who have been marginalized by the temple advocates. The priests and scribes are enough aware of Jesus' popularity to want to postpone any public confrontation.



Who is the woman who anoints the head of Jesus? All we know is that she is a woman from Bethany, that she anoints the head of Jesus with apparently quite expensive ointment; nard, one of the ingredients, was imported from India. This event and the event of Judas Iscariot's first contact with the chief priests set the stage for the Passion. The Passion then unfurls quickly; it culminates in the crucifixion and death and burial of Jesus. We know that it is evening when the disciples gather with Jesus for the Passover:

17 When it was evening, he came with the twelve. 18 And when they

had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." 19 They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, "Surely, not I?" 20 He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread † into the bowl † with me. 21 For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born."

Jesus at the Passover meal predicts his betrayal, interpreting the bread and wine of that meal as his body and blood. The meal concludes with a hymn, and Jesus and his disciples go out to the Mount of Olives. This is apparently a grove of olive trees containing an olive press. Since this is the first watch of the night, we conclude it to be about 9:00 p.m. At some garden within the Mount of Olives, Jesus goes apart from his disciples to pray, taking Peter, James, and John, his inner circle with him. We find out that they do not keep watch with him even one, two, or three hours. Probably about 12:00 p.m., they leave the garden. This means the betrayal comes at the darkest part of night. Jesus is led away by the chief priests, elders, and scribes in the dark of night; early in the morning, Peter has already made his dramatic three times denial, matching the the three hours you could not pray. Jesus has been betrayed by Judas Iscariot, possibly for both monetary and political reasons. Judas could have tired of waiting for Jesus to assume the Messiahship role expected of him. At any rate, when Jesus is asked directly if he is the Messiah, he replies with apparent knowledge of Daniel 7:

I saw one like a human being

coming with the clouds of heaven.

And he came to the Ancient One

and was presented before him.

14 To him was given dominion

and glory and kingship,

that all peoples, nations, and languages

should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion

that shall not pass away,

and his kingship is one

that shall never be destroyed.

The high priest interprets this as blasphemy: according to the *Oxford Companion*, blasphemy is defined in the following way:

**Blasphemy.** Speech that is abusive to humans or derogatory to God. Blasphemy against humans occurs when people speak words harmful to one another ([Matthew 15.19](#); [Colossians 3.8](#); NRSV: "slander"). Blasphemy also occurs when a person speaks against God in a way that fails to recognize the sacredness and honor of God's person and name. According to [Leviticus 24.10–16](#), it was punishable by death.

Blasphemy was also used to describe a claim to a divine prerogative. According to [Mark 2.7](#) (par.), Jesus was accused of blasphemy when he claimed to forgive sins; see also [John 10.33–36](#); [Mark 14.64](#).

The gospel writers also describe Jesus' opponents as blasphemous when they mocked him ([Mark 15.29](#); [Luke 22.65](#)). Similarly, 1 Timothy says that Paul blasphemed Jesus when he persecuted the church ([1 Timothy 1.13](#)), and that those who deserted the gospel were also guilty of blasphemy ([1 Timothy 1.20](#)).

In a passage that has elicited much debate, the synoptic Gospels ([Mark 3.28–29](#) par.) speak of blasphemy against the (Holy) Spirit as a sin that cannot be forgiven. The context indicates that this sin is not committed unintentionally by Jesus' followers, but is ascribed to the adversaries of Jesus, who had attributed his success to an evil spirit.

That Jesus has said he is the Messiah has apparently been interpreted as claiming divine prerogative. Interpreted as deserving death, Jesus is subjected to physical abuse and buffoonery. What follows quickly is Peter's denial.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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## Bible Studies **Jeanie C. Crain** <http://crain.english.mwsc.edu>

[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Word Text](#)

### The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)
[Search](#)

Summary The following morning, the Sanhedrin confirms its decision and takes Jesus before Pilate. He is arraigned before Pilate, Judea's fifth procurator, CE 26-36. Jesus is said to have proclaimed himself king of the Jews, which would have implicated him in a political rebellion. Pilate suspects Jesus' popularity is the real reason for his being arraigned. A Jewish nationalist, Barrabas, is released in accordance with Passover tradition, even though the people have had their choice of Jesus or Barrabas. Those who have been permitted to be present cry out for the death of Jesus, probably indicated they are a Jerusalem following associated with the Sanhedrin. Jesus is sentenced to crucifixion preceded by scourging. For the claim of king of the Jews, which Jesus has not made, he is mocked by the soldiers in a tradition of the "king" game in which he receives a crown of thorns, a scepter, and a mock robe. Simon of Cyrene carries the cross of Jesus to Golgotha, where he is crucified with two thieves. The victims are offered the opportunity to have their senses dulled by drugged wine; Jesus refuses the opiate. A written notice of the charge against the victims is written on a banner and placed on the cross: Jesus is said to be King of the Jews. He is taunted by passers-by. Jesus, in agony, cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He is offered wine vinegar and utters, "It is finished." At that moment, the curtain of the temple is reported to have been torn from top to bottom. A non-commissioned officer in charge confesses that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. This is the climax of the Gospel. We are told that Mary Magdalene and the mother of James the young look on the crucifixion from afar. Joseph of Armithea, a member of the Council, asks to be allowed to bury Jesus; he, no doubt, has been a sympathizer to the Kingdom of God to come. Joseph wrapped the body of Jesus in linen and laid it in a tomb, with Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus looking on. The traditional tomb closing occurs with a

huge stone rolled across the door of the cave.



In Mark 15, divine power pours itself into the world. Remember, the baptism of Jesus has been marked by the sky's splitting; at his death, the temple veil is torn from top to bottom. Nothing any less decisive than an epiphany of the nature of Sinai is occurring here. The light of God comes to rest in that place where heaven and earth seem to come together. For Moses, this happened on Mount Sinai, where the definitive absolute commandments were revealed by the hand of God. These commandments have been housed in the ark and carried until a temple is constructed. Recall the history of that ark:

As the years went by this object became ever-more venerated. It symbolized the presence of the living God at one particular spot on earth; for the God who dwelled "in the high and holy place" was also present at the ark in the midst of his people. As a result, later generations embellished descriptions of it in their traditions, seeing it as overlaid with gold both within and without ([Exodus 25.10–16](#)). The ark was transportable; it could be carried on poles overlaid with gold, which passed through rings on its side. It was considered to be of such sanctity that were an unauthorized person to touch it, even accidentally, this infraction would be punishable by death ([2 Samuel 6.6](#)).

The ark seems at one time to have contained only the two tablets of the law ([1 Kings 8.9](#)), but according to other traditions ([Hebrews 9.4](#)) it contained also Aaron's rod that budded ([Numbers 17.1–10](#)) and a golden urn holding manna ([Exodus 16.32–34](#)).

The history of the ark parallels many of the vicissitudes of Israel. It was carried by the sons of Levi on the wilderness wanderings ([Deuteronomy 31.9](#)); borne over the Jordan by the priests ([Joshua 8.1](#)); captured by the Philistines ([1 Samuel 4](#)); brought to Jerusalem by David ([2 Samuel 6](#); [1 Chronicles 13.3–14](#); [1 Chronicles 15.1–18](#)). After being kept in a tentlike sanctuary (See [Tabernacle](#)), it was finally installed in the holiest chamber of Solomon's Temple.

The ark had a cover or lid. Its name (Hebr. *kapporet*) is actually a theological term (cf. *kippûr*, "to purify, atone"), so we do not know what this cover looked like ([Leviticus 16.2](#); [Leviticus 16.13–15](#)).

Martin Luther described it in his German Bible as the "mercy seat" because the Lord "sat" enthroned over it in mercy, invisibly present where the wingtips of two cherubim met above it, guarding the divine presence. So the ark represented for Israel the localized presence of God in judgment, mercy, forgiveness, and love; and because it contained the Ten Commandments, it was a visible reminder that their life was to be lived in obedience to the expressed will of God. Since the Ten Commandments were incised on stone so as to last for all time, Israel carried in her midst God's demands for total loyalty and obedience to himself and for social justice and love of neighbor.

The ark is thought to have been captured when Jerusalem fell in 587/586 BCE, and nothing is known of its later history. Later legend reports that Jeremiah rescued it and hid it on Mount Nebo ([2 Maccabees 2.4–8](#); but cf. [Jeremiah 3.16](#)) (*Oxford Companion*).

What we have in Mark, among other things, is a wonderfully compounded Kingdom of Christ in relation to the Kingdom of David. Christ is not David's son, but his Lord. There is both continuity and discontinuity between the two kingdoms. Israel had been baptized into Moses in the cloud and sea; later, Paul, who carries the Christian message forward, is to baptize into Christ. It seems clear that the Christian interpretation of the cross is that the divine has entered into history and turned its course decisively (John Drury in "Mark" in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode. Harvard University Press, 1987: 410).

In the concluding chapter of Mark, the tradition of the Jews will have been completely transformed in Jesus as the new temple embraced by the heavenly light of God. Recall the transfiguration: Moses and Elijah, both men who stand with Jesus have experienced unusual deaths: Moses died alone and was buried by God; Elijah was taken by a fiery chariot directly into divine presence. Each of these Hebrew heroes had conquered death. Just as Moses went up Sinai with three intimates (Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu), Jesus at the transfiguration is accompanied by three disciples. In both cases, we have a cloud, and in both cases, they stayed for forty days.

Christians came to believe that Jesus was nothing less than the new dwelling place of God, and that Jesus had himself become the ultimate and final sacrifice that rendered additional temple sacrifices irrelevant. They began to argue that Jesus had replaced the temple. This theme grew in intensity when the temple was destroyed in 70 CE. So the idea that the light of God had actually come to rest in Jesus expanded in the tradition (Spong, 79-79).



But what does one come to make of this narrative finally. As human, the story is poignant: a man dies for his beliefs in the most agonizing way possible. Even those present at his condemnation find him without evil: 14 Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" What he has proclaimed consistently is a difference between the realized Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man. He has seen himself as God and man. For this blasphemy--even though others before him have claimed themselves one with God--he is condemned and crucified. Moments prior to death, he asks the agonizing, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" and he dies uttering, "It is finished." He expired. Then, wonderfully, the temple veil is rent from top to bottom, signaling that God at last has fully revealed Himself and that the entry into the Holy of Holies will always, hence forth, be mortal being to God with no priestly intermediary. The notion of intermediary itself should be studied. In Revelation, for example, the finite and infinite are at first separated by a sea of glass; in the end, there will be no more sea between the two realms.

The vision of the eternal is always in the realm of the prophet, a spokesperson for God, a priest, and sometimes a king. Never before, however, have the three roles come together so decisively in one person. In the person of Jesus, the Son of Man has, indeed, become the Son of God, as proclaimed at the baptism, the transfiguration, and again at the resurrection.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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## Bible Studies **Jeanie C. Crain** <http://crain.english.mwsc.edu>

[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 12](#)
[Word Text](#)

### The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)
[Rulers NT Times](#)
[Psalms 110](#)
[Search](#)

Summary When the Sabbath is over, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome come to the tomb early in the morning to anoint the body of Jesus; on the way, they have wondered about how they will remove the huge rock that covers the front of the tomb. Arriving, they see that the stone has already been rolled away; inside, they see a young man in white, and they become alarmed. This young man hastens to reassure these women, telling them they seek Jesus who has been crucified, but he has risen. He then tells them to go to the disciples and tell them, Peter in particular, that Jesus has gone into Galilee before them. The women are seized by terror and amazement, are afraid, and they flee.

The short ending of Mark is brief:

[[And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterward Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. ]]

Christians are grateful for the longer ending which has Jesus appear to several and then to ascend:

#### **Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene**

9 [[Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.  
10 She went out and told those who had been with him, while they

were mourning and weeping. 11 But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

### **Jesus Appears to Two Disciples**

12 After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. 13 And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

### **Jesus Commissions the Disciples**

14 Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. † 15 And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news † to the whole creation. 16 The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes in their hands, † and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."

### **The Ascension of Jesus**

19 So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it. ]]

Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, but when she goes to his disciples and reveals this appearance, they don't believe her, remembering that she is, after all, the one from whom Jesus has cast out seven demons. Jesus next appears to two disciples walking in the country; they, too, go back and tell the rest, being no more believed than Mary Magdalene. Now, Jesus appears to the eleven while they are sitting at a table and upbraids them for their lack of faith, an all too common occurrence in Mark. Nonetheless, Jesus tells them they are to carry on the mission, taking the good news to the whole creation. Interestingly, in a book which has played hard into the Jewish need for signs, the disciples are told signs will accompany them: they will cast out demons, speak in tongues, pick up snakes, and be unaffected by any poisonous drinks. They will lay their hands upon the sick who will then recover.

Now, Jesus is taken up into heaven, where he is given the preferred place on the

right hand of God. While God works with the disciples, they go into the world and begin to proclaim the good news, their message confirmed by signs.



What does one finally make of the Gospel of Mark? Certainly, the last chapter gives us our traditional Easter story, tied intimately into the Jewish Passover. Jesus has become the paschal lamb. Concerning the ending of Mark, we do well to consult the *Oxford Annotated Bible*:

**16.9–20: The traditional close of the Gospel of Mark.** Nothing is certainly known either about how this Gospel originally ended or about the origin of [Mark 16.9–20](#), which, because of the textual evidence as well as stylistic differences from the rest of the Gospel, cannot have been part of the original text of Mark. Certain important witnesses to the text, including some ancient ones, end the Gospel with [Mark 16.8](#). Though it is possible that the compiler of the Gospel intended this abrupt ending, one can find hints that he intended to describe events after the resurrection: for example, [Mark 14.28](#) looks forward to an account of at least one experience of the disciples with Jesus in Galilee after the resurrection, while the friendly reference to Peter ([Mark 16.7](#)) may anticipate the recounting of the otherwise unrecorded moment of reconciliation between Peter and his Lord (compare [Luke 24.34](#); [1 Corinthians 15.5](#)). If accounts such as these were originally part of Mark's Gospel, the loss of them took place very shortly after the Gospel was written, under circumstances beyond present knowledge. Many witnesses, some ancient, end the Gospel with [Mark 16.9–20](#), thus showing that from early Christian times these verses have been accepted traditionally and generally as part of the canonical Gospel of Mark. A variety of other manuscripts conclude the Gospel with the shorter ending, either alone or followed by [Mark 16.9–20](#), thus indicating that different attempts were made to provide a suitable ending for the Gospel. The longer ending may have been compiled early in the second century as a didactic summary of grounds for belief in Jesus' resurrection, being appended to the Gospel by the middle of the second century. On the Christian belief in continuing unrecorded memories about Jesus in the first century see [Luke 1.1–2](#); [John 20.30](#); [John 21.25](#); [Acts 20.35 n.](#); [1 Corinthians 15.3](#); also compare [Matthew 28.20](#); [John 16.12–33](#); [Revelation 1.12–16 n.](#); [Revelation 2.18](#).

**16.9–18: Post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. 9–10:** Mary is associated with other women in [Mark 16.1](#), [Mark 16.7–8](#) and parallels; she is apparently alone in [John 20.1–2](#); [John 20.11–19](#).

*Seven demons*, Luke 8.2. **11:** Luke 24.11; Luke 24.22–25; John 20.19–29; 1 Corinthians 15.5. Here, as in John 20.19–29, the disciples are convinced of the truth of Jesus' resurrection by their own immediate experience with him, though they should have heeded the witness of others as later generations must do (John 20.29). **12–13:** Luke 24.12–35. **13:** Compare Luke 24.34.

**16.14–18:** Matthew 28.19; Luke 24.47. **16:** Acts 2.37–42; Acts 10.47–48; Romans 10.9. **17–18:** The reality of faith in believers' lives as they respond to the apostolic witness is signified by events that both correspond with biblically recorded happenings in the lives of the apostles and conform to apostolic statements about the gifts of the Spirit (for example, 1 Corinthians 12.8–11; 1 Corinthians 12.28; 1 Corinthians 14.2–5; Hebrews 2.3–4): exorcism (Acts 8.6–7; Acts 16.18; Acts 19.11–20); new tongues (see Acts 2.4–11 n.; Acts 10.46; Acts 19.6; 1 Corinthians 12.10; 1 Corinthians 12.28; 1 Corinthians 14.2–33); healing (Acts 28.8; 1 Corinthians 12.9; James 5.13–16). Instances of picking up snakes and drinking poison, without injury to the believer in either case, lack New Testament parallels. However, the former resembles the harmless accidental attack upon Paul in Acts 28.3–6, and the latter appears occasionally in Christian literature from the second century onward.

**16.19–20: Jesus' exaltation. 19:** For the concept of Jesus' exaltation, Philippians 2.9–11; Hebrews 1.3; for the language *was taken up*, Acts 1.2; Acts 1.11; Acts 1.22; 1 Timothy 3.16 (seemingly a Christian hymn); for the image of the *right hand of God*, Psalm 110.1 n.; Acts 7.55; Hebrews 1.3. **20:** Mark 16.17–18; Hebrews 2.3–4.

Taken from the above, note at least these movements:

1. The disciples have at least one experience after the resurrection with Jesus in Galilee. Remember, Galilee is in the north of Palestine.
2. Peter, in the traditional role of one who has denied Christ, seems to be reconciled.
3. The longer ending of Mark may have been compiled in the second century.
4. Jesus' work with the disciples suggests immediate experience is necessary for belief; others can report, but the conviction comes from within a relationship.

5. Finally, the image of the right hand of God is clearly Jesus' exalted position. You may want to read all of Psalms 110. In particular, remember at least these words:

4 The Lord has sworn and will not  
change his mind,

"You are a priest forever according to the  
order of Melchizedek." †

5 The Lord is at your right hand;

The theme in Mark is clear: Jesus is the Son of God, stated both in the prologue (1.1) and in the unfolding of the Gospel (1.11; 9.7; 3.11; 5.7; 12.6; 14.61). He has been recognized by the heavenly Father, those who possess supernatural knowledge, and by himself. The climax comes when a Roman official also proclaims him as Son of God (15.39).

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ] [ [Rulers NT Times](#) ] [ [Psalms 110](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Up](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)

### Search

**Jesus' Radical Message: The Kingdom of God Is in the Midst of You (Lu.17:21 nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the **kingdom of God** is in the midst **of** you.')**

**1Co.15:50 I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.**

Much like the orthodox of the first century, people today devoutly expect God's kingdom to come; the emphasis here is that the kingdom is not present and is to come at some future point. This leads to living in expectation rather than with the present. For many, the end of time (which heralds the kingdom of God) is to be preceded by tribulation. As the prophets understood, the end is darkness and not light, at least from the temporal perspective. Matthew calls this the 24:15 the abomination of

desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet. If Christ were present in human form, we might be startled to hear him say, **Mt. 22: 13: But woe unto you, churched, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.** The message Christ proclaimed while on earth, after all, was the kingdom is here now, in our midst. How differently would we behave if we lived this truth in the present moment: the kingdom of God here now, in the moment: the eternal in the temporal! In some ways, this is the predictable message to come to the Hebrew-Judaic world which has been reshaped by Greek thinking, with an emphasis upon unity, harmony, and the ideal.

Mt.12:28 But if it is by the Spirit **of God** that I cast out demons, then the **kingdom of God** has come upon you.

Mt.19:24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye **of** a needle than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God.**"

Mt.21:31 Which **of** the two did the will **of** his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots go into the **kingdom of God** before you.

Mt.21:43 Therefore I tell you, the **kingdom of God** will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits **of** it."

Mk.1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom of God** is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."

Mk.4:11 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret **of** the **kingdom of God**, but for those outside everything is in parables; [the secret is known.]

Mk.4:26 And he said, "The **kingdom of God** is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground,

Mk.4:30 And he said, "With what can we compare the **kingdom of God**, or what parable shall we use for it?

Mk.9:1 And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the **kingdom of God** has

come with power." [need not taste death to see that the kingdom of God has come.]

Mk.9:47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter the **kingdom of God** with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell,

Mk.10:14 But when Jesus saw it he was indignant, and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the **kingdom of God**.

Mk.10:15 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the **kingdom of God** like a child shall not enter it."

Mk.10:23 And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the **kingdom of God!**"

Mk.10:24 And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the **kingdom of God!**

Mk.10:25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God**."

Mk.12:34 And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the **kingdom of God**." And after that no one dared to ask him any question. [not far from kingdom of God]

Mk.14:25 Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the **kingdom of God**."

Mk.15:43 Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the **kingdom of God**, took courage and went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.

Lu.4:43 but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the **kingdom of God** to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose."

Lu.6:20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the **kingdom of God**.

Lu.7:28 I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John; yet he who is least in the **kingdom of God** is greater than he."

Lu.8:1 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, [brings the good news of the kingdom of God.]

Lu.8:10 he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.

Lu.9:2 and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal.

Lu.9:11 When the crowds learned it, they followed him; and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and cured those who had need of healing.

Lu.9:27 But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

Lu.9:60 But he said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Lu.9:62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Lu.10:9 heal the sick in it and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." [has come near.]

Lu.10:11 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you; nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'

Lu.11:20 But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. [kingdom of God has come.]

Lu.13:18 He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it?

Lu.13:20 And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God?

Lu.13:28 There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God

and you yourselves thrust out.

Lu.13:29 And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the **kingdom of God**.

Lu.14:15 When one **of** those who sat at table with him heard this, he said to him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the **kingdom of God!**"

Lu.16:16 "The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news **of the kingdom of God** is preached, and every one enters it violently.

Lu.17:20 Being asked by the Pharisees when the **kingdom of God** was coming, he answered them, "The **kingdom of God** is not coming with signs to be observed;

Lu.17:21 nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the **kingdom of God** is in the midst **of** you." [The kingdom of God is in the midst of you.]

Lu.18:16 But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the **kingdom of God**.

Lu.18:17 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the **kingdom of God** like a child shall not enter it."

Lu.18:24 Jesus looking at him said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the **kingdom of God!**

Lu.18:25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye **of** a needle than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God.**"

Lu.18:29 And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake **of the kingdom of God,**

Lu.19:11 As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the **kingdom of God** was to appear immediately.

Lu.21:31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the **kingdom of God** is near.

Lu.22:16 for I tell you I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the **kingdom of God.**"

Lu.22:18 for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink **of** the fruit **of** the vine until the **kingdom of God** comes."

Lu.23:51 who had not consented to their purpose and deed, and he was looking for the **kingdom of God.**

Jn3:1: In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

2: And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Jn.3:3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the **kingdom of God.**"

Jn.3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born **of** water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the **kingdom of God.**

Jn.3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the **kingdom of God.**

Mt 4:17: From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mt 4:23: And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

Mt 5:3: Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Mt 5:10: Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Mt. 9:35: And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Mt. 22: 13: But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in

yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Ac.1:3 To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the **kingdom of God**.

Ac.8:12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the **kingdom of God** and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Ac.14:22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the **kingdom of God**.

Ac.19:8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the **kingdom of God**;

Ac.28:23 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in great numbers. And he expounded the matter to them from morning till evening, testifying to the **kingdom of God** and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

Ac.28:31 preaching the **kingdom of God** and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered.

Ro.14:17 For the **kingdom of God** is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit;

1Co.4:20 For the **kingdom of God** does not consist in talk but in power.

1Co.6:9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts,

1Co.6:10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the **kingdom of God**.

1Co.15:50 I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the **kingdom of God**, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Ga.5:21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I

warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the **kingdom of God**.

Col.4:11 and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the **kingdom of God**, and they have been a comfort to me.

2Th.1:5 This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made worthy of the **kingdom of God**, for which you are suffering --

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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[Home](#)

[Up](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Word Text](#)

## **The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament**

[Home](#)

### Search

Isaiah 40

3 A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

5 Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

3 A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;

the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.  
5 Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed

and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

An Oxford search finds 280 hits. Genesis 14.6-- on the edge of the wilderness; Genesis 16.7-- spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. Genesis 21.14-- wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. Genesis 21.20-- up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. Genesis 21.21-- He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Genesis 36.24-- the springs † in the wilderness, as he pastured the donkeys of his father Zibeon. Genesis 37.22-- this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of Exodus 3.1-- his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. Exodus 3.18-- days' journey into the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.' Exodus 4.27-- to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he went; and he met him at the Exodus 5.1-- a festival to me in the wilderness.' " Exodus 5.3-- days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to the LORD our God, or he will fall upon us Exodus 7.16-- may worship me in the wilderness." But until now you have not listened.' Exodus 8.27-- days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as he commands us." Exodus 8.28-- LORD your God in the wilderness, provided you do not go very far away. Pray for me." Exodus 13.18-- roundabout way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. † The Israelites went up out of the Exodus 13.20-- on the edge of the wilderness. Exodus 14.3-- in the land; the wilderness has closed in on them.' Exodus 14.11-- us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? Exodus 14.12-- than to die in the wilderness." Exodus 15.22-- and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and Exodus 16.1-- and Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth Exodus 16.2-- Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. Exodus 16.3-- us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." Exodus 16.10-- they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. Exodus 16.14-- on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. Exodus 16.32-- which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.' " Exodus 17.1-- the Rock 17 From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed Exodus 18.5-- came into the wilderness where Moses was encamped at the mountain of God, bringing Exodus 19.1-- day, they came

into the wilderness of Sinai. Exodus 19.2-- Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped Exodus 23.31-- and from the wilderness to the Euphrates; for I will hand over to you the inhabitants of the Leviticus 7.38-- to the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai. Leviticus 16.10-- be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel. † Leviticus 16.21-- it away into the wilderness by means of someone designated for the task. † Leviticus 16.22-- be set free in the wilderness. Numbers 1.1-- spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the Numbers 1.19-- he enrolled them in the wilderness of Sinai. Numbers 3.4-- before the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children. Eleazar and Ithamar Numbers 3.14-- spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying: Numbers 9.1-- spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they Numbers 9.5-- at twilight, † in the wilderness of Sinai. Just as the LORD had commanded Moses, so the Numbers 10.12-- out by stages from the wilderness of Sinai, and the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Numbers 10.31-- we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us. Numbers 12.16-- and camped in the wilderness of Paran. Numbers 13.3-- sent them from the wilderness of Paran, according to the command of the LORD, all of Numbers 13.21-- out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebo-hamath. Numbers 13.26-- the Israelites in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and Numbers 14.2-- we had died in this wilderness! Numbers 14.16-- slaughtered them in the wilderness.'

Numbers 14.22-- did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have tested me these ten times and have not Numbers 14.25-- and set out for the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea." † An Attempted Invasion is Numbers 14.29-- shall fall in this very wilderness; and of all your number, included in the census, from Numbers 14.32-- shall fall in this wilderness. Numbers 14.33-- be shepherds in the wilderness for forty years, and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until Numbers 14.35-- against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die. Numbers 15.32-- Israelites were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the sabbath day. Numbers 16.13-- honey to kill us in the wilderness, that you must also lord it over us? Numbers 20.1-- came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh. Miriam Numbers 20.4-- of the LORD into this wilderness for us and our livestock to die here? Numbers 21.5-- of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this Numbers 21.11-- at Iye-abarim, in the wilderness bordering Moab toward the sunrise. Numbers 21.13-- of the Arnon, in † the wilderness that extends from the boundary of the Amorites; for the Numbers 21.18-- the staff." From the wilderness to Mattanah, Numbers 21.23-- against Israel to the wilderness;

he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel. Numbers 24.1-- set his face toward the wilderness. Numbers 26.64-- the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai. Numbers 26.65-- "They shall die in the wilderness." Not one of them was left, except Caleb son of Numbers 27.3-- "Our father died in the wilderness; he was not among the company of those who gathered Numbers 27.14-- against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled with me. † Numbers 32.13-- made them wander in the wilderness for forty years, until all the generation that had done Numbers 32.15-- abandon them in the wilderness; and you will destroy all this people." Numbers 33.6-- is on the edge of the wilderness. Numbers 33.8-- the sea into the wilderness, went a three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham, and Numbers 33.11-- Sea † and camped in the wilderness of Sin. Numbers 33.12-- They set out from the wilderness of Sin and camped at Dophkah. Numbers 33.15-- and camped in the wilderness of Sinai. Numbers 33.16-- They set out from the wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth-hattaavah. Numbers 33.36-- and camped in the wilderness of Zin (that is, Kadesh). Numbers 34.3-- shall extend from the wilderness of Zin along the side of Edom. Your southern boundary Deuteronomy 1.1-- the Jordan—in the wilderness, on the plain opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Deuteronomy 1.19-- that great and terrible wilderness that you saw, on the way to the hill country of the Deuteronomy 1.31-- and in the wilderness, where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as Deuteronomy 1.40-- journey back into the wilderness, in the direction of the Red Sea." † Deuteronomy 2.1-- journeyed back into the wilderness, in the direction of the Red Sea, † as the LORD had Deuteronomy 2.7-- through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with Deuteronomy 2.8-- along the route of the wilderness of Moab, Deuteronomy 2.26-- messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth to King Sihon of Heshbon with the Deuteronomy 4.43-- Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland belonging to the Reubenites, Ramoth in Deuteronomy 8.2-- forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in Deuteronomy 8.15-- the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous † snakes and Deuteronomy 8.16-- and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble Deuteronomy 9.7-- God to wrath in the wilderness; you have been rebellious against the LORD from the Deuteronomy 9.28-- to let them die in the wilderness.' Deuteronomy 11.5-- he did to you in the wilderness, until you came to this place; Deuteronomy 11.24-- shall extend from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from the River, the river Deuteronomy 29.5-- you forty years in the wilderness. The clothes on your back have not worn out, and the Deuteronomy 32.10-- land, in a howling wilderness waste; he shielded him, cared for him, guarded him Deuteronomy 32.51--

Meribath-kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, by failing to maintain my holiness among Joshua 1.4-- From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land Joshua 5.4-- the journey through the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt. Joshua 5.5-- the journey through the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt had not been circumcised.

Joshua 5.6-- forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, the warriors who came out of Egypt, Joshua 8.15-- in the direction of the wilderness. Joshua 8.20-- people who fled to the wilderness turned back against the pursuers. Joshua 8.24-- of Ai in the open wilderness where they pursued them, and when all of them to the very last Joshua 12.8-- in the slopes, in the wilderness, and in the Negeb, the land of the Hittites, Amorites, Joshua 14.10-- journeying through the wilderness; and here I am today, eighty-five years old. Joshua 15.1-- of Edom, to the wilderness of Zin at the farthest south. Joshua 15.61-- In the wilderness, Beth-arabah, Middin, Secacah, Joshua 16.1-- of Jericho, into the wilderness, going up from Jericho into the hill country to Bethel; Joshua 18.12-- and it ends at the wilderness of Beth-aven. Joshua 20.8-- appointed Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland, from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Joshua 24.7-- you lived in the wilderness a long time. Judges 1.16-- city of palms into the wilderness of Judah, which lies in the Negeb near Arad. Then they went Judges 8.7-- on the thorns of the wilderness and on briars." Judges 8.16-- he took thorns of the wilderness and briars and with them he trampled † the people of Judges 11.16-- Israel went through the wilderness to the Red Sea † and came to Kadesh. Judges 11.18-- journeyed through the wilderness, went around the land of Edom and the land of Moab, Judges 11.22-- the Jabbok and from the wilderness to the Jordan. Judges 20.42-- in the direction of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them, and those who came out of Judges 20.45-- and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, five thousand of them were cut down Judges 20.47-- and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and remained at the rock of Rimmon

1 Samuel 4.8-- sort of plague in the wilderness.

1 Samuel 13.18-- of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

1 Samuel 17.28-- those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart;

1 Samuel 23.14-- the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul

1 Samuel 23.24-- and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon.

1 Samuel 23.25-- rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon. When Saul heard that, he pursued David into

1 Samuel 24.1-- told, "David is in the wilderness of En-gedi."

1 Samuel 25.1-- up and went down to the wilderness of Paran. David and the Wife of Nabal

1 Samuel 25.4-- David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep.

1 Samuel 25.14-- messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he shouted insults at them.

1 Samuel 25.21-- this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him;

1 Samuel 26.3-- David remained in the wilderness. When he learned that Saul came after him into the

2 Samuel 2.24-- Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon.

2 Samuel 15.23-- moved on toward the wilderness.

2 Samuel 15.28-- at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me."

2 Samuel 16.2-- drink who faint in the wilderness."

2 Samuel 17.16-- at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means cross over; otherwise the king and all the

2 Samuel 17.29-- and thirsty in the wilderness."

1 Kings 2.34-- his own house near the wilderness.

1 Kings 9.18-- Baalath, Tamar in the wilderness, within the land,

1 Kings 19.4-- day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He

1 Kings 19.15-- on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as

2 Kings 3.8-- "By the way of the wilderness of Edom."

1 Chronicles 12.8-- the stronghold in the wilderness mighty and experienced warriors, expert with shield

1 Chronicles 21.29-- Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time in

2 Chronicles 1.3-- LORD had made in the wilderness, was there.

2 Chronicles 8.4-- He built Tadmor in the wilderness and all the storage towns that he built in Hamath.

2 Chronicles 20.16-- the valley, before the wilderness of Jeruel.

2 Chronicles 20.20-- and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood

2 Chronicles 20.24-- the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; they were corpses

2 Chronicles 24.9-- laid on Israel in the wilderness.

2 Chronicles 26.10-- He built towers in the wilderness and hewed out many cisterns, for he had large herds, Nehemiah 9.19-- not forsake them in the wilderness; the pillar of cloud that led them in the way did not

Nehemiah 9.21-- sustained them in the wilderness so that they lacked nothing; their clothes did not wear Psalm 29.8-- of the LORD shakes the

wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. Psalm 55.7-- I would lodge in the wilderness; Selah Psalm 65.12-- 12 The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, Psalm 68.7-- you marched through the wilderness, Selah Psalm 74.14-- the creatures of the wilderness. Psalm 75.6-- west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up; Psalm 78.15-- split rocks open in the wilderness, and gave them drink abundantly as from the uninhabited wilderness, and pitched their tents in untrodden places.

Wisdom of Solomon 17.17-- who toiled in the wilderness, they were seized, and endured the inescapable Sirach 13.19-- Wild asses in the wilderness are the prey of lions; likewise the poor are feeding grounds for Sirach 43.21-- and burns up the wilderness, and withers the tender grass like fire. Sirach 45.18-- and envied him in the wilderness, Dathan and Abiram and their followers and the

1 Maccabees 2.29-- went down to the wilderness to live there,

1 Maccabees 2.31-- hiding places in the wilderness.

1 Maccabees 3.45-- was uninhabited like a wilderness; not one of her children went in or out. The

1 Maccabees 5.24-- days' journey into the wilderness.

1 Maccabees 5.28-- turned back by the wilderness road to Bozrah; and he took the town, and killed every

1 Maccabees 9.33-- and they fled into the wilderness of Tekoa and camped by the water of the pool of

1 Maccabees 9.62-- to Bethbasi in the wilderness; he rebuilt the parts of it that had been demolished, and

1 Maccabees 13.21-- to them by way of the wilderness and to send them food.

2 Maccabees 5.27-- others, got away to the wilderness, and kept himself and his companions alive in the

2 Esdras 1.17-- and thirsty in the wilderness, did you not cry out to me,

2 Esdras 1.18-- you led us into this wilderness to kill us? It would have been better for us to serve the

2 Esdras 1.22-- † When you were in the wilderness, at the bitter stream, thirsty and blaspheming my name,

2 Esdras 9.29-- to our ancestors in the wilderness when they came out from Egypt and when they came into Matthew 3.1-- Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, Matthew 3.3-- one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' "

Matthew 4.1-- by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Matthew 11.7-- did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? Matthew 24.26-- 'Look! He is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look! He is in the inner Mark 1.3-- one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' "

Mark 1.4-- appeared † in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Mark 1.12-- drove him out into the wilderness. Mark 1.13-- He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and Luke 1.80-- and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel. Luke 3.2-- son of Zechariah in the wilderness. Luke 3.4-- one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Luke 4.1-- by the Spirit in the wilderness,

Luke 7.24-- did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? Luke 15.4-- the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? John 1.23-- one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' " as the prophet Isaiah John 3.14-- up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, John 6.31-- ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' " John 6.49-- ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. John 11.54-- in the region near the wilderness; and he remained there with the disciples. Acts 7.30-- appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush. Acts 7.36-- the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years. Acts 7.38-- the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with Acts 7.42-- forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? Acts 7.44-- of testimony in the wilderness, as God † directed when he spoke to Moses, ordering him to Acts 8.26-- to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) Acts 13.18-- up with † them in the wilderness. Acts 21.38-- assassins out into the wilderness?"

1 Corinthians 10.5-- were struck down in the wilderness.

2 Corinthians 11.26-- the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and Hebrews 3.8-- day of testing in the wilderness, Hebrews 3.17-- bodies fell in the wilderness? Revelation 12.6-- the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there Revelation 12.14-- the serpent into the wilderness, to her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, Revelation 17.3-- in the spirit † into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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[Home](#)[Up](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Search](#)

### Temples of God

The first temple was built by Solomon, although it had been the ambition of David to build it himself (I Chronicles 22.7-8). This temple was located where now the Dome of the Rock stands. Solomon enlarged the temple mount, and it was enlarged still more by Herod. The *Oxford Companion* describes this first temple:

The general plan of the Temple was similar to that given for the tabernacle: rectangular, with a porch or vestibule (<math>\hat{u}l\hat{C}Em, m</math>, [1 Kings 6.3](#)) facing east, a nave (*hêkĒl*), and an inner sanctuary (*dŹbîr, bîr*, [1 Kings 6.5](#)) or holy of holies ([1 Kings 8.6](#)). The dimensions were double those of the tabernacle: 60 cubits by 20 (1 cubit = 0.5 m [19.7 in]), but triple its height (30 cubits). The building was of hewn stone, dressed at the quarry ([1 Kings 6.7](#)). The porch was 10 cubits deep ([1 Kings 6.3](#)) and 120 cubits high ([2 Chronicles 3.4](#))—a numeral that may have suffered textual corruption. Two columns, Jachin and Boaz, made of hollow bronze, 35 or 40 cubits high, stood at each side of the entrance ([2 Chronicles 3.15–17](#)). The inner walls of the *hêkĒl* were lined with cedar brought from Lebanon ([1 Kings 5.6–10](#); [1 Kings 6.15–16](#)), and the entire structure was lined with gold

([1 Kings 6.22](#)). The holy of holies was overlaid with "pure" gold ([1 Kings 6.20](#)). The skilled work was done by Tyrian artisans supplied by King Hiram ([1 Kings 5.1](#)) and under the supervision of a person also named Hiram ([1 Kings 7.13](#)) or Hiram-Abi ([2 Chronicles 2.13](#)).

The holiest place contained the ark of the covenant ([1 Kings 6.19](#)) and two winged figures (cherubim) of olive wood overlaid with gold ([1 Kings 6.23](#)) that stretched from wall to wall. Doors of olive wood, covered with gold, separated the holy of holies from the nave ([1 Kings 6.31](#)), and similar doors separated the nave from the porch ([1 Kings 6.33](#)). The nave contained the golden altar ([1 Kings 7.48](#), to distinguish it from the bronze altar in the courtyard) made of cedar ([1 Kings 6.20](#)) or the "altar of incense" ([1 Chronicles 28.18](#)), which stood before the holy of holies; the golden table for the bread of the Presence ("showbread"); the golden lampstands and other items ([1 Kings 7.48–50](#)).

The building was surrounded by two courts, the inner one constructed of three courses of stone and one of cedar beams ([1 Kings 6.36](#); also called the court of the priests, [2 Chronicles 4.9](#)), and the great court ([1 Kings 7.9](#)), which probably also enclosed the royal buildings. The size of the inner court is not given, but if it was double the size of the court of the tabernacle, it would have been 200 by 100 cubits. The inner court contained the bronze altar ([2 Chronicles 4.1](#)) where sacrifices were offered, the ten bronze basins on ten stands, five on each side of the house, and the great sea (the molten or bronze sea) on the southeast corner of the house. The bronze work was cast in the Jordan valley ([1 Kings 7.46](#)), the most impressive being the great sea, 10 cubits in diameter and 5 cubits high, with a capacity of 2,000 baths (approximately 40,000 liters [10,000 gal]). The water was used for supplying the lavers for washing the parts of the sacrificial victims and for the priests' ablutions ([2 Chronicles 4.6](#)).

...The First Temple, having been plundered several times, was finally destroyed by Nebuchadrezzar in 587/586 bce ([2 Kings 25.8–17](#); [Jeremiah 52.12–23](#)).

What needs to be remembered here is that the tabernacle as the abode for

God was a traveling structure, designed to be carried about by a migrant or unsettled people. By the time of the monarchy, a settled people seek a centralized temple and place of worship. Its location in Jerusalem is the result of David's moving the center of the nation of Israel to Jerusalem. The point of entry of the Divine into the earthly has moved from high places to a moving tabernacle to a stationary temple. In time, this symbolic entry is to become the human heart. In the interlude, we come to know other temples: Ezekiel's, Zerubbabel's, Herod's. Ezekiel's temple is a visionary and symbolic (40-48). Zerubbabel's temple is a rebuilding, the work beginning in 520 BCE and finishing under Darius, encouraged by Haggai and Zechariah. The second temple no longer contains the ark, the sacred fire, the shekinah, the holy spirit, or the Urim and Thummin according to the Talmud. According to Oxford notes, Herod used the standing second temple: What is to be noted here is that the ark containing the Word of God, the presence of God and Holy Spirit, and the symbols of entering into Divine Presence are missing. This would seem to suggest that the work of God is moving elsewhere already as early as the second temple.

Herod did not tear down the Second Temple—that would surely have instigated a revolt, as Herod recognized (Josephus, *Ant.* 15.11.387). He rebuilt and refurbished it by preparing materials for parts, using priests as carpenters and masons in the sacred areas, and doing the work by sections. The building was made new without ever destroying the old and without interrupting the sacred offerings and sacrifices. Begun in Herod's twentieth year (20 bce), it was finished in a year and a half (*Ant.* 15.11.420).

**Destruction of the Temple.** There is a full account of the capture of Jerusalem in *War* 5–6, according to which Titus commissioned Josephus to urge the Jews to surrender in order to spare the Temple, but to no avail. The Antonia was razed to the ground in August 70 ce, and the continual sacrifice ceased to be offered. Josephus made a second appeal. Titus then decided to destroy the Temple. This occurred on the tenth day of the fifth month (Ab; according to Jewish tradition, the ninth of Ab), the same day on which the First Temple had been burned by the king of Babylon. Josephus portrays the Romans as trying to extinguish the fire that had been started by the insurgents. Widespread plundering, murder, and finally the burning of all structures on the Temple mount ended the history of the Temple.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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Last modified: June 04, 2000

[Home](#)[Up](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)

Taken from *Exploring the New Testament World* by Albert A. Bell  
(Thomas Nelson Inc., 1998)

[Search](#)

### Sadducees

The Sadducees claimed their descent from David's high priest Zadok (2 Sam. 8.17; I Kings 2.35), or perhaps from the word meaning righteous. They were ultra-conservatives, recognizing only the authority of the Torah, refusing any notion not taught therein. They did not deny angels, which appear in the Torah, but they were cool to elaborate beliefs about angels and demons. Such beliefs flourished in the period after the Babylonian exile. They rejected belief in the resurrection because they saw no evidence of it in the Torah.

In Mark 12:18-27, the Sadducees question Jesus about the woman married to seven brothers; one could hear them snickering as they posed the problem; they probably regarded their question as reducing to absurdity the whole issue of resurrection. Jesus answers from the book of Moses, the only book they recognize, telling them the dead raised are like angels, who don't marry. In Acts 4. 1-3, 5.17, the Pharisees attack the apostles of Jesus for preaching "that in Jesus there is resurrection of the dead." Paul creates dissension between the Sadducees and Pharisees when he voices his belief in the hope of the resurrection (Acts 23.6-8).

The Sadducees had little contact with the ordinary people of Judea and no concern with popularity. They demonstrated a rather harsh spirit, being rude even among themselves. They had the support of the rich but no following among the masses. They were aristocratic, high-priestly people, concerned almost exclusively with running the temple. After the temple's destruction in 70 CE, the Sadducees disappeared from history, unable to adapt to the changed circumstances in which Judaism found itself.

Oxford Companion says the following about this failure to adapt:

In their development of an oral tradition of legal interpretation, the Pharisees and Sages were in one way doing no more than what had been done throughout Jewish history, that is, adapting their legal traditions to changing circumstance. Why should the Sadducees oppose this? Possibly because the written Law reinforced their control over the Temple; possibly too because the Pharisees were attempting to undermine that position by transferring some of the priestly rituals and practices away from Jerusalem to the towns and villages outside. Certainly the Sadducees were concerned principally to uphold the Temple and its sacrifices: for them it was the proper observance of Temple ritual that maintained the covenant relationship between Israel and God.

Rejection of belief in the resurrection again indicates a traditionalist stance. Jews had long believed that so long as Israel obeyed the Law then God would rule over them and reward the righteous and punish the wicked in this life. Belief in the resurrection, on the other hand, was linked to beliefs that the present age was in the grip of dark powers, so that in this life the righteous would suffer, although God would ultimately vindicate them. Those who had died would be raised so that they too could receive their due rewards ([Daniel 12.2](#)). To reject belief in the resurrection and, indeed, possibly also in demonic powers who controlled this world in the present age, was then also to reject the belief that this present age was radically corrupted; in fact, from the Sadducees' point of view, those who argued the contrary

view may have appeared to deny the continued existence of the covenant between God and Israel. This may also explain their denial of fate. They believed that Jews were free to influence their destiny; if they obeyed the Law and repented and made due restitution when they sinned, then all would be well. The darker views of the world associated with belief in the resurrection also entailed beliefs in the pervasiveness of the power of sin (see [Romans 5.12–21](#), which may owe more than a little to Paul's Pharisaic background, although such beliefs should not be thought of as specifically Pharisaic), such that men and women were no longer in control of their fate. It is such views that the Sadducees rejected.

This may suggest a further reason why the Sadducees disappeared after 70 ce. Not only was their position as the Temple aristocracy fundamentally destroyed; their belief that the maintenance of the Temple cult would suffice to stave off real disaster for Israel had also been proven false.



### Pharisees/Scribes

Most knowledge about the Pharisees has to be based on information gleaned from Christians and Sadducees, their opponents. They weren't priests, and the term rabbi was not commonly used; they were teachers and interpreters of the Torah, a scholar class devoted to the Written and the Unwritten Law. Even their name is debated: perhaps a corruption of Persian, an allusion to the theological doctrines--resurrection, angels and demons--which they were accused of picking up from the East. Another possible origin is Semitic, deriving the name from "heretic" or "separated ones." The term Pharisee was at first used in a derogatory way. Another possible origin of the name is from the word meaning "to specify" or to "be exact." They were concerned with the fine points of the law. The name is used only once in the Talmud, with the Pharisees otherwise being called "sages" or "scribes."

Scribes existed in Judaism probably since the time of Ezra. Ezra, it will

be recalled, led the people of Israel back to a strict observance of the Law after their return from the Babylonian exile in 538 BCE. Scribes were copyists of the Law and regarded themselves as preservers and protectors rather than interpreters. These scribes were known as soferim. By the late second century BCE, sofer had taken on the sense of one who "seeks out wisdom of all the ancients." By this time, sofer had also come to include interpretation: an intellectual, not a scribe; a scholar, not a copyist. The Greeks still translated the word as grammateus.

The Pharisees are in the New Testament, "those skilled in the law," and "teachers of the law." The Pharisees were considered the most authoritative in their explanations of the Law and were esteemed as a leading sect. Jesus said they "sit on Moses' seat" (Matthew 23.2-3), and he urged people to follow their teaching. Part of the negative reputation of the Pharisees may come from the Herodians; since the Pharisees opposed Herod bitterly, his followers are less than objective in reporting about them.

The Pharisees were liberals. They accepted the books of the prophets, as well as the Torah, as authoritative Scripture. Still, they were not ready to canonize the Writings. The Pharisees also stressed a continuing oral interpretation of the Scriptures as conditions changed or new insights were achieved. The body of oral law eventually became known as the Mishnah. The Pharisees welcomed new rituals, including the celebration of the Hanukkah, established in 164 BCE to commemorate the cleaning of the temple from defilement under King Antiochus IV Epiphanes; also, the Purim, the joyous re-enactment of the Jews' rescue by Esther. The practice of baptizing proselytes is pharisaic, as is much of the Jewish doctrine about angels, demons, the Messiah, and bodily resurrection.

Both the Sadducees and Pharisees developed out of the Maccabean period (160s BCE). The Pharisees seem to have come from a group known as the Hasidim or the "Pure Ones." The term is used, also, of a Jewish mystic group who refused to break the Law by fighting on the Sabbath. Not many survived the war; those remaining liberalized their beliefs somewhat.

The Pharisees themselves were divided in their own day. The Hillel group took a lenient view of the Law and conciliatory stance in most controversies, whether with Gentiles or Jews. Hillel formulated the negative golden rule: do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you. Gamaliel, who advised the Sanhedrine, posed the rule, consider carefully what you propose to do to these men; he was a follower

of Hillel, who was a minority at the time. Paul was a student of Gamaliel. The second group was led by Shammai, who advocated a stricter interpretation of the Mosaic Law in opposition to the Roman government; he was less tolerant of Gentiles. His party won control of the Sanhedrin during Jesus' lifetime. Only after 70 did the moderate views of Hillel become dominant. After 70 CE, the terms Pharisee and scribe drop out of common usage, to be replaced by "rabbi." After the destruction of the temple, all Jews became concerned with survival of the faith. The Pharisaic movement may be seen largely as an attempt to free Judaism from the domineering priesthood and the restrictions of the temple or as an attempt to provide an alternative mode of Judaism.

Oxford Companion says the following about the history of these people:

The Pharisees' origin lie in the period of the Maccabean revolt (166–159 bce), where we hear of the emergence of a group of Jews zealous for the Law, the Hasideans ([1 Maccabees 2.42](#)), who opposed the way in which the high priests were accommodating to the intrusion of Hellenistic ways into Judaism. This renewal movement spawned not only the Pharisees but also the Essenes. It is likely that the Pharisees saw the establishment of the Hasmonean monarchy (140 bce) as an opportunity for national renewal and the restoration of true observance of the Law. Certainly, unlike the Essenes, they remained in Jerusalem after the usurpation of the high priesthood by the Hasmoneans (152 bce). They probably shared the popular enthusiasm for the successful campaign for Jewish independence, recorded in [1 Maccabees 14.27–49](#), when a great synagogue of the Jews conferred the kingship and the high priesthood on Simon. Interestingly there is no sanction for such a synagogue, or assembly, in the Pentateuch, and this may have been justified by the oral tradition of the elders that the Pharisees cultivated. The Pharisees thus have their origins in a popular movement based on scribal traditions for interpreting the Law. They legitimated the Hasmonean monarchy by allowing it to control the Temple and subsequently sought to influence the monarchy both at court and in the Sanhedrin, the council in Jerusalem that was the continuation of the great synagogue. In this they were by no means always successful, falling foul of John Hyrcanus (134–104) and Alexander Jannaeus (103–76) but being restored to favor by Salome Alexandra (76–67). As their authority at the royal court diminished they sought to

influence the people through the local courts and synagogues where they enjoyed considerable success. They were not a uniform movement; over the years different schools of interpretation of the Law grew up around different teachers, notably Hillel and Shammai. After the First Jewish Revolt (66–70 ce) they emerged as the leaders, under Jonathan ben Zakkai, of the academy at Jamnia, which laid the foundation of rabbinic Judaism.



The Herodians This group was considerably political in its influence. They were a party favoring the restoration of one of Herod's descendents to the throne. Herod's sons were Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee during Jesus' lifetime, and Philip, ruling Ituraea and Trachonitis (east of Galilee). The Pharisees seemed to have initiated contact with the Herodians in an attempt to gain political allies in their campaign against Jesus. Herod Antipas was deeply concerned about Jesus due to his connection with John the Baptis, whom he beheaded (Mark 6.16). Luke is the only Gospel to relate that Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas during the deliberations over his fate.

Herod's grandson Agrippa I was made king of Judea in 41 by his friend, the emperor Claudius. Agrippa died in 44, and the province reverted to being governed by a Roman prefect. Agrippa II eventually ruled over northern territories, including Galilee, but Judea remained under direct Roman control.



### Essenes

The Essenes were devout individuals who lived in sequestered groups or towns. Their theology was heavily apocalyptic, and their lifestyle was self-disciplined and ascetic. John the Baptis had strong overtones of Essene thought in his preaching and appearance. Some also think that Jesus' forty days in the wilderness (Mark 1.12-13) might

have been spent at an Essene community or that he had been in previous contact with such a group and was accustomed to spending time alone in the desert.

Oxford Companions describes the Essenes as follows:

References to the Essenes occur in a number of ancient sources: in Josephus (*War* 2.8.119–61; *Ant.* 13.5.171–2; 15.10.371–9; 18.1.11, 18–22), Philo (*Quod omnis probus* 12–13 [75–91]; *Hypothetica*, in Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 11.1–18), and Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 5.15.73). What Josephus and Philo describe is a quite widespread group in Palestine living in communities in towns or villages and distinguished by their love for each other, their simplicity of life, and their strict adherence to the Law. Pliny by contrast describes a community living in the desert by the Dead Sea. Josephus also describes their strict examination of initiates, their ritual baths and meals, their strict observance of the Sabbath, their common ownership of property, and a number of other customs.

It is widely accepted that the Essenes referred to by these ancient authors were part of the same movement whose library and the ruins of whose buildings were discovered at Khirbet Qumran on the Dead Sea in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The name Essenes itself is obscure and does not occur in the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is said by Philo to refer to their holiness; another view suggests that the name reflects their reputation as healers.

The origins of the Essenes are not clear but probably lie in the group of Hasideans, who sought to renew the Law at the time of the

Maccabean revolt (166–59 bce; see [1 Maccabees 2.42](#)). It was not, however, until twenty years later, according to the Damascus Document (I.10–11), that they emerged as a separate group under the leadership of the Teacher of Righteousness. The occasion of this split within the movement was probably the usurpation of the high priesthood by the Maccabean king, Jonathan (152 bce). The buildings at Qumran date from this time. They were occupied, possibly with a short interruption after an earthquake in 31 bce, until their destruction in the First Jewish Revolt in 68 ce.

The Essene communities were tightly structured. Each group had a leader who controlled membership, administered the common goods and property, and ruled in matters of law (see CD 13–14; 1QS 6; the leader of the community is spoken of both as a priest and a guardian, but it is not always clear whether this refers to one or two persons). The community at Qumran had a council into which members were admitted only after long schooling in the ways of the community (1QS 6–9). Ultimate authority in the community lay with the priests (1QS 6.8). The community saw itself as administering the true understanding of the Law that had been entrusted by revelation to the Teacher of Righteousness (CD 3.13–15). Only the men of the community possessed such an understanding, and as such they, and only they, were the true men of the covenant of God and Israel. They were the "sons of light"; all others, including all other Jews, were "sons of darkness" (1QS 3.13–4.26).

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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Last modified: June 04, 2000

[Home](#)[Up](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Search](#)

The synagogue is a new form of communal institution according to the *Oxford Companion*. Whereas in the temple, sacrifice is the primary way to serve God, the synagogue uses prayer, study, and exhortation. The service is open (not restricted relative to inner and outer courts or with respect to Jew or Gentile) with all ceremonies in plain view. Their origins are far from clear:

Despite its importance in Jewish history, the origins of the synagogue and its early development are shrouded in mystery. Only during and after the first century ce does literary and archaeological evidence appear for Palestine. As for the Roman Diaspora, references before then are practically nonexistent (and what does exist refers to the Diaspora). Synagogue inscriptions from third- and second-century bce Egypt have been preserved, as have remains of a Delos synagogue building dating from the first century bce.

Owing to the paucity of sources, opinions have varied widely as to when, where, and why the synagogue developed. Theories have ranged from the late First Temple period (eighth-seventh century bce), through the exilic (sixth century) and postexilic (fifth century) eras, and down to the late Persian (fourth century) and Hellenistic times (third or second century). Most scholars have assumed a midway position, one that posits the emergence

of the synagogue closely following the destruction of the First Temple in 587/586 bce, either during the Babylonian exile or soon after, when the Jews returned to Judea during the era of restoration.

Concerning synagogue services, Torah-reading was crucial, spread with varying practice over the Jewish year:

While Torah reading was accepted as normative on Sabbaths and holidays and later on Mondays and Thursdays as well, the division into weekly portions varied considerably. In Palestine the Torah was read over a three- or three-and-a-half-year period with a plethora of local traditions on the precise divisions of the weekly portions (141, 154, 161, 167, and 175). Moreover, the practice in Babylonian communities living in late Roman and Byzantine Palestine only added to this diversity: They concluded the Torah reading in one year. How widespread the custom was of translating the Torah portion into the vernacular is unknown, but the use of Greek in addition to Aramaic cannot be denied.

A sermon, prayer, and blessings as integral, were also a part of the service, varying considerable in actual practice.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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**Last modified: June 05, 2000**

[Home](#)[Up](#)[Chapter 1](#)[Chapter 2](#)[Chapter 3](#)[Chapter 4](#)[Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#)[Chapter 8](#)[Chapter 9](#)[Chapter 10](#)[Chapter 11](#)[Chapter 13](#)[Chapter 14](#)[Chapter 15](#)[Chapter 16](#)[Chapter 12](#)[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)[Search](#)

### Visions of the Four Beasts

7 In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in bed. Then he wrote down the dream: † 2 I, † Daniel, saw in my vision by night the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea, 3 and four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. 4 The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then, as I watched, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a human being; and a human mind was given to it. 5 Another beast appeared, a second one, that looked like a bear. It was raised up on one side, had three tusks † in its mouth among its teeth and was told, "Arise, devour many bodies!" 6 After this, as I watched, another appeared, like a leopard. The beast had four wings of a bird on its back and four heads; and dominion was given to it. 7 After this I saw

in the visions by night a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that preceded it, and it had ten horns. 8 I was considering the horns, when another horn appeared, a little one coming up among them; to make room for it, three of the earlier horns were plucked up by the roots. There were eyes like human eyes in this horn, and a mouth speaking arrogantly.

### **Judgment before the Ancient One**

9 As I watched,

thrones were set in place,

and an Ancient One † took his throne,

his clothing was white as snow,

and the hair of his head like pure wool;

his throne was fiery flames,

and its wheels were burning fire.

10 A stream of fire issued

and flowed out from his presence.

A thousand thousands served him,

and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him.

The court sat in judgment,

and the books were opened.

11 I watched then because of the noise of the arrogant words that the horn was speaking. And as I watched, the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. 12 As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. 13 As I watched in the night visions,

I saw one like a human being †

coming with the clouds of heaven.

And he came to the Ancient One †

and was presented before him.

14 To him was given dominion

and glory and kingship,

that all peoples, nations, and languages

should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion

that shall not pass away,

and his kingship is one

that shall never be destroyed.

### **Daniel's Visions Interpreted**

15 As for me, Daniel, my spirit was troubled within me, † and the visions of my head terrified me. 16 I approached one of the attendants to ask him the truth concerning all this. So he said that he would disclose to me the interpretation of the matter: 17 "As for these four great

beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever—forever and ever."

19 Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped what was left with its feet; 20 and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and concerning the other horn, which came up and to make room for which three of them fell out—the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke arrogantly, and that seemed greater than the others. 21 As I looked, this horn made war with the holy ones and was prevailing over them, 22 until the Ancient One † came; then judgment was given for the holy ones of the Most High, and the time arrived when the holy ones gained possession of the kingdom.

23 This is what he said: "As for the fourth beast,

there shall be a fourth kingdom  
on earth

that shall be different from all  
the other kingdoms;

it shall devour the whole earth,

and trample it down, and break  
it to pieces.

24 As for the ten horns,

out of this kingdom ten kings  
shall arise,

and another shall arise after  
them.

This one shall be different from  
the former ones,

and shall put down three kings.

25 He shall speak words  
against the Most High,

shall wear out the holy ones of  
the Most High,

and shall attempt to change the  
sacred seasons and the law;

and they shall be given into his  
power

for a time, two times, † and half  
a time.

26 Then the court shall sit in  
judgment,

and his dominion shall be  
taken away,

to be consumed and totally  
destroyed.

27 The kingship and dominion

and the greatness of the  
kingdoms under the whole  
heaven

shall be given to the people of  
the holy ones of the Most High;

their kingdom shall be an  
everlasting kingdom,

and all dominions shall serve  
and obey them."

28 Here the account ends. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts  
greatly terrified me, and my face turned pale; but I kept the  
matter in my mind.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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Last modified: June 05, 2000

[Home](#)

[Up](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)

[Search](#)

### Proclamation against Babylon

**13** The oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw.

2 On a bare hill raise a signal,

cry aloud to them;

wave the hand for them to enter

the gates of the nobles.

3 I myself have commanded my consecrated ones,

have summoned my warriors,  
my proudly exulting ones,

to execute my anger.

4 Listen, a tumult on the  
mountains

as of a great multitude!

Listen, an uproar of kingdoms,

of nations gathering together!

The Lord of hosts is mustering

an army for battle.

5 They come from a distant  
land,

from the end of the heavens,

the Lord and the weapons of  
his indignation,

to destroy the whole earth.

6 Wail, for the day of the Lord is  
near;

it will come like destruction  
from the Almighty! †

7 Therefore all hands will be  
feeble,

and every human heart will  
melt,

8 and they will be dismayed.

Pangs and agony will seize  
them;

they will be in anguish like a  
woman in labor.

They will look aghast at one  
another;

their faces will be aflame.

9 See, the day of the Lord  
comes,

cruel, with wrath and fierce  
anger,

to make the earth a desolation,

and to destroy its sinners from  
it.

10 For the stars of the heavens  
and their constellations

will not give their light;

the sun will be dark at its rising,

and the moon will not shed its  
light.

11 I will punish the world for its  
evil,

and the wicked for their  
iniquity;

I will put an end to the pride of  
the arrogant,

and lay low the insolence of  
tyrants.

12 I will make mortals more rare  
than fine gold,

and humans than the gold of  
Ophir.

13 Therefore I will make the  
heavens tremble,

and the earth will be shaken  
out of its place,

at the wrath of the Lord of  
hosts

in the day of his fierce anger.

14 Like a hunted gazelle,

or like sheep with no one to  
gather them,

all will turn to their own people,

and all will flee to their own  
lands.

15 Whoever is found will be  
thrust through,

and whoever is caught will fall  
by the sword.

16 Their infants will be dashed  
to pieces

before their eyes;

their houses will be plundered,

and their wives ravished.

17 See, I am stirring up the

Medes against them,

who have no regard for silver

and do not delight in gold.

18 Their bows will slaughter the  
young men;

they will have no mercy on the  
fruit of the womb;

their eyes will not pity children.

19 And Babylon, the glory of  
kingdoms,

the splendor and pride of the  
Chaldeans,

will be like Sodom and  
Gomorrah

when God overthrew them.

20 It will never be inhabited

or lived in for all generations;

Arabs will not pitch their tents  
there,

shepherds will not make their  
flocks lie down there.

21 But wild animals will lie down  
there,

and its houses will be full of  
howling creatures;

there ostriches will live,

and there goat-demons will  
dance.

22 Hyenas will cry in its towers,

and jackals in the pleasant  
palaces;

its time is close at hand,

and its days will not be  
prolonged.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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**Last modified: April 25, 1999**

[Home](#)

[Up](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)

### Judgment on the Nations

[Search](#)

34 Draw near, O nations, to hear;

O peoples, give heed!

Let the earth hear, and all that fills it;

the world, and all that comes from it.

2 For the Lord is enraged against all the nations,

and furious against all their hoards;

he has doomed them, has given them over for slaughter.

3 Their slain shall be cast out,  
and the stench of their corpses  
shall rise;

the mountains shall flow with  
their blood.

4 All the host of heaven shall  
rot away,

and the skies roll up like a  
scroll.

All their host shall wither

like a leaf withering on a vine,

or fruit withering on a fig tree.

5 When my sword has drunk its  
fill in the heavens,

lo, it will descend upon Edom,

upon the people I have  
doomed to judgment.

6 The Lord has a sword; it is  
sated with blood,

it is gorged with fat,

with the blood of lambs and  
goats,

with the fat of the kidneys of  
rams.

For the Lord has a sacrifice in  
Bozrah,

a great slaughter in the land of

Edom.

7 Wild oxen shall fall with them,

and young steers with the  
mighty bulls.

Their land shall be soaked with  
blood,

and their soil made rich with  
fat.

8 For the Lord has a day of  
vengeance,

a year of vindication by Zion's  
cause. †

9 And the streams of Edom †  
shall be turned into pitch,

and her soil into sulfur;

her land shall become burning  
pitch.

10 Night and day it shall not be  
quenched;

its smoke shall go up forever.

From generation to generation  
it shall lie waste;

no one shall pass through it  
forever and ever.

11 But the hawk † and the  
hedgehog † shall possess it;

the owl † and the raven shall  
live in it.

He shall stretch the line of  
confusion over it,

and the plummet of chaos over  
† its nobles.

12 They shall name it No  
Kingdom There,

and all its princes shall be  
nothing.

13 Thorns shall grow over its  
strongholds,

nettles and thistles in its  
fortresses.

It shall be the haunt of jackals,

an abode for ostriches.

14 Wildcats shall meet with  
hyenas,

goat-demons shall call to each  
other;

there too Lilith shall repose,

and find a place to rest.

15 There shall the owl nest

and lay and hatch and brood in  
its shadow;

there too the buzzards shall  
gather,

each one with its mate.

16 Seek and read from the

book of the Lord:

Not one of these shall be  
missing;

none shall be without its mate.

For the mouth of the Lord has  
commanded,

and his spirit has gathered  
them.

17 He has cast the lot for them,

his hand has portioned it out to  
them with the line;

they shall possess it forever,

from generation to generation  
they shall live in it.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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[Home](#)

[Up](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Word Text](#)

## **The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament**

[Home](#)

[Search](#)

### **Lamentation over Pharaoh and Egypt**

**32** In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me: 2 Mortal, raise a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him:

You consider yourself a lion  
among the nations,

but you are like a dragon in the  
seas;

you thrash about in your  
streams,

trouble the water with your feet,

and foul your † streams.

3 Thus says the Lord God:

In an assembly of many  
peoples

I will throw my net over you;

and I † will haul you up in my  
dragnet.

4 I will throw you on the ground,

on the open field I will fling you,

and will cause all the birds of  
the air to settle on you,

and I will let the wild animals of  
the whole earth gorge  
themselves with you.

5 I will strew your flesh on the  
mountains,

and fill the valleys with your  
carcass. †

6 I will drench the land with  
your flowing blood

up to the mountains,

and the watercourses will be  
filled with you.

7 When I blot you out, I will  
cover the heavens,

and make their stars dark;

I will cover the sun with a  
cloud,

and the moon shall not give its  
light.

8 All the shining lights of the  
heavens

I will darken above you,

and put darkness on your land,

says the Lord God.

9 I will trouble the hearts of  
many peoples,

as I carry you captive † among  
the nations,

into countries you have not  
known.

10 I will make many peoples  
appalled at you;

their kings shall shudder  
because of you.

When I brandish my sword  
before them,

they shall tremble every  
moment

for their lives, each one of  
them,

on the day of your downfall.

11 For thus says the Lord God:

The sword of the king of  
Babylon shall come against  
you.

12 I will cause your hordes to  
fall

by the swords of mighty ones,

all of them most terrible among  
the nations.

They shall bring to ruin the  
pride of Egypt,

and all its hordes shall perish.

13 I will destroy all its livestock

from beside abundant waters;

and no human foot shall  
trouble them any more,

nor shall the hoofs of cattle  
trouble them.

14 Then I will make their waters  
clear,

and cause their streams to run  
like oil, says the Lord God.

15 When I make the land of  
Egypt desolate

and when the land is stripped  
of all that fills it,

when I strike down all who live  
in it,

then they shall know that I am

the Lord.

16 This is a lamentation; it shall be chanted.

The women of the nations shall chant it.

Over Egypt and all its hordes they shall chant it,

says the Lord God.

### Dirge over Egypt

17 In the twelfth year, in the first month, † on the fifteenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me:

18 Mortal, wail over the hordes of Egypt,

and send them down,

with Egypt † and the daughters of majestic nations,

to the world below,

with those who go down to the Pit.

19 "Whom do you surpass in beauty?

Go down! Be laid to rest with the uncircumcised!"

20 They shall fall among those who are killed by the sword. Egypt † has been handed over to the sword; carry away both it and its hordes. 21 The mighty chiefs shall speak of them, with their helpers, out of the midst of Sheol: "They have come down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, killed by the sword."

22 Assyria is there, and all its company, their graves all around it, all of them killed, fallen by the sword. 23 Their graves are set in the uttermost parts of the Pit. Its company is all around its grave, all of them killed, fallen by the sword, who spread terror in the land of the living.

24 Elam is there, and all its hordes around its grave; all of them killed, fallen by the sword, who went down uncircumcised into the world below, who spread terror in the land of the living. They bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit. 25 They have made Elam † a bed among the slain with all its hordes, their graves all around it, all of them uncircumcised, killed by the sword; for terror of them was spread in the land of the living, and they bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit; they are placed among the slain.

26 Meshech and Tubal are there, and all their multitude, their graves all around them, all of them uncircumcised, killed by the sword; for they spread terror in the land of the living. 27 And they do not lie with the fallen warriors of long ago † who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war, whose swords were laid under their heads, and whose shields † are upon their bones; for the terror of the warriors was in the land of the living. 28 So you shall be broken and lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are killed by the sword.

29 Edom is there, its kings and all its princes, who for all their might are laid with those who are killed by the sword; they lie with the uncircumcised, with those who go down to the Pit.

30 The princes of the north are there, all of them, and all the Sidonians, who have gone down in shame with the slain, for all the terror that they caused by their might; they lie uncircumcised with those who are killed by the sword, and bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit.

31 When Pharaoh sees them, he will be consoled for all his hordes—Pharaoh and all his army, killed by the sword, says the Lord God. 32 For he † spread terror in the land of the living; therefore he shall be laid to rest among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword—Pharaoh and all his multitude, says the Lord God.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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Last modified: April 25, 1999

[Home](#)

[Up](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)

[Search](#)

2 Blow the trumpet in Zion;

sound the alarm on my holy  
mountain!

Let all the inhabitants of the  
land tremble,

for the day of the Lord is  
coming, it is near—

2 a day of darkness and gloom,

a day of clouds and thick  
darkness!

Like blackness spread upon  
the mountains

a great and powerful army  
comes;

their like has never been from  
of old,

nor will be again after them

in ages to come.

**3** Fire devours in front of them,

and behind them a flame  
burns.

Before them the land is like the  
garden of Eden,

but after them a desolate  
wilderness,

and nothing escapes them.

**4 They have the appearance  
of horses,**

**and like war-horses they  
charge.**

**5 As with the rumbling of  
chariots,**

**they leap on the tops of the  
mountains,**

**like the crackling of a flame  
of fire**

**devouring the stubble,**

**like a powerful army**

**drawn up for battle.**

**6 Before them peoples are in**

anguish,

all faces grow pale. †

7 Like warriors they charge,

like soldiers they scale the  
wall.

Each keeps to its own  
course,

they do not swerve from †  
their paths.

8 They do not jostle one  
another,

each keeps to its own track;

they burst through the  
weapons

and are not halted.

9 They leap upon the city,

they run upon the walls;

they climb up into the  
houses,

they enter through the  
windows like a thief.

10 The earth quakes before  
them,

the heavens tremble.

The sun and the moon are  
darkened,

**and the stars withdraw their  
shining.**

**11 The Lord utters his voice**

**at the head of his army;**

**how vast is his host!**

**Numberless are those who  
obey his command.**

**Truly the day of the Lord is  
great;**

**terrible indeed—who can  
endure it?**

**12 Yet even now, says the  
Lord,**

**return to me with all your  
heart,**

**with fasting, with weeping,  
and with mourning;**

**13 rend your hearts and not  
your clothing.**

**Return to the Lord, your  
God,**

**for he is gracious and  
merciful,**

**slow to anger, and  
abounding in steadfast love,**

**and relents from punishing.**

**14 Who knows whether he  
will not turn and relent,**

**and leave a blessing behind  
him,**

**a grain offering and a drink  
offering**

**for the Lord, your God?**

**15 Blow the trumpet in Zion;**

**sanctify a fast;**

**call a solemn assembly;**

**16 gather the people.**

**Sanctify the congregation;**

**assemble the aged;**

**gather the children,**

**even infants at the breast.**

**Let the bridegroom leave his  
room,**

**and the bride her canopy.**

**17 Between the vestibule and  
the altar**

**let the priests, the ministers  
of the Lord, weep.**

**Let them say, "Spare your  
people, O Lord,**

**and do not make your  
heritage a mockery,**

**a byword among the nations.**

**Why should it be said among  
the peoples,**

**‘Where is their God?’ "**

### **God’s Response and Promise**

18 Then the Lord became  
jealous for his land,

and had pity on his people.

19 In response to his people  
the Lord said:

I am sending you

grain, wine, and oil,

and you will be satisfied;

and I will no more make you

a mockery among the nations.

20 I will remove the northern  
army far from you,

and drive it into a parched and  
desolate land,

its front into the eastern sea,

and its rear into the western  
sea;

its stench and foul smell will  
rise up.

Surely he has done great

things!

21 Do not fear, O soil;

be glad and rejoice,

for the Lord has done great things!

22 Do not fear, you animals of the field,

for the pastures of the wilderness are green;

the tree bears its fruit,

the fig tree and vine give their full yield.

23 O children of Zion, be glad

and rejoice in the Lord your God;

for he has given the early rain  
† for your vindication,

he has poured down for you abundant rain,

the early and the later rain, as before.

24 The threshing floors shall be full of grain,

the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

25 I will repay you for the years

that the swarming locust has

eaten,

the hopper, the destroyer, and  
the cutter,

my great army, which I sent  
against you.

26 You shall eat in plenty and  
be satisfied,

and praise the name of the  
Lord your God,

who has dealt wondrously with  
you.

And my people shall never  
again be put to shame.

27 You shall know that I am in  
the midst of Israel,

and that I, the Lord, am your  
God and there is no other.

And my people shall never  
again

be put to shame.

### **God's Spirit Poured Out**

28 †Then afterward

I will pour out my spirit on all  
flesh;

your sons and your daughters  
shall prophesy,

your old men shall dream  
dreams,

and your young men shall see  
visions.

29 Even on the male and  
female slaves,

in those days, I will pour out my  
spirit.

30 I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth,  
blood and fire and columns of smoke. 31 The sun shall be  
turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the  
great and terrible day of the Lord comes. 32 Then everyone  
who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for in  
Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who  
escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors  
shall be those whom the Lord calls.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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[Home](#)

[Up](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)

[Search](#)

### An Oracle concerning Egypt

19 An oracle concerning Egypt.

See, the Lord is riding on a  
swift cloud

and comes to Egypt;

the idols of Egypt will tremble  
at his presence,

and the heart of the Egyptians  
will melt within them.

2 I will stir up Egyptians against  
Egyptians,

and they will fight, one against  
the other,

neighbor against neighbor,

city against city, kingdom  
against kingdom;

3 the spirit of the Egyptians  
within them will be emptied out,

and I will confound their plans;

they will consult the idols and  
the spirits of the dead

and the ghosts and the familiar  
spirits;

4 I will deliver the Egyptians

into the hand of a hard master;

a fierce king will rule over  
them,

says the Sovereign, the Lord of  
hosts.

5 The waters of the Nile will be  
dried up,

and the river will be parched  
and dry;

6 its canals will become foul,

and the branches of Egypt's  
Nile will diminish and dry up,

reeds and rushes will rot away.

7 There will be bare places by  
the Nile,

on the brink of the Nile;

and all that is sown by the Nile  
will dry up,

be driven away, and be no  
more.

8 Those who fish will mourn;

all who cast hooks in the Nile  
will lament,

and those who spread nets on  
the water will languish.

9 The workers in flax will be in  
despair,

and the carders and those at  
the loom will grow pale.

10 Its weavers will be  
dismayed,

and all who work for wages will  
be grieved.

11 The princes of Zoan are  
utterly foolish;

the wise counselors of Pharaoh  
give stupid counsel.

How can you say to Pharaoh,

"I am one of the sages,

a descendant of ancient  
kings"?

12 Where now are your sages?

Let them tell you and make

known

what the Lord of hosts has  
planned against Egypt.

13 The princes of Zoan have  
become fools,

and the princes of Memphis  
are deluded;

those who are the  
cornerstones of its tribes

have led Egypt astray.

14 The Lord has poured into  
them †

a spirit of confusion;

and they have made Egypt  
stagger in all its doings

as a drunkard staggers around  
in vomit.

15 Neither head nor tail, palm  
branch or reed,

will be able to do anything for  
Egypt.

16 On that day the Egyptians will be like women, and tremble with fear before the hand that the Lord of hosts raises against them. 17 And the land of Judah will become a terror to the Egyptians; everyone to whom it is mentioned will fear because of the plan that the Lord of hosts is planning against them.

### **Egypt, Assyria, and Israel Blessed**

18 On that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to

the Lord of hosts. One of these will be called the City of the Sun.

19 On that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the center of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border. 20 It will be a sign and a witness to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt; when they cry to the Lord because of oppressors, he will send them a savior, and will defend and deliver them. 21 The Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians; and the Egyptians will know the Lord on that day, and will worship with sacrifice and burnt offering, and they will make vows to the Lord and perform them. 22 The Lord will strike Egypt, striking and healing; they will return to the Lord, and he will listen to their supplications and heal them.

23 On that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.

24 On that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, 25 whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage."

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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[Home](#)

[Up](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)

[Search](#)

# Chronological Tables of Rulers during New Testament Times

**(Oxford Companion)**

## ROMAN EMPERORS

27 b.c.–a.d. 14

Augustus

a.d. 14–37

Tiberius

a.d. 37–41

Caligula

a.d. 41–54

Claudius

a.d. 54–68

Nero

a.d. 68–69

Galba; Otho; Vitellius

a.d. 69–79

Vespasian

a.d. 79–81

Titus

a.d. 81–96

Domitian

27 b.c.–a.d. 14

Augustus

a.d. 14–37

Tiberius

a.d. 37–41

Caligula

a.d. 41–54

Claudius

a.d. 54–68

Nero

a.d. 68–69

Galba; Otho; Vitellius

a.d. 69–79

Vespasian

a.d. 79–81

Titus

a.d. 81–96

Domitian

## **HERODIAN RULERS**

37–4 b.c.

Herod the Great, king of the Jews

4 b.c.–a.d. 6

Archelaus, ethnarch of Judea

4 b.c.–a.d. 39

Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea

4 b.c.–a.d. 34

Philip, tetrarch of Ituraea, Trachonitis, etc.

a.d. 37–44

Herod Agrippa I, from 37 to 44 king over the former tetrarchy of Philip, and from 41 to 44 over Judea, Galilee, and Perera

a.d. 53–about 100

Herod Agrippa II, king over the former tetrarchy of Philip and Lysanias, and from 56 (or 61) over parts of Galilee and Perera

37–4 b.c.

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## **PROCURATORS OF JUDEA AFTER THE REIGN OF ARCHELAUS TO THE REIGN OF HEROD AGRIPPA I**

a.d. 6–8

Coponius

a.d. 9–12

M. Ambivius

a.d. 12–15

Annius Rufus

a.d. 15–26

Valerius Gratus

a.d. 26–36

Pontius Pilate

a.d. 37

Marullus

a.d. 37–41

Herennius Capito

a.d. 6–8

Coponius

a.d. 9–12

M. Ambivius

a.d. 12–15

Annius Rufus

a.d. 15–26

Valerius Gratus

a.d. 26–36

Pontius Pilate

a.d. 37

Marullus

a.d. 37–41

Herennius Capito

## **PROCURATORS OF PALESTINE FROM THE REIGN OF HEROD AGRIPPA I TO THE JEWISH REVOLT**

a.d. 44–about 46

Cuspius Fadus

a.d. about 46–48

Tiberius Alexander

a.d. 48–52

Ventidius Cumanus

a.d. 52–60

M. Antonius Felix

a.d. 60–62

Porcius Festus

a.d. 62–64

Clodius Albinus

a.d. 64–66

Gessius Florus

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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[Home](#)

[Up](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)

### Psalm 110

[Search](#)

#### Assurance of Victory for God's Priest-King

*Of David. A Psalm.*

1 The Lord says to my lord,

"Sit at my right hand

until I make your enemies your  
footstool."

2 The Lord sends out from Zion

your mighty scepter.

Rule in the midst of your foes.

3 Your people will offer  
themselves willingly

on the day you lead your forces

on the holy mountains. †

From the womb of the morning,

like dew, your youth † will  
come to you.

4 The Lord has sworn and will  
not change his mind,

"You are a priest forever  
according to the order of  
Melchizedek." †

5 The Lord is at your right  
hand;

he will shatter kings on the day  
of his wrath.

6 He will execute judgment  
among the nations,

filling them with corpses;

he will shatter heads

over the wide earth.

7 He will drink from the stream  
by the path;

therefore he will lift up his  
head.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ]

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[Home](#)
[Up](#)
[Chapter 1](#)
[Chapter 2](#)
[Chapter 3](#)
[Chapter 4](#)
[Chapter 5](#)
[Chapter 6](#)
[Chapter 7](#)
[Chapter 8](#)
[Chapter 9](#)
[Chapter 10](#)
[Chapter 11](#)
[Chapter 13](#)
[Chapter 14](#)
[Chapter 15](#)
[Chapter 16](#)
[Word Text](#)

### The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)
[Isaiah 5](#)
[Search](#)

Summary Chapter twelve continues the discussion of Jesus' authority, beginning with a parable of a rich landlord who had rented his vineyard to some farmers in agreement for a portion of the vineyard's produce. The landlord sends servants to claim the rent, but they are abused, some wounded, and some even killed. The landlord next sends his son to claim payment; the son, also, is killed. The landlord himself, now with government backing, will come authorized to take what is his. This leads directly into the discussion of paying Caesar's poll-tax. This is a political question, and it is followed by a theological question concerning the resurrection. Jesus grounds his answer in scripture; the next question about which commandment is greatest is genuine and raised by a teacher of the law. Jesus asks the next question, directing it to the teachers of the law, asking them concerning the messianic title Son of David. The last two episodes both discuss the sincerity of the act: the scribes are condemned for outward show while the widow is commended for giving everything she has.



To understand the parable of the vineyard in Mark twelve, one must first do some background reading. Isaiah's vineyard is interpreted clearly to talk about God's relationship to the nation of Israel. In this case, the vineyard has been planted and tended to by God so that nothing else could have been provided. The vineyard has not, however, yielded grapes so is to be destroyed. Isaiah then interprets the parable:

7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts

is the house of Israel,

and the people of Judah

are his pleasant planting;

he expected justice,

but saw bloodshed;

righteousness,

but heard a cry!

In this parable in Mark, too, the application is clearly to what is about to happen to Jerusalem in 70 CE when the temple is destroyed.

9 What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. 10 Have you not read this scripture:

‘The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

11 this was the Lord’s doing,

The Jews standing about realize now that this parable has been told against them; they would like to arrest Jesus, but they are afraid to do so because they suspect the crowd will turn against him. They simply leave.

One should probably recognize that this parable of the absent landlord is familiar to the people listening to Jesus. If it is recalled that the masses of people were poor and that land was owned by the wealthy but attended by the poor, one will recognize resentment directed against prevailing conditions in Galilee. Many estates in Galilee at this time were owned by foreign landlords and tended to by Galilean peasants.



Next, Jesus is badgered by Herodians who have joined the Pharisees and asked about paying the taxes due Caesar:

13 Then they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to trap him in what he said. 14 And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? 15 Should we pay them, or should we not?" But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it." 16 And they brought one. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." 17 Jesus said to them, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him.

Jesus recognizes that these loyal to Caesar and the Pharisees are merely attempting to test him. The provincial poll-tax being addressed has been paid by the Jews since CE 6 and is extremely unpopular; it reminds the Jews that they are a subject people. If Jesus denies the legitimacy of the tax, those who observe and report officially to the Caesar are likely to implicate him in rebellion to authority; on the other hand, his saying to pay the taxes would alienate him from the people. As long as Caesar is demanding money which bears his image, then a people who have acknowledged their subservience should pay the tax; however, Caesar, has not right to demand anything that belongs to God. Jesus has once again adroitly missed the trap, and the people are utterly amazed.



The conversation has now been directed to spiritual matters, and the priests and Sadducees now attempt to make belief in the resurrection look ridiculous; remembering that the Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection, one hears a smugness in their question:

18 Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him a question, saying, 19 "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that 'if a man's brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, the man † shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.' 20 There were seven brothers; the first married and, when he died, left no children; 21 and the second married her and died, leaving no children; and the third likewise; 22 none of the seven left children. Last of all

the woman herself died. 23 In the resurrection † whose wife will she be? For the seven had married her."

As has been the case before, though, Jesus points out that these outwardly pious people have missed the very implication of spirituality; Jesus provides scriptural authority for the belief and anchors it in its very different reality:

24 Jesus said to them, "Is not this the reason you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? 25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 26 And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the story about the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 He is God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong."

Jesus alludes to God's revelation of Himself to the living Moses:

4 When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

In this revelation, God reveals His relationship to men who are no longer alive: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. The relationship is present, implying God's continuing care for these individuals. The Jews have not yet begun to understanding that Jesus defines life spiritually: He is God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong." In this case, it is to be implied that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have been raised by the power of God into life. The power of God effects resurrection.



Another scribe, having been an observer of the earlier conversation, comes forward now and asks what the greatest commandment is. The Jews, of course, know the answer, the Shema of Deuteronomy, since they recite it daily:

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

Jesus goes well beyond the requirement and tells them what the second great

commandment is, linking his answer to Leviticus 19:18:

but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

His full answer, as recorded in Mark, bears quoting fully:

"The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Heart, soul, and strength are familiar to the Jewish audience; added here, however, is mind which reflects the hellenistic dichotomizing of body and mind but also emphasizes that loving God is a complete act. The scribe who has asked the question now summarizes what he has heard:

2 Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; 33 and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

Jesus has not addressed burnt offerings; this comes from the scribe; the reply of Jesus, however, confirms the truth of the scribe's observation: "You are not far from the kingdom of God."



Next, Jesus is again teaching in the temple; he addresses their messianic expectation:

35 While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? 36 David himself, by the Holy Spirit, declared,

‘The Lord said to my Lord,

"Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet."

,

37 David himself calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?" And the large crowd was listening to him with delight.

At issue here is the same one addressed earlier in the question of resurrection: the mistaking of flesh for spirit. The messianic expectation that has developed is that David's earthly kingdom will be established; Jesus has, from the beginning, addressed the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of man. He points out that the scripture has had David acknowledge the messiah as Lord, not son.



The last two episodes in this chapter of Mark address the issue of sincerity in act. The scribes are condemned for hypocrisy, and the widow is commended for genuine commitment. The scribes wear the traditional flowing robes marking their profession and the deference they expect others to show them. They, however, extort funds from those who are needy, and they engage in long and showy prayers. They carry out acts of injustice under the very guise of religion:

38 As he taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, 39 and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! 40 They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

The poor widow, on the other hand, gives everything she has, holding nothing back:

44 For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

That others have contributed out of abundance makes her contribution of all she has, meager in comparison, even more significant.

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Up](#) ] [ [Isaiah 5](#) ]

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[Home](#)

[Up](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Word Text](#)

## The Gospel of Mark: A Study Based on the Old Testament

[Home](#)

### The Song of the Unfruitful Vineyard

[Search](#)

5 Let me sing for my beloved

my love-song concerning his  
vineyard:

My beloved had a vineyard

on a very fertile hill.

2 He dug it and cleared it of  
stones,

and planted it with choice  
vines;

he built a watchtower in the  
midst of it,

and hewed out a wine vat in it;  
he expected it to yield grapes,  
but it yielded wild grapes.

3 And now, inhabitants of  
Jerusalem

and people of Judah,

judge between me

and my vineyard.

4 What more was there to do  
for my vineyard

that I have not done in it?

When I expected it to yield  
grapes,

why did it yield wild grapes?

5 And now I will tell you

what I will do to my vineyard.

I will remove its hedge,

and it shall be devoured;

I will break down its wall,

and it shall be trampled down.

6 I will make it a waste;

it shall not be pruned or hoed,

and it shall be overgrown with

briers and thorns;

I will also command the clouds

that they rain no rain upon it.

7 For the vineyard of the Lord  
of hosts

is the house of Israel,

and the people of Judah

are his pleasant planting;

he expected justice,

but saw bloodshed;

righteousness,

but heard a cry!

### **Social Injustice Denounced**

8 Ah, you who join house to  
house,

who add field to field,

until there is room for no one  
but you,

and you are left to live alone

in the midst of the land!

9 The Lord of hosts has sworn  
in my hearing:

Surely many houses shall be  
desolate,

large and beautiful houses,  
without inhabitant.

10 For ten acres of vineyard  
shall yield but one bath,

and a homer of seed shall yield  
a mere ephah. †

11 Ah, you who rise early in the  
morning

in pursuit of strong drink,

who linger in the evening

to be inflamed by wine,

12 whose feasts consist of lyre  
and harp,

tambourine and flute and wine,

but who do not regard the  
deeds of the Lord,

or see the work of his hands!

13 Therefore my people go into  
exile without knowledge;

their nobles are dying of  
hunger,

and their multitude is parched  
with thirst.

14 Therefore Sheol has  
enlarged its appetite

and opened its mouth beyond  
measure;

the nobility of Jerusalem † and  
her multitude go down,

her throng and all who exult in  
her.

15 People are bowed down,  
everyone is brought low,

and the eyes of the haughty  
are humbled.

16 But the Lord of hosts is  
exalted by justice,

and the Holy God shows  
himself holy by righteousness.

17 Then the lambs shall graze  
as in their pasture,

fatlings and kids † shall feed  
among the ruins.

18 Ah, you who drag iniquity  
along with cords of falsehood,

who drag sin along as with cart  
ropes,

19 who say, "Let him make  
haste,

let him speed his work

that we may see it;

let the plan of the Holy One of  
Israel hasten to fulfillment,

that we may know it!"

20 Ah, you who call evil good

and good evil,

who put darkness for light

and light for darkness,

who put bitter for sweet

and sweet for bitter!

21 Ah, you who are wise in your  
own eyes,

and shrewd in your own sight!

22 Ah, you who are heroes in  
drinking wine

and valiant at mixing drink,

23 who acquit the guilty for a  
bribe,

and deprive the innocent of  
their rights!

### **Foreign Invasion Predicted**

24 Therefore, as the tongue of  
fire devours the stubble,

and as dry grass sinks down in  
the flame,

so their root will become rotten,

and their blossom go up like  
dust;

for they have rejected the  
instruction of the Lord of hosts,

and have despised the word of  
the Holy One of Israel.

25 Therefore the anger of the  
Lord was kindled against his  
people,

and he stretched out his hand  
against them and struck them;

the mountains quaked,

and their corpses were like  
refuse

in the streets.

For all this his anger has not  
turned away,

and his hand is stretched out  
still.

26 He will raise a signal for a  
nation far away,

and whistle for a people at the  
ends of the earth;

Here they come, swiftly,  
speedily!

27 None of them is weary, none  
stumbles,

none slumbers or sleeps,

not a loincloth is loose,

not a sandal-thong broken;

28 their arrows are sharp,

all their bows bent,

their horses' hoofs seem like  
flint,

and their wheels like the  
whirlwind.

29 Their roaring is like a lion,

like young lions they roar;

they growl and seize their prey,

they carry it off, and no one  
can rescue.

30 They will roar over it on that  
day,

like the roaring of the sea.

And if one look to the land—

only darkness and distress;

and the light grows dark with  
clouds.

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