

The Gospel of Mark: A Chapter-by-Chapter Study

Introduction

The book of Mark never identifies the author directly, but early church sources dating back to 140 A.D. easily place John-Mark (see Acts chapters 12 and 15) as the author and the first to record the early events and teachings of Jesus. John-Mark is the son of a prominent Christian woman and cousin to Barnabas in the book of Acts. Mark is not an apostle, but the accounts that he recorded mostly came from the teachings of Peter. It is possible that Mark knew who Jesus was and even followed Him on occasion (see notes on Mark 14:51-52). Many theologians consider this book as “the Gospel of Peter as arranged by Mark.” However, it is likely that Mark used the teachings of the other apostles, as well, including Matthew. Many of the stories in Mark can also be found in the Gospel of Matthew. Mark records this gospel in a short story format. He appears to be writing down stories as they are told to him and arranging them as best he can. This makes the Gospel of Mark appear abrupt and even disjointed but an accurate account as told to him by eyewitnesses, nonetheless. It is believed that this account is mostly in chronological order but there is some debate and evidence to dispute that. Regardless, the recording of events in this gospel are considered an accurate account just as a reporter would retell stories from firsthand witnesses.

It is widely accepted that Mark had written this account in the early 50's A.D, but some date this gospel as late as 70 A.D. Most scholars agree that this was a letter to the Roman gentiles who were Christian converts. Mark explains many of the Jewish customs, which Jews would not need to have explained to them. Mark is noted for portraying Jesus as a servant. This would be in stark contrast to most religious leaders of the day and an easily relatable trait to the Christians in Rome, many of whom were slaves. This gospel also addresses persecution and martyrdom which would be an immediate concern to Roman Christians. Mark's gospel was quickly reproduced and distributed throughout the Christian church in Rome and beyond.

Chapter 1

V1-8

Mark opens the gospel with a brief introduction to the contents of the letter. A more modern translation of the first sentence would be, “The start of the good news of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.” Mark then gives some historical context about John the Baptist, quoting from the book of Isaiah. John would be the forerunner of Jesus, the coming Messiah. Quoting Isaiah is important here because of the phrase ‘Prepare the way of the Lord’ which implies that Jesus is God. Mark leaves no doubt about what he is proclaiming in this letter.

John the Baptist would be the first prophet to the Jews in over three hundred years. Mark sets the groundwork for the accounts of Jesus by listing Isaiah and John as references for proclaiming Jesus as God.

Mark gives an account of who John was and how he paved the way for the Christ. John baptized people with water. The term baptize means to overwhelm or immerse. In the Jewish culture, only Gentiles were fully immersed when they converted to Judaism. Most ceremonial baptisms consisted of the sprinkling of water. With John the Baptist, he didn't care if you were Jewish or Gentile. All needed to be baptized

to clean themselves before the Messiah. The Jews would see this as an insult as this would put them on the same level of 'holiness' as a Gentile.

John's message was well received, and he was a popular figure. The Jews, although not approving of his full-immersion baptisms for Jews or his wildlife appearance, welcomed the new Messiah and were anxious for His arrival. They were not expecting a Messiah like Jesus, though.

V9-13

Mark introduces the reader to Jesus at this point by recounting the baptism of Jesus by John. Jesus didn't require baptism as a cleansing of sin. Jesus was setting the example for His followers. It is interesting to note that Mark distinguishes Jesus not only by retelling the voice of God over Jesus being baptized but by giving Him a full description which the Jews would not appreciate: "Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized...in the Jordan." Nazareth was an unremarkable and even despised village, Galilee was considered the "unspiritual" region of the day, and the river Jordan was so unclean that the Jews did not permit any ritual cleansing in it. Even the name, Jesus, was a common and inconsequential name of the era. The contrast between the two portrayals would not be lost on the Jews. God spoke and showed great glory over a man with a common name from a common place in a filthy river.

The Holy Spirit compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness where He would be tempted by Satan. Mark is the only gospel to record the phrase "with the wild beasts" when describing Jesus' time in the wilderness. The Greek phrasing used here indicates that Jesus walked among the beasts peacefully. As the sinless creator, Jesus had no reason to fear His creation. Both the angels and the animals all served the Christ.

V14-15

Galilee was a large settlement north of Jerusalem. Both Jews and Gentiles lived in Galilee during this era, and it is estimated that over three million people inhabited the region. Galilee would be where Jesus did the bulk of His ministry. Mark makes it a point to define the primary message of Jesus here. Jesus performed countless miracles, but not without a purpose. He wanted to gain everyone's attention so that they would come to salvation.

V16-20

This passage describes the calling of the first four disciples. Simon (who would later be called Peter), Andrew, James, and John (the author of the gospel of John) all followed Jesus when He called them. This was not the first time they met (see the first four chapters of John), this is simply when they were called.

V21-28

The synagogue often had guest speakers or even open discussions about the Bible (the Old Testament, at this point) so Jesus would not have been out of place to teach here. What is remarkable is that He spoke as an educated priest, not someone simply repeating what they had heard or misinterpreting what they had been taught. For a carpenter to speak with this much intelligence and knowledge would be unheard of.

While in the synagogue, a demon possessed man approached Jesus and confronted Him. Even though the people didn't know who Jesus was, the spirits did!

Jesus drives the spirits out of the man, something which (probably) had been attempted before and met with failure. This would be the reason that Jesus gained popularity from this action. This wasn't a staged event with a person no one knew. This demon-possessed man was well known by the synagogue and the region.

V29-31

When Jesus enters the house of Simon-Peter, He meets Simon's mother-in-law. She is sick with what is known as a "burning fever." The common remedy for this ailment was to tie an iron knife to a thorn bush by a braid of hair (presumably from the afflicted person), and quote scripture from Exodus 3:2-5 for three consecutive days. Finally, a magical incantation was spoken, and the cure was supposedly achieved. Jesus bypassed all of that and simply relieved this woman of her illness.

It is also interesting to note that "she served them" once she was able. This may seem harsh by modern standards or even self-serving on the part of Jesus. But she did what we all should do as Christians. Jesus saved us. Our life belongs to Him. Serve Him.

V32-39

It should be noted here that sunset is when the Sabbath ended so people were free to travel and "do work" again. They immediately came to Simon-Peter's house to see The Healer.

After a long night of ministering and serving others, Jesus seeks solitude to be alone with The Father. This is another example for the followers of Jesus. It is important to be around others, especially fellow Christians, but it is also important to spend some quiet time with God.

Jesus then begins to travel throughout Galilee and visiting various towns throughout the region. He wants to spread His message quickly. Notice that in verse thirty-six the disciples let Jesus know that people are actively seeking Him. They are excited about His popularity.

V40-45

Leprosy was one of the worst diseases of the old world. Not only because the disease itself is horrific, but the superstitions and beliefs surrounding leprosy brought scorn for those that were afflicted by it. It is no wonder that this person sought out Jesus, the One who could heal and cast out demons. Jesus was one of the few that met lepers with compassion. Jesus even *touched* him, something unheard of since the disease was contagious.

Why would Jesus tell the leper to not reveal who healed him?

Jesus not only heals this man but tells him to perform the cleansing ritual (Leviticus 14:4-7) so that he may be recognized as clean by the temple and all Jews. Jesus also tells him to remain silent on how he was healed or who healed him. This command, however, is quickly ignored. Although not addressed here, it is most likely that this man was simply so excited to be healed that he wanted to give credit to the One that healed him. The word of this healing, though, prevented Jesus from openly entering the city due to the swarms of people that wanted to meet this Healer. Jesus must continue His ministry elsewhere.

Chapter 2

V1-12

Mark opens this chapter by describing the popularity of Jesus. So far in this gospel, Jesus has driven out demons from a man, healed Simon-Peter's mother-in-law, and healed a leper. Word of these events has people seeking out Jesus.

Jesus is preaching to the people when He is interrupted by a man being lowered through the roof. It is not clear what type of structure Jesus and His followers were in, but it is likely a dwelling with a thatched roof that had to be taken apart in order to create an opening.

Jesus had been avoiding the streets so that He could preach and not be mobbed by people seeking healing. He had come to spread the Good News, not heal. Healing was only a side-effect of His ministry. But Jesus looked up at four men lowering their friend from the roof and saw their faith. They didn't rush in and ask if He could do it. They didn't challenge Jesus. They didn't ask anything for themselves. They brought their friend to someone who could work miracles. This moved Jesus and He healed their friend.

The interesting aspect of this healing isn't simply the healing itself, but how Jesus offered it. Jesus forgives the sins of this paralyzed man. This may have startled the crowd, the friends, and even the man himself. This man was there to be made whole and walk. Yet Jesus offered salvation, a gift far beyond what this world has to offer, regardless of the ability to walk.

Mark does not address who the scribes were or why they were there. It's likely that they were scribes of the temple investigating this miracle worker. They knew that only God could forgive sin and correctly posed the question to Jesus. Jesus proclaims that He is God.

To emphasize His point, Jesus forgives the paralyzed man of his sin and heals his legs. The crowd, many of whom may have been familiar with the paralyzed man, were now asking themselves if this truly could be the Son of God.

V13-17

What compels Levi to follow Jesus?

What is remarkable about this story is that Jesus not only talked to a tax collector but *welcomed* him. Tax collectors were considered among the lowest forms of thieves in their day. They were scorned, shunned, and if they were caught alone, they could even be targets of assault. This simple, kind gesture intrigued Levi so he followed this Man and the crowds gathered around Him.

If Levi was to become a follower of Jesus, he would have to leave his tax collecting business. This was not a small sacrifice. Tax collectors held contracts with the Roman government. To give up that contract meant someone else could bid for it. Levi could not simply return to this job whenever he wanted.

Not only did Levi follow, but Jesus and His followers ended up at Levi's house. The pious members of the crowd quickly take offense to the followers gathering at the house of a tax collector. Here, Jesus responds with a well-known saying. "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." The first step to salvation is the admission of sin. It would be easier for those who knew they were sinners and, indeed, were reminded of it every day by their neighbors to be saved than those who believed they were already righteous.

V18-20

What does Jesus mean when He gives the example of a bridegroom and friends not fasting?

Jesus gives one of many examples of how a marriage is a reflection of a Christian relationship with God. In Jewish tradition, a wedding is a weeklong celebration, and the festivities even supersede any religious rituals that may fall during that week. Jesus uses this example to proclaim that He is the prophesied Messiah. His time here should be spent celebrating.

V21-22

What is meant by the examples that Jesus gives here?

When trying to mend garments or fabric, it is best to use fabric of the same age, maybe even the same wear. This will keep the garment intact. If a patch made of new fabric is used to mend an older garment, the new patch is likely to shrink and change over time rendering it useless as a patch.

With wineskins, a new skin, or bag, was used to hold the beverage during fermentation. Fermentation creates pressure and the skin expands and becomes brittle. Typically, a wine skin would be used only once. To reuse a wineskin was to risk the loss of the new wine.

What Jesus is trying to get across to the Jews here is that He is the New Covenant. The old ways of doing things are over. The new way is about to begin.

V23-28

The Jews are now trying to trap Jesus on adhering to the law. But Jesus is ahead of them. While picking grain on the Sabbath, a huge social faux-pax of the day, the Jews call Jesus out. Jesus is quick to remind them of the precedent set by King David in 1 Samuel 21. The human need is more important than the religious ritual. Even without this precedent, Jesus goes on to say that as God, the Sabbath belongs to Him.

Chapter 3

V1-6

Mark records the popularity of Jesus again albeit indirectly. Jesus enters the synagogue under the watchful eye of the Pharisees from the previous passage at the end of chapter two. Jesus had become so famous that even His critics wouldn't leave Him alone. Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath intentionally challenging the Pharisees to question His authority. The Pharisees were so caught up in trying to prove Jesus wrong that they couldn't see what He was doing right. Instead of rejoicing with a healed man, they plotted to kill Him. This is one of the few places that scripture records Jesus being angry.

Who are the Herodians in verse 6?

The Herodians were a politically motivated group that supported the rule of King Herod. Typically, the Pharisees and the Herodians were at odds with each other, but one of the few things they could agree on was that Jesus was a threat to their rule.

V7-12

It is believed that this passage recounts Jesus' sermon on the mount (Matthew 5-7), although it does not recount the sermon itself. Rather, this recounts the events surrounding the sermon on the mount. The large crowd following Jesus, believed to be in the ten-to-twenty-thousand range, were begging to see

Jesus perform more miracles in the hopes that He would save them from the tyrannical Roman rule under which they found themselves.

Why would Jesus not want the demons to identify Him to the crowds?

This is an often asked and difficult to answer question. Jesus didn't want the lame man to tell anyone who healed him because Jesus wanted to move about freely and preach to souls that needed salvation rather than be seen as a healer of our physical bodies. But here, the general consensus is that Jesus doesn't want evil to reveal Him because it might tarnish His reputation. An evil spirit proclaiming the Messiah might be taken as a lie or conspiracy.

V13-19

Here, Jesus names His twelve disciples. The names that are colorized are brothers of the same colorized name. James of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus' brotherhood is debatable.

- Simon-Peter
- James of Zebedee
- John of Zebedee (author of the Gospel of John)
- Andrew (brother of Simon-Peter)
- Philip
- Bartholomew Nathanael
- Matthew (the tax collector Levi from chapter 2)
- Thomas Didymus, Judas
- James of Alphaeus (It is the belief of some denominations that this is the author of the book of James, but that authorship is usually attributed to James the brother of Jesus)
- Thaddaeus of Alpheus, Judas, possibly Jude
- Simon
- Judas Iscariot

V20-30

The popularity of Jesus was such that He couldn't even sit down to eat without people demanding His attention. Jesus returns to His homeland and the crowds follow. The very people that Jesus knew and grew up with were in astonishment. They didn't know what all the fuss was about, but they knew they didn't want it here!

The scribes took advantage of the commotion of having Jesus' own family and friends question Him. They used this opportunity to pronounce Jesus as being possessed by Satan. The original Greek in verse 22 implies that either Beelzebub is using Jesus as an agent to channel Satan or that Satan himself has possessed this man, depending upon the translation of Beelzebub. Some scholars believe Beelzebub is a powerful demon, but most scholars believe this is a slang-term for Satan. This would be a unique claim as most so-called demon possessions were either just demons or a false claim of a demon. Jesus was so powerful and had performed so many miracles that the scribes admitted to Jesus' power being more than anything they had seen from a demon. Yet they couldn't believe this power to be from God.

This passage produces more popular quotes from Jesus as He proclaims that the very work He is doing proves that He is not Satan. Instead, he is more powerful than Satan, the Almighty God.

Jesus also warns His critics that they need to tread lightly. All sins can be forgiven except the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (see notes on Luke 12:10 and Leviticus 24:10-16). There are many commentaries concerning this passage on the unforgiveable sin, but a brief summary is this: most theologians think that this sin is an attitude of the heart, that no matter what happens or how many miracles one might see, if the heart is not willing to accept, then the heart is lost.

V31-35

It is unclear what Jesus' family wanted with Him at this point. It could have been any number of things, but they were certainly caught off guard by the sheer number of people that surrounded Jesus. Regardless, Jesus uses this as an example that all who believe in Him are family. There are some early manuscripts and translations that include Jesus' sisters in this passage.

Chapter 4

V1

What would be the benefit of Jesus preaching from the boat to those on the shore?

Aside from the obvious and often-touted answer of being able to separate Himself from the push of the crowds, the water added an acoustic advantage. He could be heard better without people standing so close to Him and the sound of His voice would be able to travel across the water clearly and loudly. Another side effect would be the use of nature as His temple rather than the building that now housed the pious religious leaders. As God, all His creation is His temple. The water would also serve as a magnificent backdrop for a stage. As the end of the chapter will demonstrate, teaching from a boat would also serve as a convenient exit.

V2-9

Mark presents the Parable of the Sower or Parable of the Soils here, the first of Jesus' parables in this gospel. This parable would be easily relatable to everyone in the crowd as most people were familiar with farming or gardening in some way.

What is a parable?

Most people believe a parable to be a relatable story. While this is true, there is another element that comprises a parable. A parable is also a riddle or mystery. The teller of the parable uses a story to convey a message. It is often the "key" to this message that is hidden. Once the listener or reader figures out the key, then they get the full impact of the story. In this parable, the key is that the farmer or sower is planting the Word of God, as Jesus will explain to His disciples later in the chapter.

V10-12

Why does Jesus speak in riddles if He's trying to explain the kingdom of God?

Jesus quotes from Isaiah 6:9 to explain to His disciples why He speaks in riddles. Telling someone a direct and harsh criticism, no matter how true, is easily rejected and not well received. A parable would pique the interest of someone enough to investigate the issue on their own and hopefully come to a truthful conclusion. Some commentators hold the viewpoint that rejecting a parable would receive less condemnation than rejecting an all-out truth, so Jesus is sparing those who choose not to listen a harsher sentence than if they turned away from bold truth.

V13-20

The reason this is the first parable presented is that Jesus indicates that this parable is the key to understanding all future parables. The disciples need to clearly understand how the Word of God is spread.

There are many facets to this parable other than understanding that the seed is the Word. First, if the Word is a seed, then it must be planted. Reading and studying a Bible is good but keeping that wisdom to oneself does no one else any good. The seed is meant to be spread. Second, there are four locations where the seed falls: the wayside, the stony ground, the thorny ground, and the good soil. Only one of these locations causes the plant to truly grow. Lastly, even amongst the good soil, the growth can vary. Some seeds will produce more than others.

V21-25

In this passage, Jesus tells His disciples how important it is for them to understand His parables. As true believers in the Messiah and, later, the resurrection of Jesus, they had a responsibility to tell others what they knew to be true. Those who know the truth are accountable for what they do with it.

What does Jesus mean when He tells the disciples to be careful of what they hear in verse 24?

As the founders of the Christian church post-resurrection, the disciples would be responsible for spreading truth. But to do so, they must *know* the truth. This is a warning for all believers to know what truth is and surround yourselves with those who speak truth. Surrounding yourself with the lies of the world will make you more vulnerable to succumbing to those beliefs, regardless of their lack of truth.

V26-29

Mark does not offer transitions between Jesus speaking to the crowds and Jesus speaking to just His disciples. It is possible that the remaining two parables of the chapter were just given to the disciples, but this is not certain.

This parable presents the work of the sower. He must find good soil and plant it. But he does not cause the seed to grow. As followers of Jesus, Christians are responsible for spreading the truth. It is not up to us to make the seeds grow.

V30-34

Here is the parable of the mustard seed. Jesus compares the church and true believers to a mustard seed. The common understanding of this parable is that something so very small can become large and even majestic. What is often overlooked is that the plant is large enough to harbor birds. Birds can be destructive creatures to plants. They will eat any seed that falls by the wayside. The larger the church becomes the more attention Satan will pay to it.

V35-41

Jesus and His disciples part ways with the crowd by way of the boat. Jesus falls asleep after a long day of teaching and a storm arises while He is asleep. The disciples, some of them experienced fishermen who've spent a good portion of their life on the water recognize that this storm is impressive and even deadly. They wake Jesus up in a panic. Jesus calmly, peacefully, removes the storm. This not only saved the boat He was on but also those boats that were near His, as it states in verse 36.

The rebuke of the disciples by Jesus here is interesting in that the storm didn't wake Jesus up. It was the lack of faith that woke Jesus up. Jesus knew the storm was not a threat to Him. But the storm scared His followers and they started to doubt. Jesus removed the storm not because He was afraid but because the disciples needed an example of God's power. The disciples followed Jesus because of His wisdom, compassion, and His miraculous healing powers. But they were just beginning to understand that Jesus is God.

Chapter 5

V1-13

What are the traits of demon possession?

Mark gives one of the most detailed descriptions of demon possession in the Bible.

- The man lived like an animal, in the wild and with little-to-no clothing.
- The man lived in a cemetery among the dead, wishing not to be among the living.
- The man had supernatural strength.
- The man appeared mad, tormented, and self-destructive.
- The man could not interact with others in a normal manner.

This passage provokes many more questions concerning demon possession. Why did the demons seek Jesus out? Why do demons inhabit human bodies? Why did the demons fear being driven out of this body?

There is an interesting ancient superstition surrounding how the demons address Jesus. The demons use a full title in verse 7, "Jesus, Son of the Most High God." It was believed by the ancient world and Jews, in particular, that calling someone by their full title gave you a spiritual foothold over that person. The demons weren't being respectful to Jesus. They were trying to overcome Him. Notice that then Jesus asked for a name, the demons gave Him no name, but simply replied that there are a lot of them. Jesus didn't adhere to the superstition of needing a name and won the battle anyway. Jesus didn't just defeat one demon. He defeated many. And without the demons revealing their names.

This would be another notch in Jesus' battle over the culture of the day.

The demons also ask Jesus not to torment them by forcing them to leave their host. Satan and his demonic army hate God and they hate His image. Since we as humans are made in His image, they do everything they can to torment us and even inhabit us as a way to defile the image of God. Not inhabiting a human would be seen as a defeat to these evil spirits.

The fact that the demons asked Jesus' permission to enter the pigs rather than simply leave the man they inhabited shows that they are aware who was going to win the battle. Jesus could have simply banished them into the abyss (Luke 8:31) but instead, He showed even the demons mercy, albeit with an ulterior motive, and let them inhabit swine to their own end. This showing of the destruction of roughly two thousand head of swine would allow those in observance of this activity what the true nature of demon possession was like. Many people sought out demon possessed people to make money off them. This display would reveal the true destructive nature of demons.

V14-20

There are two very different reactions to the exorcism in this passage. The community where the demon possessed man lived were used to having this nuisance around. But when they saw that someone had healed this man and made him sane and normal, they became afraid. So afraid that they asked Jesus to leave.

The demon possessed man, however, had a much more grateful reaction. He recognized the work that Jesus did and that he owed Jesus his life. He begged Jesus to let him follow. Instead, Jesus asked him to return to his family and friends and tell them what happened. Unlike the leprous man in Mark 1:40-45 who Jesus asked to tell no one what happened, Jesus wanted this man to freely spread the good news to the Greek cities of the Decapolis.

V21-34

Jairus, a synagogue leader, begs Jesus to heal his deathly ill daughter. Jairus wasn't a priest, but he was active in the temple administration and day-to-day operations. This man had great faith that Jesus could heal his daughter, but it is unclear why he thought Jesus needed to be present to do it. In Luke 7, a gentile Roman centurion trusted that Jesus could heal his servant without even being present. Regardless, Jesus encourages the faith of Jairus and follows him to his house.

While on the way to Jairus' house, a Jewish woman showed her own faith in Jesus. This woman had some form of disease that kept her menstrual cycle from regulating or even subsiding. She had been ceremonially and socially unclean for twelve years. She had become poor after spending her money on physicians. She was not allowed near the temple. She was likely shunned by everyone who knew her and knew that she had this disease. She was now desperate. Her faith in Jesus and the miracles He had performed shown through. She just needed to touch his garment. It is unclear as to what rationale led her to this belief. Maybe she intended to touch Jesus, but the clothes were all she could reach. It was obvious she had nothing to lose.

What does the phrase "power had gone out of Him" mean in verse 30?

Unfortunately, there is no exact translation or description of this phrase. This is also the only place in the Bible where this phrase is used. It is assumed by most scholars that Jesus recognized that someone had been healed by His power, but it is unclear in what way or if there is anything more to it than that. It is also assumed that Jesus knew exactly who it was and what had happened, but He wanted to not only heal this woman, but give her peace, as well. Healing is a wonderful thing. Healing with compassion is an example of love. Instead of accusing her of "stealing" a cure from a miracle worker, Jesus gave her His blessing.

V35-43

While the bleeding woman is being healed, a messenger arrives from the house of Jairus to let them know that the daughter has passed away. Jesus is not dissuaded by this. He continues to Jairus's house and brings Peter, James, and John with Him. This is the first example of Jesus addressing His "inner circle." These three were often privy to more than the other disciples.

Why would the mourners ridicule Jesus in verse 40?

The obvious answer is that they simply didn't believe Jesus knew what He was doing. But there is a cultural context that must be understood about this passage. In those days, it was common for a

household to hire “professional mourners” who would weep and wail loudly to “set the tone” for visitors and let those around know that a death had occurred. These professionals, no doubt, had seen death many times. They scoffed at Jesus because He couldn’t possibly know more about death than they did. This also explains why He drove them out. Jesus wasn’t shoving family members out of the room. He was getting rid of those who had no interest in what was happening.

Instead of telling the mourners that He had raised the girl, Jesus told the family to keep this event quiet. He didn’t need anyone to proclaim this publicly. It would become evident soon enough.

It is often pointed out that there are many comparisons between the healing of the bleeding woman and the raising from the dead of Jairus’ daughter.

- The daughter was twelve years old, which is how long the woman had been afflicted.
- Jairus was an important man in the synagogue, while the woman was unknown and nameless.
- Jairus probably had a good income from his duties at the synagogue. The woman was poor and had spent all her money on physicians.
- Jairus came to Jesus publicly while the woman was trying to be discreet.
- Jairus’ daughter was healed discreetly while the woman was healed publicly.

Chapter 6

V1-6

What does the phrase, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country...” mean in verse 4?

Jesus was known in Nazareth as a carpenter, the son of Mary. Although there was nothing wrong with being a carpenter, there was nothing particularly glamorous about it, either. And being known as “the son of Mary” was not a compliment. The only time a man was referred to as the son of his mother was to imply an insult as this indicated that the father was unknown. The stigma of Mary’s pregnancy prior to her marriage followed her and Jesus all the days of their lives.

When Jesus returned to Nazareth as a rabbi with disciples and a large gathering hanging on His every word this caused quite the social stir. How could an illegitimate carpenter garner such attention? Just as everyone grows up to become a different person than they were as a child, Jesus left His hometown and returned as The Christ. Only His hometown still saw Him as the young wood worker that belonged to Mary.

As such, the disbelief of His fellow countrymen left Him with little choice but to leave them as He found them. One commentator put it this way: God may work with no belief, but not with unbelief. There must be at least faith, hope, or both for the relationship between man and God to begin.

V7-13

There are several aspects to this passage that are often overlooked. First, Jesus sends out His disciples while He is still in ministry Himself. Jesus didn’t keep the twelve with Him at all times. He wanted them to grow on their own and learn to have faith. It should be noted that even Judas the betrayer was sent out and included among those that performed healings.

Another aspect is that Jesus sent them out with nothing but their staffs. It was a common rule among Jewish rabbis that you could not enter the temple with staff, shoes, or even money because it might

imply that you have business other than that of dealing with God. Jesus sent His disciples out with just their staff and sandals as they were to journey to show God to the world. Their staff and footwear became a part of their dealings with God.

One of the most interesting aspects of this passage is that Jesus states that any location that does not receive the news of the disciples will be dealt with more harshly than Sodom and Gomorrah. Many scholars take this to mean that there will be different levels of severity in the day of judgment, but that is up for hardy debate.

Finally, Mark refers here to anointing the sick with oil. James 5 is the only other reference to this practice. It is unclear as to whether this was used as a symbol of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, much like baptism is a symbol of Jesus' cleansing our sin, or if this was meant to be used as a medicinal practice of its day. Regardless, the disciples healed those who were sick.

V14-16

This is an example of Mark telling a single story out of chronological order. Mark makes reference to John the Baptist being beheaded but discusses this event in greater detail immediately after this passage rather than before.

Mark uses the title King Herod here which would likely be used in a sarcastic tone. Herod repeatedly begged Cesar Augustus for the title "king" but was denied every time. Finally, Herod requested the title one too many times and Augustus labeled him a traitor to the empire.

Both Malachi 4:5 and Deuteronomy 18:15 mention a prophet coming before the Messiah. John the Baptist was that prophet, but Herod mistakenly thought that John had been somehow reincarnated as Jesus.

V17-29

This passage recounts how Herod came to order the execution of John the Baptist. Herod respected John the Baptist, but John had rebuked Herod for marrying his brother's wife. Herod had John imprisoned for that rebuke.

Herodias' daughter, supposedly Herod's niece, danced before Herod and the court. This would have been unusual as it was uncommon for woman of stature to dance in this manner. Dancing before the court was usually done by professional women and consisted of seductive movements and little clothing. Herod's niece had so aroused him that he offered her whatever she desired in return for what he desired. It is speculated that Herod had sexual relations with his niece in exchange for the death of John.

It is also interesting that this idea was neither Herod's nor the nieces. Herodias is the one who wanted John dead, possibly for John putting doubt in Herod's mind about her rise in stature from Herod's brothers' wife to Herod's wife.

V30-44

After the work the disciples had done in the surrounding area, Jesus called them to rest and relax. Since they were now performing some of the same healing miracles that Jesus was doing, the crowds were following them, too. The disciples got a glimpse of what popularity and fame were like. This is why Jesus called them to rest.

Jesus saw the crowds that gathered around He and His disciples and could not resist the urge to serve them. Jesus took this opportunity to begin teaching again. He teaches for so long that He carries over into the dinner hour. The disciples want to eat, too, and want to break for supper but Jesus has another idea. It is interesting to note that Jesus has the disciples organize the crowd into groups. The Greek word used here usually describes rows of plants in a garden. Jesus took this crowd of five-thousand men, about fifteen- to twenty-thousand people in total and arranged them in groups that would make it easy to distribute food among them.

It is unclear how exactly Jesus performed this miracle and what the disciples and crowds were witnessing. Whether Jesus was continuously tearing away bread and fish from the food He held in His hands or whether the food reproduced in the baskets that were being used to distribute the food is left up to the imagination of the reader. It is possible that the disciples didn't know how to describe it. What is clear is that no one went hungry that day.

V45-52

After the meal, Jesus returns to time alone with His Father. The disciples leave by boat in order to get away from the crowds, as well. The disciples are rowing the boat across the Sea of Galilee, but the wind is blowing against them. The fourth watch indicates that it is roughly 3am and the disciples had still not crossed to the other side.

It is interesting to note that Mark, Matthew, and John all record this event of Jesus walking on the water, but Matthew is the only one to record that Peter walks on the water with Jesus. Matthew recounts that Peter desires to do as Jesus and Jesus invites him out of the boat. Peter walks on water at first but then begins to sink and Jesus pulls him up and leads him to the boat. Since Peter is the primary source for the Gospel of Mark, it is unclear why this account is left out. Some scholars speculate that Peter either wished to remain humble by not mentioning how he walked on the water or was too embarrassed to mention how his lack of faith caused him to sink.

The Gospel of John (see notes on John 6:21) records that Jesus miraculously and instantaneously moved the boat to the shore so the disciples would no longer have to row. Mark does not mention that here.

V53-56

Mark concludes this chapter by again reiterating how famous Jesus had become. The miracles He had performed were known across the entire region.

Chapter 7

V1-13

What is wrong with the Jewish tradition of washing hands, pots, and pans in this passage?

There is a context that one should be aware of here that is not found in the Bible. Long before the time of Mark's gospel, the priests had incorporated a ceremonial cleansing into the everyday culture of the Jews. One was to wash one's hands *and then* perform a ritual cleansing ceremony before eating a meal. This expanded upon the commands in Exodus (30:18 and 40:12) for priests, but somehow became a common tradition. This was one of the many examples of the Jewish "oral law" which was a priestly interpretation of the Mosaic law. Many Pharisees held the oral law in a higher regard than the Mosaic law. The Talmud, or the book of Jewish traditions records much of the oral law, and it is even a Jewish

tradition to find more offense at contradicting the Talmud than it is to contradict the scripture itself. This is the standard to which the Jews were holding Jesus. The Pharisees weren't judging Jesus by the commands of the Bible. They were judging Him by *man-made* traditions.

Jesus responds to the Pharisees by quoting prophecy from Isaiah. Isaiah warned of the Legalism that was abounding even in his day. The Jews were creating such a legalistic doctrine that it began to exclude anyone who didn't follow every letter of the man-made law. This caused piety among the Jewish leaders and gave them a superiority complex. It is no wonder that Jesus looked so harshly at the self-absorbed acts of such men.

Jesus closes this passage by providing an example of how the oral law is not the will of God and harms others. If someone's parents were in need of money and asked their son for help, the son could claim his money was tied up in Corban or devoted to the purpose of God. This would not only keep his money from going to his parents but make him look ultra-religious, as well.

V14-23

This passage is a direct continuation of the previous passage and can be misunderstood if taken out of context. Jesus is not saying that we can't take anything bad into ourselves or that we can't feed our minds bad thoughts or images. What Jesus is saying is directly related to the previous passage. There is no food that can defile us. This is a precursor to Acts 10:15 where Peter has the vision of all animals being clean before God and acceptable for human consumption. Although this passage may seem tame by modern standards, this would be one of the most controversial things Jesus would say to the crowd of His time.

Here, Jesus separates the ritual consumption of "clean" animals from how man acts. Just because one abstains from eating unclean animals does not make him a righteous man. Jesus lists these thirteen examples of how not just the everyday man behaved but even the Jewish leaders and Pharisees behaved despite their adhering to the traditional law.

V24-30

Although much of Jesus' ministry was spent teaching the Jewish people, He also went to the surrounding regions of the Gentiles. It is unclear here whose house Jesus was staying at, whether this person was a Jew or Gentile, but it is believed that this would be a Gentile house since no self-respecting Jew would live among such heathens. If this is true, then this would also be an alarm for the Pharisees since they would see this as an affront to their Jewish traditions.

This chapter is often discussed as being the "flipping of the switch" of not just the unclean foods of the old covenant to the new, but also of the inclusion of the Gentiles (unclean) to the "chosen people" (clean) for the new covenant.

Although Jesus was trying to be discreet, His popularity would not allow Him to remain hidden. A Gentile woman found Him and begged Him to heal her demon-possessed daughter. What Jesus said to her is often looked at as controversial, but there are linguistic nuances that must be examined to understand what He is doing. First, Jesus is declaring that His ministry is to the chosen people, the Jews. The Greek word "dog" was commonly used to describe Gentiles. Notice Jesus uses the phrase "little dogs." This phrase would soften the word from the derogatory form to an almost affectionate tone. Jesus was reminding this woman that she wasn't following God, but that she was still welcome.

This woman remains humble before Jesus. She recognizes the power that Jesus has. Whether she knows Jesus from His reputation or has seen Him in action is unclear. But she has faith, nonetheless. She is used to the piety of the Jews, but she sees a difference in this Teacher. Jesus is quick to reward that faith. This is a great example to modern day Christian Americans. We have everything we need in the wealthiest country on the planet. Why would we need God? And why would we need to be humble? It is a good reminder for American Christians to be more like this woman and less like the Pharisees.

V31-37

The healing of the deaf man comes in a drastically different form than the healing of the demon-possessed girl in the previous passage. The demon-possessed girl was healed with just a few words and from a distance. The deaf man had Jesus sticking His fingers in his ears and using Jesus' saliva on his tongue!

Why did Jesus sigh?

Jesus also did something else which has caused much debate over the centuries. He sighed. Jesus grew weary. Not of healing or teaching, but of the sin that had so corrupted the world. None of the healings that Jesus had performed would be necessary if it wasn't for the sin that disfigured humanity.

Chapter 8

V1-10

In this passage, Jesus feeds a multitude of His followers. As a passage later in this chapter will mention, this is not the first time Jesus has done this. The Feeding of the Five Thousand was the first time Jesus fed many with so little food. That food was provided by a little boy. Here, the disciples give up their own food and watch Jesus turn it into a feast. There was so much food that the leftovers filled seven baskets.

It is often noted by scholars that the disciples didn't produce the fish until after Jesus had started to multiply the bread. There is much debate and inferred about the faith (or lack thereof) of the disciples from this statement.

V11-13

What were the Pharisees seeking from Jesus?

The Pharisees were still following Jesus to evaluate Him and see what He would do next. They had already witnessed many miracles and had just watched Him feed a multitude of people with only a handful of food. Yet they still doubted Him. Most scholars believe the Pharisees were looking for some sort of fire from the sky, as noted in 1 Kings 18:38 that Elijah called down. They wanted further proof that Jesus was from God.

Instead, Jesus rebukes them. And Mark records for the second time that Jesus sighs. Jesus is weary of not just the sin in the world, but the lack of faith on the part of His own creation. Jesus didn't do miracles to convince non-believers. Jesus did miracles to show mercy.

V14-21

What does Jesus mean when he warns the disciples, "...beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod?"

From early in the Old Testament, sin has been compared to leaven in the sense that a little goes a long way. One small sin can ruin an entire nation. The pride of the Pharisees would spread amongst the Jews despite Jesus, the Son of God walking amongst them. It is also believed that Jesus said this knowing that His own disciples were about to show a lack of faith.

Jesus confronts the twelve when they relate His metaphor to food instead of sin. Jesus has to remind the disciples that there is a higher purpose for them. They need not worry about their life in this world when sin is overcome.

V22-26

This is the only record of a miracle that Jesus performed that happened gradually. And it further adds more variety to how Jesus performed miracles.

It is interesting to note that Jesus takes the blind man from the town and tells him not to return once his sight is restored. It does not say if that was a permanent command or even why Jesus said it. There is much speculation about this with no real answer.

V27-33

This is an interesting passage concerning the dynamic between Jesus and His disciples, particularly Peter. Jesus clearly describes the plan of death and resurrection to them here. And Peter is praised in one instance and admonished in the next.

It is believed that this conversation is the same conversation found in Matthew 16:17-23, although Matthew gives more detail to what was said. Mark does not mention what Peter said to Jesus to earn such scorn, but Matthew records that Peter told Jesus that He should not be killed. Jesus reminded Peter that he was thinking as a man and not with the kingdom of God in mind.

V34-38

There is an odd break in the chapter here. Most biblical scholars include the first verse of chapter 9 in this conversation. It is unclear why this chapter stops short of including the last line. When reading this section, Mark 9:1 should be included as the finishing point.

Jesus continues the conversation with His disciples by telling them that all of them need to focus on the Kingdom of God. Jesus used Peter as an illustration of what not to focus on. And Jesus holds nothing back. His message to the disciples is clear and powerful. Jesus uses the two phrases “deny himself” and “take up his cross” synonymously. Taking up a cross meant certain death. It was a condemnation. It was knowing that you could not save yourself. Jesus was (and still is today) asking His followers to forget the ways of this world and live for Him. This would not only be a commitment, but complete submission of oneself to God. Jesus emphasizes and reiterates as plainly as He can to the disciples that this world means nothing.

What does Jesus mean when He says that there are some here who will see the kingdom of God before they die (Mark 9:1)?

Most scholars believe that this refers to the three disciples who witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus. Peter, James, and John saw Moses and Elijah standing with Jesus, as recorded in Luke 9, Matthew 17, and the next section in Mark 9.

Chapter 9

V1

Chapter 9 begins with the conclusion to the previous conversation at the end of chapter 8. Verse 2 comes six days after this conversation.

V2-13

This passage contains the Transfiguration. Three of the four gospels tell of Jesus being clothed in bright white light with Moses and Elijah standing with Him. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John to witness this event. Surprisingly, the gospel of John is the only one not to mention this occurrence despite the author being present for this event. Just as complete blackness means the absence of light, white means the existence of light. The white of Jesus shone so brightly as if every spectrum of light focused solely on the Creator of the Universe.

There is an interesting use of linguistics in the English translation here that should be mentioned. The words 'transfigure' and 'masquerade' are opposites in that they both indicate a change but 'transfigure' means the change came from the inside. 'Masquerade' means the change is only on the outside. The word 'transfigure' used here is meant to convey that the brightness of Jesus came from *inside* Him. This is similar to Moses not being able to look directly upon God because His glory would be too bright for Moses to endure (Exodus 33:18-23).

This passage is also a source of some debate about the afterlife. *How did the disciples know that the figures with Jesus were Moses and Elijah?* Most scholars believe that in the afterlife, the followers of Jesus will all know and recognize each other. Whether this passage is the source of that belief, or an example of that belief is unclear.

Why are the figures of Moses and Elijah important?

Moses is considered the founder of the law of the Old Testament. Elijah usually represents the prophets of the Old Testament. Together, these two would represent the overall summary of the Old Testament. The Transfiguration is another method of converting from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant under Jesus.

What was Peter trying to do by offering to build three tabernacles?

Peter's intentions may have been good, but he missed the point of what he was seeing. He didn't fully understand who Jesus really was. As a Jew, Peter would have been in awe of Moses and Elijah. Seeing Jesus with these two might have elevated Jesus to the level of Moses and Elijah in Peter's eyes. What Peter didn't realize was that Moses and Elijah weren't there to join Jesus. They were there to see the covenant fulfilled and be with God.

What is the significance of the cloud appearing?

Most Christians will recognize this cloud as a symbol of God appearing from the heavens. This would be the same cloud that led the Jews out of Egypt and into the desert in Exodus, the same cloud that appeared to the high priest in the Holy Place of the tabernacle in Leviticus, the same cloud that appeared in the newly created temple of Solomon in 1 Kings, and various other appearances including to Ezekiel and even to Mary when she was told she was going to be the mother of Jesus.

When God the Father spoke from His cloud, Peter, James, and John would have all been in awe of their Teacher. This would have overshadowed the appearance of Moses and Elijah. This would be an emotional roller coaster of a day for these disciples!

What do the disciples mean when they ask about Elijah coming first?

There is a prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6 that tells of Elijah coming before the Messiah. What the disciples missed was that this prophecy is concerning judgement day, not the coming of the New Covenant. Both Elijah and Moses are often connected to the two witnesses in Revelation 11:2-13, another reason for them to appear with Jesus during the transfiguration.

V14-29

In this passage, Jesus, Peter, James, and John return from the mountain to find some chaos. There is a demon possessed boy with his desperate father, scribes arguing with the rest of the disciples, and a crowd gathering to watch what transpires.

Why would the disciples and even the scribes find this kind of demon hard to exorcise?

It is an ancient Jewish belief that to exorcise a demon, the name of the demon must be known. If this demon was mute, then no name could be given. Jesus alludes to this in verse 29 but does not say it directly.

What were the scribes not doing?

The disciples could not remove this demon and were at a loss as to what to do. Instead of helping the boy themselves, the scribes simply taunted the disciples and, by proxy, Jesus for not being able to do this. There was no doubt that they could also not perform this exorcism, but they chose to mock those who tried to help and failed rather than try to help themselves.

What does this passage tell us about demons?

In Mark 3:14-15 and 6:7, Jesus gives the disciples authority over demons. Yet, this one did not obey. Jesus also says that this kind of demon can only be removed with prayer (some translations include fasting in this remedy). Both of these indicate that there are different types of demons and probably even demons of varying strengths and abilities. This passage is just a small glimpse into the veiled spirit world.

The father in this account makes an interesting and even highly regarded plea to Jesus: "Help my unbelief." This is a common prayer among Christians, new and old, modern and ancient alike. It only takes a little bit of faith to realize how much faith we are lacking.

V30-37

This passage describes conversations that take place on their way to Jerusalem. Jesus reminds the disciples of His true mission and even reiterates that He will be killed and rise again. This is so far out of the realm of possibility that the disciples think He is speaking in parables again and become confused. Instead, they argue over which of them is the best disciple! Mark does not go into detail of the conversation, but it is likely that it contained arguments over which of them was Jesus' favorite, which of them performed more miracles, which of them was the better speaker to the crowds, and so on. Jesus lets them argue but then confronts them while they are in Capernaum. Jesus patiently and calmly

sits the disciples down and speaks to them as a Rabbi to His students. Jesus tells them the whole point of the law from Exodus and Leviticus and even the Ten Commandments. Love God, Love others. Don't be selfish. Love one another in such a way as to put them first. True greatness is achieved through sacrificial servitude.

V38-42

John tells Jesus that they reprimanded someone for exorcising demons in Jesus' name. One can almost picture John being proud of this fact. Yet the disciples were unsuccessful in their own attempts at exorcism just a little while ago. Instead, Jesus has to remind the disciples again that this "movement" is for everyone. This is not an exclusive club or a religion of the "chosen people." If anyone believes, they are welcome. In fact, Jesus offers a stern rebuke for those that try and keep others away.

V43-50

Jesus speaks to the disciples of not just their reward in Heaven, but of their sacrifice made in this life. This life is nothing compared to eternity! One must do whatever it takes to shed the burden of sin and spend eternity with God in a place of peace, happiness, and love.

It should be noted in this passage that Jesus is not speaking about self-mutilation in order to be righteous. Sin is a matter of the heart. No manner of self-harming will remedy that. Jesus is using metaphors here to make it clear to the disciples of the lengths they must go to be rid of sin.

The closing of this chapter has Jesus telling His disciples that they will be "seasoned" with fire and salt. Just as every sacrifice to God must be seasoned with salt (Leviticus 2:13) in order for the giver to become clean, so shall the disciples have trials and tribulations that will see them come closer to God.

Chapter 10

V1-12

This same passage with only a little more detail added can be found in Matthew 19:1-12. Matthew offers slightly more clarification of the subject matter, which neither passage covers in full detail.

Upon Jesus' return to Judea, the Pharisees greet Him with the intent to confront and test Him. The subject of divorce was controversial in this era with two different viewpoints from two popular Rabbis. The debate centered around the definition of "unclean" found in Deuteronomy 24:1. One school of thought believed the definition of "unclean" to mean only sexual immorality. The other believed the definition to be vague and far more lenient, even going so far as to include the stipulation that if a prettier woman could be found then his wife was unclean. The Pharisees intended to trap Jesus into a human argument to prove that He was no better than they were.

Instead, Jesus points to one of the key misconceptions of this debate. The Jews believed that God *commanded* them to divorce their wife if they found her unclean. Jesus tells them that Moses permitted divorce, but God hates divorce. Instead of focusing on divorce, the Jews should be focused on saving their marriage. Permitting divorce due to the "hardness of the heart" simply meant that both parties were too stubborn to love and forgive each other. A Godly heart would never seek out divorce, just as Jesus does not seek to condemn the sinners of the world.

Mark completes this recording with Jesus telling the disciples the same answer. Divorce is a sin with the one exception of sexual immorality (see Matthew 19:9). Even in that case, one member of the marriage had to sin.

The Greek word used here for sexual immorality is “porneia” which is where the word pornography stems from. It is a vague term that covers a wide range of sexual impurities.

V13-16

Why would people bring their children to Jesus?

Children were little more than property in that age much like women. A child would only become of value once they reached the age of adulthood and even then, only if they were male. The Greek word for brought is “prosphero” which is the same word used for when pagans offered infant sacrifices to their idols. Here, the word is not as menacing as it can also be used in a sense of dedication. The parents were bringing their children to Jesus because they wanted their offspring to be like or even follow Jesus, maybe even to be blessed by Jesus. Just like adults must raise, correct, and teach their children, so God does to His children. We are but small, unlearned beings in God’s eyes.

V17-22

This passage is the story of the rich man who asked Jesus what it takes to get into Heaven. The rich man has good intentions and even uses the title “Good Teacher” which was not used by anyone in those days as it implied that the teacher was pure and sinless. The rich man realized that there was something more to Jesus than just being a man. Jesus recognizes the title and asks the man to reflect on it and make sure he truly believes what he is saying. This title would be reserved for God alone, so the man is declaring Jesus as God. What Jesus is trying to do is get the man to realize that if Jesus really is God, then why not do what God says. The man believed he had kept the law (according to the Jewish interpretations, anyway) but Jesus challenged him even further. If this man truly believed that Jesus was God, then he should give up what he has and follow Jesus, just as the disciples did. The man did not. He was not truly following God. He was following money and probably status.

V23-27

Jesus gives a warning to the disciples about riches. The power of money and all that it brings with it is a massive stumbling block to anyone. If we have everything that we need, why would we need God? This is more applicable in the modern age even than it was back when Jesus said it. As Americans, we are among the richest people in the world with modern technological conveniences at our disposal. Why would the powerful, wealthy nation of America need to put God first.

Why does Jesus use the comparison of a camel going through the eye of a needle?

Jesus does not use this illustration to say that it is impossible for a rich person to get into Heaven. He is using this humorous example as a way to indicate the seriousness of the stumbling block of wealth. It is something to always be on guard against.

It should also be noted that there have been many modern attempts to translate this passage to a more understandable metaphor. Some translations take the term “eye of a needle” and turn it into a postern gate where guards would enter and exit the city walls watch gate. Some even take the word camel (kamelon) and change it to cable (kamilon). The original translation is clearly the hump-backed animal

and the knitting needle of the day. To say it was something else is missing the point that Jesus was trying to make.

V28-31

Jesus gives further clarification to the disciples upon Peter's remark saying that they had done what Jesus asked of the rich man. The disciples didn't have as much wealth as the rich man, but they did give up what they had. Jesus gives the disciples assurances that their place in Heaven is filled with wealth beyond imagination. It is hard for us humans to comprehend that kind of wealth because the only reference we have is the wealth of the world. We strive to accumulate that wealth and it takes our eyes off serving others. Rarely does the world equate servitude with wealth. But this is how the kingdom of Heaven works.

V32-34

Jesus makes it a point to bluntly tell the disciples what is coming. He clearly states it more than once and reiterates His coming crucifixion again here. The disciples were both afraid of what lay ahead and amazed that Jesus not only boldly stated it but went forth to it. The natural human instinct is survival. Jesus predicted His death and went ahead anyway.

V35-45

This is another example of the misunderstanding of the disciples. They had heard Jesus teach and had witnessed many miracles. They had even performed miracles themselves once Jesus had given them authority! But they still thought in terms of an earthly kingdom. James and John, both brothers, wanted Jesus to make them high-ranking officials in what they thought was the earthly kingdom that Jesus had come to stand up. By doing so, not only did James and John show their ignorance in what Jesus had been saying, but also their arrogance in that they were still arguing over who amongst the disciples was the greatest!

Jesus tells them to be careful what they wish for in so many words. Jesus knew His fate would involve torture, humiliation, and suffering. James and John, unbeknownst to them at the time, would also live lives of pain. James is the first of the apostles to be martyred. John would not be executed but would spend a good portion of his life in prison or exile. John is said to have survived an execution attempt by being dunked in a vat of boiling oil.

Once again, Jesus has to steer the disciples to servitude instead of earthly power and wealth.

V46-52

Bartimaeus is a great example of Christian faith in his plea to Jesus. He is persistent despite people telling him to be quiet. He is simplistic in his plea. He is respectful in that he calls Jesus "Rabboni" which not just means teacher, but master. He is humble in that he is asking for mercy rather than feeling entitled. And he is faithful in that he trusts that Jesus can heal him. Bartimaeus also shows commitment. Jesus healed him and told him to go on his way. Bartimaeus followed Jesus. He made Jesus his "way."

Chapter 11

V1-11

This passage is the "beginning of the end" of this gospel. Here is what is known as Jesus' Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem. This is the height of Jesus' popularity. The entire region knows who Jesus is and

has heard of His many miracles if they haven't seen them for themselves. This date is the beginning of the Jewish Passover feast and Jerusalem is crowded. Jews from across the region are present to witness Jesus' arrival into the Holy City.

It should be noted that this is the first time Mark records Jesus going to Jerusalem. However, the Gospel of John cites Jesus in Jerusalem throughout His three-year ministry. Mark notes this occurrence specifically because it is the arrival prior to Jesus' crucifixion.

Why would Jesus select a colt?

There are many "symbols" that could be derived from actions in that culture. For instance, riding on a horse would symbolize a warrior riding in to battle since that was the primary use of horses during this time. Riding on a colt was a symbol of a peacemaker coming to settle a dispute. Jesus could have simply walked into Jerusalem like the common man. But Jesus wasn't entering Jerusalem as a common man this time. Jesus entered with business at hand.

There is another interesting phrase tied to the colt. The disciples were told to find a colt on which no one had sat. This typically means that the colt had not been broken in. Jesus was riding in on an untamed colt. But Jesus did not care. Just as He walked amongst the wild beasts in the desert for forty days (Mark 1:9-13) Jesus did not fear His creation.

There is some speculation on how Jesus obtained the colt from its owner. Most scholars believe that Jesus had prearranged this borrowing of the animal and it is simply not recorded in the Bible. Some believe that this may have just been the owners recognizing the status of Jesus and His disciples and were more than willing to help when the need arose.

The crowds praised the name of Jesus on this day! Clothes and palm branches lined the streets as a type of "red carpet" parade. Clothes were an expensive commodity in this era, so this was no small gesture. Palm branches represented the uprising of the Jewish nation from captivity and the palm tree could even been found on currency of the day. The people welcomed their Messiah. But they welcomed Him thinking He would lead the revolt against Rome. Jesus had much bigger plans: a revolt against death.

V12-14

Why does Jesus curse the fig tree?

Jesus used the tree as an example to the disciples. Fig trees are known for producing leaves and fruit at the same time. A bare fig tree meant that it was in hibernation or even dead. A fig tree with leaves meant that fruit was ripening on the branch. In this case, the tree had leaves but no fruit.

This tree was a metaphor for people claiming to be Christian, but not sharing their Christianity with others. Our purpose as Christians is to love others and show them the way to eternal life. If we don't do this, then we are not truly Christians. This example is similar to the parable Jesus told in Mark 2:3-8 about spreading the seed to sow God's Word.

V15-19

John 2:13-22 records what is believed to be the first time Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple. Here, Jesus does it for the last time. In John, they asked Jesus who He was that He would do this. Here, they ask Jesus by what authority He does this. They already knew who He was and even who He claimed to be.

During Passover, the temple charged an annual “temple tax” that amounted to roughly two days of pay. The issue was that this tax had to be paid in the temple currency, not the Roman currency. The temple had money changers on hand to convert the Roman currency into temple currency but there was an exorbitant charge to do so. Passover also required sacrifices of animals without blemish. The priests would determine if an animal was suitable for sacrifice or not. If the priest determined that an animal was not suitable, which happened more often than not, then a suitable animal could be purchased from vendors in the temple courtyard at a rate much higher than the typical cost of such an animal. These are the money changers that Jesus drove out of His Father’s house. This, unsurprisingly, left the temple priests and vendors furious.

V20-26

Jesus shows His disciples the example of the fruitless fig tree. Overnight, the fig tree withered and died even though it had leaves on it the previous day. Just as a so-called Christian might get away with faking it for a little while, it doesn’t take long for his roots to be exposed. Jesus also tells the disciples to have faith in God that not only will those who are faking it be exposed, but that they can do anything if they truly trust and believe in God. This passage often gets misused as stating that God will give you riches if you ask for riches. This is not the case. If you seek and follow God, then your heart desires what God’s heart desires. Asking God to fulfill these Godly desires is the prayer that God will answer. This is made clear by the closing of this passage where Jesus states that you must do God’s will in order for God to fulfill your will. This includes loving and forgiving those around you.

V27-33

It is believed that the original intention of Jesus was to teach in the temple as He had done so many times before. This time, the temple authorities met Him and questioned Him. What they were not expecting was Jesus to confront them, as well. Jesus posed a question to their question offering to respond to them upon their answer. Jesus’ question put them in an awkward position. Answering one way exposed them as hypocrites and answering the other way would turn the people against them. They had been backed into a corner.

Chapter 12

V1-12

This chapter picks up immediately following chapter 11 while Jesus is preaching in the temple. This should be noted since the parable that Jesus uses here would speak directly to the Jews.

This parable is set in a tenant farming situation which was common during this era. Unfortunately, the dispute that Jesus talks about was also common. The title to the land was not always certain and forgery was rampant. If the land went undisputed for more than three years, those who were using the land were said to own it. The vineyard represents Israel from Isaiah 5:1-7. The vinedressers represent the rulers of Israel. The messengers were the prophets of the Old Testament and could even include John the Baptist.

One aspect of this parable that is unclear is why the vinedressers would assume that killing the son of the landowner would cause the owner to simply give up. This speaks to the foolishness of the Jewish leadership not looking at the fulfilled prophecies and ignoring the teachings and miracles of Jesus. In the parable, the son is the final messenger. There will be no others after Jesus. Jesus is the only way.

This parable was obvious to the Jewish people surrounding Jesus and to the Jewish leadership that wished to do Him harm. Jesus even quotes from Psalm 118 to reiterate that He is the Messenger from God that is being rejected by the Jewish rulers. But just like at the close of chapter eleven, Jesus is surrounded by His followers and the rulers dare not do anything to Jesus for fear of turning the crowds against them.

V13-17

Instead of physically harming Jesus, the Pharisees and the Herodians sought to discredit Jesus by asking Him difficult questions. But the Creator will not be outdone by His creation in a battle of wits. In this passage, they hope to catch Him in a trap. Jesus will either side with the Romans and turn the public against Him or He will side with the people and commit treason against Rome. Instead, Jesus states one of the most memorable quotes in scripture. We are all citizens of this world and if we use the currency of the government, then we must pay taxes on it. But, as children of the Most-High God, we have a dual citizenship. We need to honor God, even before we pay the earthly government. However, we should do both.

V18-27

Mark does not make mention of the Sadducees often in his gospel. This passage is a rare viewpoint of who they are and what they believe from Mark. The Sadducees were an aristocratic and conservative group of Jews who were worldly-minded. They did not believe in spirits, angels, or the afterlife. Mark records their feeble attempt at stumping Jesus with an almost non-sensical question in order to justify their beliefs. Jesus explains to them that their understanding of eternal life or the afterlife should not be compared to life as they know it in this realm.

Jesus even uses scripture to prove them wrong. They came to Jesus publicly and they were humiliated publicly. There is some confusion surrounding this passage, but the original Hebrew uses past and present tense differently than English. Jesus quotes from Exodus 3 that God *is* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God did not say that He *was* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Hebrew language states that God *continues to be* the God of the Jewish patriarchy.

V28-34

Here is another rare exchange found in Mark. Jesus is asked a question, He answers it, and the person asking the question *agrees* with Jesus. This passage has its roots in Leviticus 19:18 and is often cited as the “whole” of the message of God’s Word.

Jesus is impressed with the reply from the asker. Finally, someone understands what Jesus is saying! All of the rituals, all of the law-following, and all of the hypothetical questions mean nothing without the love for God and love for others.

V35-40

While the Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees all asked Jesus questions with the intent of trapping him, Jesus poses them a question straight from scripture. How is the Christ both the Son of David and the Lord of David? Jesus is stating that the clue to who the Messiah is lies in the Bible. The Messiah is not coming from Heaven with a triumphant army to defeat Rome as was the belief at the time. The Messiah is coming as a *man* to walk among them. Jesus even warns against following those that are arrogant enough to say that they can recognize the Messiah. The ruling class always thought that the coming

savior would walk with them, leading the way to overcoming Rome. They never guessed that God would come to them as a humble servant. The piety of those people would be their undoing.

V41-44

In this passage, Jesus reiterates what can be found throughout the Bible. God doesn't want our *stuff*. He wants our hearts. The money from the rich givers mean nothing to God because it meant nothing to those who were giving it. The poor widow trusted God and wanted to honor God with everything she had. In this case, the few pennies that this woman gave equaled more than all the money the rich put in combined.

Chapter 13

V1-2

Why would the disciples be amazed at the site of the temple?

The temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and then rebuilt by Nehemiah roughly 400 years before the Roman empire came into existence, although only as a semblance of its original glory. Herod was "redecorating" the temple so it was a fairly new structure, and it was a glorious spectacle. It is said to have had so much gold plating on the outer walls that it could be blinding on a sunny day. Where there wasn't gold, there were large marble blocks. The rebuilding started in 19BC and wasn't completed until 63AD, so the redecorating took place during the entirety of Jesus' time on Earth. This would also lend more credence to Jesus' claims to be greater than the temple (Matthew 12:6).

The Jews continued to revolt against the Roman empire long after the death and resurrection of Jesus. The temple restoration was completed in 63AD, but it would only be seven years later that Rome needed to squelch the many uprisings of the Jews and leveled Jerusalem flattening even the great temple.

V3-13

In a rare moment of solitude with His inner circle, Jesus sits on the Mount of Olives which provides a spectacular view overlooking the temple.

Luke 21:8-23 records the same conversation with more detail added. The disciples ask two questions, but Mark only records the answer to the second question.

Mark does record that Jesus predicted the world conditions until His second coming. There will be false prophets, false messiahs, wars, and natural disasters. Christians will be persecuted, which has happened and continues to happen, even more so throughout the modern world than in the past. This means that Christians must be even more steadfast. One of the answers to the age-old question "Why does God let bad things happen to good people?" is that Christians need to witness to those that are doing the harm. Our fellow man is not our enemy. Satan is. Our persecutors need to know that they, too, can be saved. However bad it gets, however stinging the betrayal, however harsh the world may become, the Love of God must still be preached.

V14-23

What is the 'abomination of desolation' that Jesus speaks about?

Jesus is quoting from Daniel 11:31 where Daniel is prophesying the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanies less than 200 years before the time of Jesus. It was believed at that time that Antiochus Epiphanies was the fulfillment of that prophecy, but Jesus says here the worst is yet to come.

These words that Jesus spoke some two-thousand years ago spark much debate. Some scholars and theologians think that this prophecy had at least begun when Rome destroyed the temple in 70AD, forcing the Jews to flee into the hills. Other scholars refer to verse 19, pointing out that the 'Great Tribulation' hasn't happened yet. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 discusses how Christians will not have to suffer through the tribulation, leading to the general consensus that this prophecy hasn't been fulfilled, regardless of whether it's started yet or not.

Jesus speaks of the horror of the tribulation as something that mankind cannot survive. The tribulation truly does mean the end. People have been waiting on the return of Jesus for two thousand years. This doesn't mean we can relax and think that the end will never come. Jesus warns (later in the chapter) that no one knows when He is coming back, not even Himself. Only the Father knows when the tribulation will begin. There is never a time to relax.

V24-27

Jesus continues on to post-tribulation prophecy. This is no longer just about the fall of mankind, but this is destruction on a cosmic scale! Most Christians believe that the end is near because it can't possibly get much worse. Jesus says here that it's going to get much worse.

V28-37

The Mount of Olives was famous for its fig trees. Fig trees are often considered the trumpeter of the seasons as they only produce leaves when summer approaches. Jesus is saying that the signs He has provided are as foreboding as the fig tree.

Why does Jesus use the phrase 'this generation' when talking about the tribulation?

This is often a point of confusion for readers as the disciples all passed away without seeing Jesus' return. Jesus isn't referring to the generation of disciples. Jesus means that the generation that witnesses the abomination of desolation will be the last generation.

How could Jesus not know the hour of His return if He is God?

This is one of those questions that non-believers like to ask to stump Christians. However, the answer is relatively simple. Jesus, the Son of God, volunteered to not know. He submitted to God the Father even though He is God *with* the Father and the Holy Spirit. Another example of this would be Jesus' volunteering to be the sacrifice for mankind and submitting to the will of the Father even though He prayed for another way (Mark 14:36).

Jesus pleads with His disciples and all that follow Him to remain prayerful and level-headed at all times so when the end does come, Christians will be ready.

Chapter 14

V1-2

The Gospel of John gives a little more insight into why the plot to kill Jesus transpired at this time. Jesus had just raised Lazarus from the dead in front of witnesses. The priests could not allow Jesus to continue

His ministry for fear of the attention from Rome. If someone had the power to raise the dead, this would certainly be of interest to the empire. The Pharisees now added political reasons to their growing list of reasons to hate Jesus. The timing was unfortunate since Jerusalem would be filled to capacity with Jews celebrating the Passover feast. They had to tread carefully in arresting Jesus.

V3-9

This passage is often confused with the sinful woman who washed Jesus' feet in Luke 7:36-50. That is a different time and different woman. Mark's account here aligns with John 12:1-8. Mary, the sister of Lazarus, uses the burial ointment which was intended for Lazarus to anoint Jesus in an act of worship. It is speculated that Mark did not mention Lazarus or Mary by name because of the intense hatred for Jesus by the Jews and Romans at the time of his writing. Mary and Lazarus were most likely still alive and under scrutiny. Mark did not want his gospel account to cause any harm to them.

This ointment would have been very costly. But Mary loved Jesus even before He raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus, having just rode into Jerusalem as a king, was the entire object of her affections at this point. Not as a man, but as the Christ. Using expensive oil to worship her Messiah was the least she could do.

Of course, there were those that saw this as a waste. It was customary in this period to anoint the head of guests with just a small drop of oil. Mary used the entire bottle of the most expensive oil on Jesus alone. She was even rebuked for her actions. But Jesus rebuked right back.

It's not that Jesus doesn't care about the poor or needy. He loves everyone deeply. What Mary did was return that love to Jesus the best she knew how. Jesus will never rebuke someone for showing Him love.

V10-11

Mark does not elaborate on the motives of Judas for betraying Jesus. Matthew shows that Judas bargained for the price of Jesus' life. John shows that it was Judas that was rebuked by Jesus for scolding Mary on wasting the anointing oil, so it could be his ego was bruised. Both are considered valid motives, but whatever the reason, the betrayal was in motion.

V12-21

It appears that Jesus had made plans to celebrate the Passover feast without the knowledge of His disciples. Whether this was supernatural or not is up for debate.

Why would this sign mentioned by Jesus be important?

The disciples were to look for a man carrying a pitcher. This would have been an unusual sign as it was typically women who carried pitchers. This would be an obvious sign to the disciples.

This "Last Supper" was spent with just Jesus and His disciples in a private room. There were no other observers present. It was meant to be a close, personal dinner where Jesus could talk with His friends at length. Mark gives a short recount of the Passover feast here, but the Gospel of John goes into great detail of the conversation Jesus had with His friends (John chapters 13-18). There are some discrepancies between the gospels as to when this supper and the crucifixion took place. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all indicate that this feast took place on the day of Passover and the crucifixion took place the following day. John indicates that this meal took place the day before Passover and that Jesus was crucified on Passover.

What does Jesus mean when He says, "...one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish," in verse 20?

There is often speculation that Jesus was singling someone out with this statement, but most scholars agree that the Passover meal would use a shared bowl and that all the disciples would dip their bread into the same dish. There was and still is a belief in the middle eastern culture that eating with a person and then betraying that person immediately after the meal was the worst kind of treachery there is.

This was also Jesus offering Judas a final chance to change his mind. Judas had already made a deal with the Pharisees to betray Jesus. It must have come as a shock for Jesus to speak openly about it. Judas knew that Jesus knew. He could have stopped what was coming. But he did not.

V22-25

Mark records what modern Christians call "communion." There are many theories concerning what happens at communion based on the words found here. The Catholic Church believes in what is commonly known as transubstantiation. This is the belief that the bread and wine physically become flesh and blood while the person who is partaking in communion consumes the small portions. Most Protestant churches believe that the bread and wine are only symbols of a commitment to follow Jesus. And there are varying degrees of ideas in between these two beliefs. Regardless, the scripture records that communion is to be treated with honor and respect. Communion represents the dying away of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New Covenant. All subsequent communions are reminders of this fact.

V26-31

What hymn did Jesus and the disciples sing?

The Bible does not say, but it is traditional to end the Passover meal with Hallel, or the three Psalms found in Psalms 116-118. This is not only an example of worship by Jesus Himself, but the desire to do the Father's will. Jesus knew what this night would bring Him and He still took time to worship. This is a powerful example to Christians.

Jesus also addresses the disciples and their worldly fear of what was to come. Once Jesus was arrested, the disciples would go into hiding. Peter would even deny knowing Jesus, despite his claims otherwise here. It is believed that only John attended the crucifixion along with the mother of Jesus.

V32-42

What does this passage say about Jesus?

Here, Jesus prays to the Father. He is troubled and distressed, just as anyone would be if they knew their fate. But this passage also offers a view into the distinctions of the trinity. Jesus' will was different than that of His Father! There are many different takes on what this means, exactly, but it does not diminish the fact that Jesus is still God, as the Gospel of John (and many other New Testament scriptures) emphasizes.

Regardless of what Jesus felt at that time, His obedience to the Father sets another example that we as Christians should follow.

Jesus' friends, His beloved inner circle, fell asleep when Jesus asked them to keep watch. He then asks them to not only keep watch, but to pray. They fell asleep again. And again. Mark does not record what

tone Jesus used when He addressed Peter, but Jesus used the name “Simon,” Peter’s name before he met Jesus. This is an indication of the frustration and disappointment that Jesus must have felt.

V43-50

Mark records the moment that Judas betrayed Jesus with feigned love and affection. A kiss and a greeting of “Rabbi” were what signified to the guards who to arrest.

John 18:10 identifies the swordsman as Peter. Jesus healed the recipient of Peter’s misplaced wrath. Otherwise, Peter might have been arrested, as well. Jesus healed the wounded and saved Peter at the same time.

V51-52

Who was the young man that stumbled away naked?

There is no clear answer scripturally, but since the early days of the church it has been believed that this is Mark himself. Tradition has it that the Last Supper was held in a house that belonged to the family of Mark. Mark had witnessed Jesus and the disciples leaving and followed them to the garden. In the confusion, Mark’s tunic was torn off and he ran away. Most scholars point to the fact that there would be no other reason for Mark to record this unless it was his own sort of confession to the fact that he, too, left Jesus.

V53-65

Jesus is put on trial a total of four times; Annas, the high priest, then a night court before the Sanhedrin, then an official court of the Sanhedrin, then a Roman court before Pilate. Mark does not record all of these trials and had to rely on broken accounts from witnesses as most of the disciples had already fled. Peter did witness the night gathering of the Sanhedrin from a distance, but then denied knowing Jesus and fled, also (vv66-72).

Jesus never said He would “destroy this temple made with hands,” and the disciples considered this false testimony. There are apparently other contradictory testimonies that Mark does not write down. The trial is going poorly until they ask Jesus to defend Himself. Jesus admits to being God, the Messiah, and the Sanhedrin consider this blasphemy.

If only they had opened with this line of questioning instead of trying to level false accusations against Jesus, their credibility would carry more weight. The fact that they blindfolded, beat, and spit upon Jesus shows their hatred and contempt rather than their desire for justice.

V66-72

Peter is worried about his own well-being while watching what is taking place. His worry is enough of a distraction to cause him to forget what Jesus predicted just hours ago. Peter denies knowing Jesus and only realized too late what he has done. He is saddened and ashamed of his actions.

Chapter 15

V1-5

This passage is the first time Pilate meets Jesus. The priests bring Jesus before Pilate as a criminal against Rome. The priests intentionally call Jesus “King of the Jews” so that Pilate will be forced to hold a trial as Rome only recognized one “king” and all others are political rivals. Luke 23:2 gives a little more detail as

to the charges brought against Jesus that Pilate would be forced to consider as a representative of Rome.

The phrase, "Pilate marveled" at the end of the passage is significant in that it speaks to the character of both Pilate and Jesus. Pilate would be used to seeing men grovel for their lives to avoid crucifixion. Jesus refused to answer the accusations of the Jews save one. Pilate asked Jesus if He was the King of the Jews. Jesus didn't reply yes, but replied, "It is as you say." Pilate was taken aback with the calmness and even deliberateness of Jesus. Jesus knew what was coming, knew it was the will of the Father, and accepted the verdict that man would dish out.

V6-15

According to Luke 23:14, Pilate could find nothing warranting death for Jesus. Luke records this in 23:14. But Pilate wanted to keep the peace and wished to be rid of the Jewish leadership. Non-Biblical accounts tell of Pilate's disdain of the Jews and the Bible hints at that in different accounts. Pilate is looking to avoid the death of an innocent man but is leaving it up to the crowd to decide. It was Pilate's custom to release a single prisoner during the Jewish festival of Passover in order to keep the peace with the Jewish people. He asks the crowd if they would like to spare Jesus. He is surprised to find that the crowd asked for Barabbas to be spared.

The Jews had turned the crowd against Jesus with bribes and cunning. This same Jesus who rode into Jerusalem on a colt while the crowds hailed Him as the Messiah had failed to conquer Rome and release the Jews from their oppressors. The priests convinced the mob that this "deception" was worthy of death.

V16-21

The Roman guards were notorious for their ferocity. Rome was also good at finding the right people for the right job. Those that carried out sentences of torture and death usually were very callous and psychopathic. They *enjoyed* their jobs. It is no surprise, then, that they would mock and abuse those who were handed over to them.

In Mark 8:34, Jesus tells His followers to take up their crosses and follow Him. They did not understand what He meant at the time. Roman tradition was for the condemned to carry their arm-beams to the site of their death in a ghastly sort of parade while a centurion rode on horseback leading the way. A herald would read the crimes and sentences along the way so the people watching would know what was coming. This is what Jesus is expecting of His followers. Not everyone is called to go through this drastic of a martyrdom, but some will be. This is a reminder of how strong our convictions as Christians should be.

It was unusual for a scourging to take place before an execution. Pilate sentenced Jesus to be flogged in an effort to appease the Jews and still keep Jesus alive. However, Jesus was still sentenced to death. Jesus was so beaten and exhausted that the weight of the cross beam became too much for Him to carry. Mark records that a man named Simon helped Jesus carry His burden, albeit under duress from Roman guards. It is believed that Simon was the father of the Rufus mentioned in Romans 16:13, who was a Christian in the Roman church.

V22-32

There is an interesting twist in the language used in verses 20 and 22. Verse 20 says that Jesus was led out to be crucified. Verse 22 says that He was brought to Golgotha. This is significant in that some historians think that Jesus was too weak to complete the journey unaided, so He was possibly carried or even dragged to the crucifixion site. This is speculation, though, and should not be taken as fact.

Why would Jesus refuse the drink offered to Him?

Proverbs 31:6-7 began a Jewish tradition of offering a pain-numbing medication to the condemned to ease their suffering. Although Jesus was already suffering and would suffer even more, He chose to keep His mind unclouded for what lay ahead. There is no specific reason as to why He would have chosen this other than He knew that this earthly suffering would be nothing compared to what would lay ahead for Him in Hell the next three days.

There would be no need to go into great detail about crucifixion. The entirety of Rome knew what it was and how horrific it was. Mark states the crucifixion very matter-of-factly in this passage. The crime of Jesus was published on the sign above His head as a means for Pilate to snub the Jews for punishing an innocent man (see notes on John 19:19-22).

It is unknown why the soldiers gambled for the clothing of Jesus. Most scholars believe that He had been gifted a robe or sash and in lieu of cutting it up, the decision was made to gamble for the whole of it. Roman executions were generally carried out while the victim was naked. Jewish culture did not allow for this, but they were under Roman rule. It is not known whether Jesus was permitted a loin cloth or not during His execution.

It should be noted that Mark and John differ upon the times of the crucifixion. Mark records the “third hour” (roughly 9am) and John records the “sixth hour” (about noon). It is unclear where the discrepancy comes from, or which one is correct.

The closing of this passage records the witnesses mocking Jesus as He die. Everyone knew who Jesus was. He was a famous figure in the region during His ministry. After all the miracles Jesus performed, after all the people He fed and healed, He was still insulted while hanging on the cross. It is evident from the previous conversations Jesus had with the priests that even if He were to spring from the cross and wipe out Rome that they would still not believe who He was. Even after He rose from the dead, the priests did their best to cover up that fact and dissuade anyone from spreading the news.

V33-41

Mark records the darkness of the sun at the death of Jesus. If it was an eclipse that blacked out the sun it was the longest eclipse in history. The darkness began at roughly the time the nails were being driven into the hands and feet of Jesus. The darkness ended when Jesus breathed His last. Most scholars believe the darkness occurred when the Father separated from the Son so that Jesus could take the sin of the world upon Himself.

The sour wine was from the beverage provided to the Roman soldiers, as well as throughout the region for use in quenching thirst but preventing drunkenness. Even with the offering of this drink, Jesus was still mocked as people misunderstood the word “Eloi” for “Elijah.”

Mark records Jesus dying with a loud and final cry. John records that this cry was the declaration, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was torn in two. It is unclear who recorded this happening and how the priests allowed this information to get out. But it would be notable in that with the death of Jesus there would no longer be a need for God to be separated from man. Jesus taking our sin means that all can come to God freely and clearly.

For a Roman centurion to break silence while performing his duties would be extraordinary. Maybe from a common soldier, but not a centurion who would have spent years in service and more than likely performed many executions himself.

Mark records some of the friendly witnesses to the crucifixion. One can only imagine how hard it must have been for the mother of Jesus to not only watch her son die, but to listen to the insults around her.

V42-47

Most victims of crucifixion were left on the cross for days as a warning to those who would defy Rome. Since it was the Jewish Passover, Pilate allowed the body of Jesus to be taken down so as not to offend the Jewish culture. Typically, crucifixion lasted days, so Pilate was surprised that Jesus had already passed and even verified the fact before granting permission for the body to be taken down.

John records that Nicodemus accompanied Joseph of Arimathea in preparing the body of Jesus for burial. Joseph provided his own family tomb for Jesus.

Chapter 16

There is some debate on the length of the closing chapter of Mark. Some early manuscripts have a verse after verse 8 that provides a closing to the chapter. Other manuscripts conclude the chapter with 20 verses and do not include the closing verse 9 of the shorter versions. It is unclear why there are two different versions of the manuscript in existence. Most scholars attribute this to scribes shortening the chapter for some unknown reason. It is even possible that Mark amended his gospel as it made the rounds to other churches and believers. The earliest versions of Mark do not contain verses 9-20, but these examples are also few in number. The vast majority of later manuscripts all contain 20 verses. There are numerous examples of early Christian writings that reference and even predate the passages found in later manuscripts. It is unknown which version is the most accurate, but both are considered acceptable closings to the Gospel of Mark.

V1-8

The first people to visit the tomb of Jesus were women. For the authors of the Bible to record this is of no small significance. Women were considered property by the world in this era. Their testimonies would mean nothing. But Mark ensures the names of these women are written down as some of the most devoted followers of Christ.

Jesus was crucified on Friday, the beginning of the Sabbath. Saturday night would be the end of the Sabbath, but there would be no light to work with. Sunday morning was the earliest these women could honor Jesus by anointing His body.

What is the difference between "resurrection" and being raised from the dead?

The angel addressing the women is clear in his language. Lazarus was raised from the dead, meaning he was brought back to life in his original body. The term “resurrection” means that Jesus came back to life *in a new body*. Jesus still retains His scars from the crucifixion as recorded in John 20:24-29.

One commentator notes that there was no need for the stone to be rolled away. Jesus could have (and did at other times in other gospel accounts) simply left and appeared wherever He wanted. The stone was moved so that the people would know it was empty.

The resurrection is the culmination of God’s promise to save the human race. This is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies going back to Genesis chapter 3. It is no wonder that a messenger was there to encourage people to believe their own eyes and tell of what they saw. Sin and death are conquered! He is risen!

Even still, the women are in complete shock that they couldn’t even talk amongst themselves as they left. Verse 11 and Luke 24:9 reveal that the women weren’t hesitant to share their news with others, though. Their shock did not keep them from proclaiming what they had seen.

V9-13

Mark and John both record that Mary Magdalene was the first one to see Jesus. She was a devout follower of Jesus. Even she could not convince the disciples that Jesus was alive.

Mark and Luke both record that Jesus appeared to others prior to revealing Himself to the disciples. The disciples would have none of it. They still did not understand what Jesus had told them just three days prior.

V14-20

When Jesus finally does appear to them, the disciples are rebuked for their unbelief. Then they are commanded to tell everyone of what they have finally seen with their own eyes. Jesus is alive! The prophecies fulfilled, sin is overcome, the Love of God has offered salvation to all! These few verses tell of “the Great Commission” to preach salvation to all the world.

Verse 16 is an often debated and, unfortunately, often a cause of divisiveness amongst Christians. The word “baptism” appears with salvation but does not appear with condemnation. So, what is the purpose of baptism? Is it necessary or unnecessary? This verse can be confusing when overanalyzed. Jesus does command us to be baptized, but as a public declaration of a new life. If we are to obey Christ, we should be baptized. However, baptism is not a requirement for salvation, nor is it a guarantee against condemnation. For some, they may not have time to be baptized before they die. This goes back to the purpose of the Old Testament law: God wants our hearts to be in the right place and to follow Him. Not all will get the chance to do so equally.

Mark wraps up the miraculous post-resurrection events rather quickly. Jesus ascends to Heaven and the disciples go out and teach the news to all that will listen. Most scholars believe that Mark doesn’t go into detail here because the events of Acts are still happening when Mark finishes his gospel. But this letter would be more than enough to stir the hearts of believers around the world.

For the shorter manuscripts, verse 9 is this: *And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself also sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.* (NASB)

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