

Exploring Mark

Finding Jesus

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Part I

Introducing the Gospel Accounts

Background to the Gospels

The Meaning of “Gospel”

- The word “gospel” (*euangelion*/εὐαγγέλιον) literally means “good news.” This word was not exclusive to the story of Jesus. It could refer to any important message such as the “good news of a victory in battle.”
- Related to this word is *euangelizo* (εὐαγγελίζω) which means “to evangelize.”
 - This word appears in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint/LXX) in Isa 52:7 “the one bringing the good news.”
 - Those who knew the OT in Greek would have recognized this connection with the predicted coming of good news.¹
 - Christians used this word to refer to the *oral proclamation* of the good news of Jesus’ life and death (cf. 1 Thess 1:5).
 - Those that delivered the good news were called an “evangelist” (*euangelistes*/εὐαγγελιστής) and their action.
- Gospels, then, identified their narratives as “*a written version of the oral proclamation.*”
 - This written version does not imply that the “gospels” are comprehensive sources of life of Jesus (cf. John 21:25).
 - Paul knew things Jesus said that were not in the gospels (Acts 20:35)
 - The preaching and writing of the Apostles also contains “the gospel.”
- In the most basic sense, the gospel accounts are stories of the life of Jesus. They are the *good news* for all of humanity.
 - For ancient Greco-Roman readers, they probably saw these gospel accounts as kind of like ancient biographies.²

¹ Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, ZECNT 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 27.

² Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, ed. Astrid B. Beck and David Noel Freedman, 2nd ed., BRS (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

- Jews had stories about individuals (Job, Jonah, Esther, Ezekiel, etc.) but not to this effect³
- But at the same time, these “biographies” did something entirely different in that they *announced something new*.

How did We Get the Gospels?

Their Composition

- The first question we might ask is: where do you start with telling the story of Jesus?
- The Gospels did have sources from which they drew upon. This does not mean they randomly spliced stories together, but that their *material came from somewhere*.
- **Certain Sources of the Gospels**
 1. *Eyewitness Testimony /Memories of Jesus*
 - Matthew (Mt 9:9) and John (Jn 21:24) were certainly among those who walked and talked with Jesus. These people had the best direct access to the life of Jesus and they were anointed with the Spirit.⁴
 - John wrote that the Holy Spirit would “bring to your remembrance all that I [Jesus] taught you” (John 14:26).
 - Notably, Luke does not count himself among them. Paul had to rely on eyewitnesses (and revelation) for understanding Jesus and spot-checking his message (cf. Gal 1:19; 2:2).
 2. *Preaching/Teaching in the Church* (cf. Acts 2:22–36) — These served as sources of authority.⁵
 3. *The Gospel Accounts* — Gospels preserved the memories, teachings, and preaching about Jesus. Luke says that others before him attempted to compile a narrative (Lk 1:1).

Their Transmission

- The text of the original Gospels was composed in Greek by the authors. This is called the “autograph.”
- These autographs, unfortunately, do not exist anymore. What does exist is a number of very early and reliable manuscripts that accurately represent the original autographs.
- *Humans* (important to remember!) copied and transmitted the Greek text for about 1500 years. Many copies of the Greek manuscripts are different based on the simple fact that *humans make mistakes*. If we were pressured, with a deadline, to copy an entire book of the Bible, word by word, without spaces between the letters: how many mistakes would we make?

³ Perhaps Jonah is the most similar in narrative style/format to the Gospels. Jonah had a divine calling (which he resisted), went on a mission to preach to the *Gentiles*, his message was accepted, but was viewed somewhat as a failure. In contrast Jesus accepted this calling without hesitation, went on a mission to preach to Jews and all nations, his message was somewhat heard, his disciples abandoned him, and he was crucified.

⁴ Jesus also appeared after the resurrection to the Apostles, Saul, Stephen, Peter, James, and many others (1 Cor 15:7). It is very unclear what Jesus might have said to any one of these disciples after rising from the grave, but it's hard to imagine him dictating his autobiography to one of the Gospel writers. Writing a NY Times best-seller didn't really seem to be the point of Jesus' resurrection appearances. This was more-so the role of the Holy Spirit. That Jesus did not need to write a book or books to secure his legacy, like Mohammad or others, distinguishes Him from other religions in that his Apostles and the Holy Spirit established his legacy.

⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, ed. David Noel Freedman, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 107–8.

- This process of *hand-copying* the Greek text did not really end until Gutenberg's press in 1450. It was around this time that scholars began collecting and compiling the Greek Manuscripts into modern editions of the Greek New Testament that we have today.

Their Translation

- Early translations of the Greek Gospels were into Syriac (spoken in Syria), Latin (Vulgate), Armenian, Coptic (Egyptian), et. al.
- Wycliffe was one of the first to translate the Bible into Middle English (1383), but not the first. Many of these "unauthorized" translations were banned by the Roman Catholic Church.
- KJV emerged many years later (1611) as a revision of many prior versions. KJV wasn't necessarily special except that it was good English. The sources behind KJV are lacking.⁶
- Our modern versions (ESV, NASB, NIV, HCSB, NET, etc) are based on the best available manuscripts of the Greek New Testament.
- Some notes regarding translation:
 1. *Translations differ because of translation methods.*
 2. *Translations do lose some essence of the original Greek (style, vocabulary, etc).*
 3. *Translations generally do not significantly impact doctrine except in some minor points.*
 4. *Most modern translations are reliable because they are based on very ancient Greek copies of the New Testament.*

⁶ Some modern versions of the KJV and NKJV (post-2000) have attempted revisions based on better Greek Manuscripts.

Relationship of the Gospels

- To the careful and frequent reader of the four gospels, it is very apparent that they are different in some respects but are the same in others.
- Some of the notable characteristics of the four:
 1. *Matthew* — genealogy of Jesus, birth of Jesus, sermon on the mount, prodigal son, other parables, historical details, etc.
 2. *Mark* — shortest gospel, many exorcisms, one trip to Jerusalem, longer narratives, etc.
 3. *Luke* — addressed to Theophilus, stories about Mary and John the Baptist, shorter sermon on the mount,
 4. *John* — omits material in “Synoptics,” miracle at Cana, woman at the well, Nicodemus, Lazarus, extended discourses (13–17).
- Their united message, however, is to proclaim that **Jesus of Nazareth is Lord, the Son of God, crucified on the cross, and resurrected on the third day.**

Table 2.1: Length Comparison

	Matthew	Mark	Luke
Verses	1068	661	1149
Words	18,293	11,025	19,376

Mark: The Neglected Gospel?

- Most early Christians neglected Mark because:
 1. 90% of Mark is contained in Matthew and Luke.
 2. Mark is the shortest and “least comprehensive.”
 3. Some thought Mark condensed Matthew.¹
- Restoration Movement and churches of Christ generally focus on Matthew.
- We should appreciate the unique characteristics of Mark and how he tells the story of Jesus's life and ministry.

¹ Augustine, *Harmony of the Gospels* 124.

Part II

Introduction to Mark

Authorship: Who Wrote Mark?

Internal Evidence

1. No explicit mention of Mark in the Gospel (14:15?)
2. So who could he have been? Mark, *Marcos* (Μάρκος) was a common name.
3. **John Mark?**
 - Mary, his mother, lived in Judea. Their house was a gathering place for Christians and they had a servant Rhoda (Acts 12:12ff)
 - John Mark and Barnabas were cousins (Col 4:10)
 - John Mark joined Paul and Barnabas on early travels (12:25)
 - Barnabas and Paul parted ways over John Mark (Acts 15:37–40)
 - Mark went home to Cyprus (Acts 15:39; cf. 4:36)
 - Mark was with Paul when he was imprisoned (Col 4:10; Phlm 24)
 - Paul later in life requests Mark be sent to him (2 Tim 4:11)
 - Barnabas was in Rome (=Babylon) with Peter (1 Pet 5:13)

External Evidence

- Papias of Hierapolis wrote (ca. 120–130 CE)¹
 1. Papias himself had first or second-hand contact with Peter and other apostles.
 2. Mark was the interpreter/translator of Peter.
 3. Mark wrote careful what Peter remembered what the Lord spoke and did but “without order.”²
 4. Mark himself did not hear or follow Jesus personally, but was a follower of Peter.
 5. Mark adapted Peter’s teachings [to a narrative].

¹ His original work “Expositions of Sayings of the Lord” exist in a quotation contained in Eusebius, *Eccl. hist.* 3.9.1–15.

² We aren’t entirely sure what “without order” means. Possibilities include: (1) not in an academic, systematic order; (2) not in the same order as other Gospels; (3) merely reflects the opinion of Papias that Mark was “unordered.”

- 6. Mark did not make an error of Peter said, but wrote as Peter remembered.
- 7. Mark did not omit anything or falsify anything
- Papias was *not inspired* but probably did represent the consensus view of the day. His testimony was reinforced and repeated by other church fathers including Irenaeus, Muratorian Canon, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and Jerome.
- Mark's connection with Peter dates very early in the late first and second centuries.
- If Peter "remembered" and Mark wrote this down, certainly what John said about "Holy Spirit remembrance" was involved here (John 14:26).

Why Write Mark? Practical Reasons

- **Persecution** — pressure to record the teachings of Peter before serious persecution eliminated the key Apostles and eyewitnesses of Jesus.
- **Death** — by Nero or natural causes, Apostles were aging and their message needed preservation for future generations.
- **Evangelism** — Rapid spread of the gospel message necessitated a record of Jesus's life and teaching to help (1) missionaries who did not see Jesus personally; (2) help others come to Christ.

Conclusions

1. Mark was probably John Mark who was in the circle with Peter & Paul.
2. The Gospel of Mark, proportionally, mentions Peter the most.
 - Matt (25x / 1067 vss) = ev. 42 vss.
 - **Mark (25x / 661 vss) = ev. 26 vss.**
 - Luke (29x / 1149 vss) = ev. 40 vss.
 - *John (34x / 878 vss) = ev. 26 vss.*
3. The Gospel of Mark appears to adopt Peter's perspective on events (9:6).³
4. Mark faithfully recorded what Peter said or preached.
 - They sat down together and worked through a written composition of Jesus' words and deeds.⁴
 - Mark may have *translated* (Aramaic → Greek) what Peter said.
 - Mark may have had better Greek than Peter since Mark was from Cyprus.
 - In one instance, Andrew, not Peter, talks to Greeks (John 12:21–22).

³ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 204.

⁴ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 207.

Date: When Was Mark Written?

Was Peter Alive or Dead?

- If we trust the testimony of Papias, he says that Peter was alive when Mark wrote the Gospel.
- If, as tradition says, that Peter died under Nero (54–68) then Peter probably died around 64/65.
- So the final form of Mark was probably written between AD 50–60.

Audience: To Whom Was Mark Written?

Greek/Roman Audience?

1. He explains Jewish/Palestinian customs (7:3–4).
2. He transliterates and translates **Aramaic** expressions into Greek (3:17; 5:41; 10:46).
3. Contains Latin words (12:42 *quadran*; 15:16 *praetorium*)

Simon of Cyrene

And they seized upon one who was passing by, Simon the Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, in order that he might carry his cross. (Mark 15:21)

- No other Gospels name the sons Alexander and Rufus (cf. Matt 27:32; Luke 23:26).
- Mark probably knew his readers and included this detail for them.

Conclusions

- Mark wrote with both a local and broader context in mind.
- Overall, however, *Mark's audience was predominately non-Jewish.*

Purpose/Message: Why Was Mark Written?

Mark 1:1 *to communicate the “good news/gospel” of Jesus Christ, the Anointed One or Messiah.*

- Chief focus of any Gospel Account is to communicate the story of Christ.

Themes: What Supports Mark's Purpose/Message?

- **Increasingly reveals Jesus to be the Christ**

- Demons hint at it (1:24–25; 3:11–12)
- Miracles allude to power.
- Peter confirms it (8:29)

- **Discipleship**

- Mark focuses on them as a group.
- They serve as a guide to our own following of Jesus.
- We live through their successes but mostly failures.
- Scenes of belief and confusion occur in threes:
 - * Three passion predictions (8:31–32; 9:31; 10:33–34)
 - * Three boat scenes (4:35–41; 6:45–52; 8:14–21).
 - * Three times falling asleep (14:37, 40, 41).
 - * Three denials of Jesus (14:68, 70, 71).

- **Kingdom of God**

- Focuses on the “coming” of the kingdom (4:1–34)
- Expressed through parables as to how to enter it.

- **Contrast of Galilee/Jerusalem**

- Jews in Galilee lived in close proximity to Gentiles and Samaritans. Probably viewed with suspicion by Southern /“Judean” or “Jerusalem” Jews.
- But the “Northern/Galilean Jews” *were more receptive to the message of Christ*. In Galilee, Jesus was welcomed.
- In Jerusalem, Jews were more skeptical and opposed him. There he was rejected and killed.
- Certainly this is a contrast of “good and bad” soil.¹

¹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 35.

- **Jesus is the Messiah and Suffering Servant of God**
 - Has the authority.
 - But is opposed by men.
 - Jesus counters all expectations and dies and rises.

Other Interesting Features

1. The Gospel of Mark does not name people that John does

- *The woman who anoints* — Mary, sister of Martha (John 12:3)
- *The man who cuts the ear* — Simon Peter (John 18:10)
- *The servant of the high priest* — Malchus (John 18:10)
- Was this to protect them (from Jews, Romans) if Mark was an earlier Gospel?

2. Mark's Greek is unrefined and rough

- Probably was intended to be read orally as preaching or at a meeting.¹
- Reflects both the style of the author (not a Greek expert!) and also the audience (broad church).

3. Despite length, Mark has more detail about Jesus's miracles

- He is more vividly descriptive.
- Has more details about exorcisms.²
- Mark 5 takes 43 verses to tell what Matthew does in 16 vss (8:28–34; 9:18–26).

4. Mark's Gospel is very "action-packed"

- *Mark moves quicker than other gospels.*
- *Mark's favorite word is "immediately" (euthus/εὐθύς).*

5. Mark often "sandwiches" one story inside another

- Starts one story, tells another part, comes back to original.
- Examples include Mark 6:7–31.
 - Jesus sends out disciples (6:7–13)
 - Narrator tells story of John's death (6:14–29)
 - Disciples return to Jesus (6:30–31)

¹ France, *Gospel of Mark*, 9.

² France, *Gospel of Mark*, 17.

- Also see Mark 5:21–43
 - Jairus requests healing (5:21–24)
 - On the way, Jesus heals woman of discharge (5:25–34)
 - Jesus heals Jairus's daughter (5:35–43)

6. Jesus tells people not to reveal his identity

- Demons (1:24–25; 3:11–12)
- After healing (5:43; 8:36)
- After revelation of Jesus is Christ & Transfiguration (8:30; 9:9)

Part III

Introduction of the Messiah (Mark 1:1–13)

Summary: “Mark introduces his narrative with the message and ministry of John the Baptist, whose role was to fulfill Scripture by preparing the way for the coming of Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God.”³ The message of this book is that: This is the beginning the good news of the long-awaited salvation as accomplished by God through Jesus the Messiah.

³ Strauss, *Mark*, 59.

The Beginning as the Fulfillment of Scripture (1:1–3)

1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ [the Son of God]. 2 Just as it was written by Isaiah the prophet, “Behold I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, 2 a voice crying out in the wilderness ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths!’”

1:1 The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

- This verse serves as a title to the whole work.
 - It sets up the expectation of what is to come: “the good news of Jesus the Messiah”
 - This “good news” is a proclamation of salvation that came in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah.¹
- Jesus’s name (Ἰησοῦς) is Greek for Joshua (*Jesua*/יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) which means “YHWH saves.”
- The title Christ is transliterated from Greek *Christos* (Χριστός).
 - It means “Anointed” in the sense of an anointed king (2 Sam 12:7).
 - Jews associated this term with the descendant of David who would bring salvation to God’s people.
- Son of God, appearing in some versions.
 - For Greeks and Romans would have resonated with their ideas of the “divine” Caesar who called himself “son of the divine” (*divi filius*).²
 - For Jews, they would think of angels/messengers of God who are also called “sons of God” (Gen 6:2–4; Job 1:6; 38:7; Dan 3:25).
- Either way, both of these titles emphasize the *divine and royal* implications of Jesus.

¹ Strauss, *Mark*, 60.

² Strauss, *Mark*, 61.

1:2–3 Fulfillment of Prophecy

- John's coming was written about but is now fulfilled.
- Jesus's coming fulfills the prophetic expectations from Isaiah.³
- Mark uses the following Scriptures to explain this:
 1. "Look/Behold! I am sending my messenger before you" (Exod 23:20)
 2. "Who will prepare your way" (Mal 3:1)
 - In this context, Malachi is speaking of the "new Elijah."
 - Jesus would later identify this individual as John the Baptizer (9:11–13; cf. Matt 17:13)
 3. "A voice crying out in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight his paths.'" (Isa 40:3)

³ Strauss, *Mark*, 63.

The Ministry of John the Baptist (1:4–8)

1:4 John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching/proclaiming baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And all of the country of Judea and all the Jerusalemites were going out to him, and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan river confessing their sins. 6 And John was wearing camels hair and a leather belt around his waist and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And he was preaching, saying “After me comes one mightier than me, who I am not worthy to stoop down and loose the strap of his sandal. I baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

- **4 *John's Repentance-Baptism for Forgiveness of Sins***

- Baptism *that is* repentance *for the purpose of* forgiveness of sins.
- This was a new act of salvation that drew on:¹
 1. Jewish ritual washings.
 2. Immersion of Gentiles when they converted to Judaism.

- **5 *All of Judea and Jerusalem is being baptized.***

- So already, baptism was connected to (1) repentance, (2) confession, (3) and forgiveness of sin.

- **6 *John's Lifestyle: rugged living, survivalism.***

- This recalls Elijah (2 Kgs 1:8)
- John is living off the land, abandoning luxuries.
- Locusts were a clean food (Lev 11:20–23)

- **7 *He is coming, but John is unworthy.***

- John preaches about the one coming who is greater than him.
- John places himself below even that of a slave.²

- **8 *John baptized with water; Jesus with Spirit.***

¹ Strauss, *Mark*, 64.

² The Talmud says the disciple of a rabbi must do everything except remove shoes (*b. Ketub.* 96a) cf. Strauss, *Mark*, 65.

- However, Gospel of John states that one must be baptized with both (John 3:5)
- This foreshadows the outpouring of the Spirit that began at Pentecost (Acts 2)
- This outpouring was predicted in the Old Testament (Isa 44:3; Ezek 36:26–27; Joel 2:28; etc).

Baptism and Temptation of Jesus (1:9–13)

1:9 And it happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. **11** And a voice came from the heavens, “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.” **12** And immediately the Spirit cast him out into the wilderness. **13** And he was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by the Adversary and he was with the wild animals, and the messengers were ministering to him.

1:9–11 Baptism

This is the event where Jesus (1) receives his power; and (2) receives divine affirmation from God.

- **9** *Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.*
 - Nazareth was the city where Jesus grew up, but he was born in Bethlehem (Matt 2:1, 23; Luke 2:4, 39).
 - Jesus himself was baptized. What are the implications? (cf. Matt 3:14)
- **10** *Jesus came up from the water; the heavens split open, the Spirit descends.*
 - That Jesus ‘came up’ from the water implies full-immersion.¹
 - This “ripping open” indicates a divine revelation. Opens a parentheses which ends later in the Gospel at 15:38 when the temple curtain is ripped.
 - Access to God (ripping of the curtain) begins with Jesus (at baptism).
 - Jesus’s reception of the Spirit must be read alongside Isa 11:2–4.
- **11** *You are my beloved Son, I am well pleased with you.*
 - Alludes to Ps 2:7 (Son of God);
 - Gen 22:2 (Abraham/Isaac);
 - and Isa 42:1 (God is pleased with the Spirit-empowered servant)

¹ Strauss, *Mark*, 72.

1:12–13 Temptation• **12 *Right after this, Jesus goes to the wilderness.***

- Similar account of Paul’s conversion “going to Arabia” (Gal 1:17)
- The Spirit is leading him now.

• **13 *40 days, Satan, wild animals, and angels.***

- Period of testing “where Messianic credentials are confirmed.”²
- The wilderness was a place of testing for Israel.
- Jesus’s 40 days represents the 40 years of wilderness wanderings in which they ate manna and depended on God for survival (Exod 16:35; Num 14:34).
- “Satan” is a transliteration of σατάν which means ‘Adversary’.
 - * He is the tester/accuser of God’s people (1 Chron 21:1; Job 1–2; Zech 3:1–2)
 - * Kind of like a “prosecuting attorney” (esp. in Zech 3).

² Strauss, *Mark*, 74.

Part IV

The Authority of the Messiah (1:14–8:21)

The Kingdom Authority of the Messiah (1:14–3:6)

Jesus's central message is the nearness of the kingdom of God and the need to respond with repentance and faith in the good new of God's message of salvation. Jesus then calls two fishermen to learn to fish for people or *calling others to obedience to God and his kingdom purposes*.¹

Jesus Proclaims the Kingdom and Calls Disciples (1:14–20)

Mark 1:14 But after John was handed over Jesus came into Galilee preaching the good news of God 15 and saying that, “The time has been fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe in the good news.” 16 And while passing by the sea of Galilee he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon while they were casting their nets into the sea, for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, “Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” 18 And immediately after leaving their nets they followed him. 19 And after going a little way he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother and they were in a boat mending nets, 20 And immediately he called out to them. And leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired laborers they followed after him.

- 1:14 *John is Arrested; Jesus goes to Galilee*

- Establishes the context of Jesus's ministry.
- John is now “passing the torch” as he is imprisoned by Herod Antipas (cf. 6:14–29).²

- 1:15 *Jesus's Good News*

- Jesus's Fundamental Message:
 1. The time has been fulfilled,
 2. The *Kingdom of God* has come near,
 3. Repent and believe in the good news.
- The “Kingdom of God” has more to do with God's dynamic *reign* and not necessarily always static *realm*³

¹ Summary from Strauss, *Mark*, 77.

² This is, perhaps, one example when what we might perceive as a negative event (the imprisonment of John) actually helped serve the future better. As a leader, a “succession plan” is a valuable thing to keep in mind. It might be that it is better for you to step out of your role so another can come into it instead of trying to hang onto something for yourself. If John had continued, would his disciples have made the transition to Jesus? cf. John 1 for how John is constantly pointing to Jesus instead of himself.

³ Strauss, 81.

- Kingdom of God is a “present reality” (in Jesus/church) and a “future hope” (in the church & ultimately end of time).
- 1:16 *Jesus calls Simon and Andrew*
 - Titles of the Sea of Galilee;
 - * Sea of Kinnereth (Num 31:11; Josh 13:27) and Lake Gennesaret (Luke 5:1) indicate the “harp shape” of the Lake;
 - * Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1) in reference to the city of Tiberias on the western shore.
 - * Fishing was the major industry.
 - 3/4 of these called disciples would be part of the “inner circle.”
 - It’s interesting that Jesus does not select his disciples from among the scribal elite, Pharisees, or priests in the Temple. In fact, most of his disciples lived in Galilee and not Judea/Jerusalem. Judas may have come from this region, but we don’t know for sure.
 - In Johannine account, Andrew was a disciple of John and then began to follow Jesus. Andrew found Peter and told him to follow Jesus. There is no mention of Jesus meeting them on the shore although it’s not impossible that this didn’t happen as well (cf. John 1:40–42).
- 1:17 *Fishing for Men*
 - Students normally sought after Rabbis to follow them, but Jesus actually seeks out his own disciples.⁴
 - Jesus would help them “fish people out of the sea.” The sea was often associated with danger/death & the underworld (think Jonah). We will explore this metaphor more with the boat trips.
- 1:18 *“At once they followed him”*: Jesus speaks, people obey⁵
- 1:19 *James and John, sons of Thunder*
 - They were mending/preparing their nets.
 - James is listed first and so is probably firstborn.⁶
 - This is not James son of Alphaeus (3:18) or James half-brother of Jesus (6:13; Acts 1:14).
 - Jesus nicknames them “Sons of Thunder” perhaps because of their personalities (were they volatile? cf. 9:39; Lk 9:54)
- 1:20 *They left their father to follow Jesus*
 - Zebedee had some wealth (hired servants).
 - James/John did not leave their father helpless.
 - Yet this demonstrates their sacrifice, honoring one’s parents was an important value. Their “abandonment” was radical.
 - One must leave family (3:33–34), wealth (10:21–24), and deny oneself (8:34)

⁴ Strauss, 83.

⁵ Strauss, 85

⁶ Strauss, 84.

Authority in Teaching, Healing, and Exorcism (1:21–45)

This section is one long day in Capernaum (1:21–34) and the morning of the next day (1:35–38).

Jesus Teaches and Drives Out an Evil Spirit (1:21–28)

1:21 And he entered into Capernaum and immediately on the sabbath after he entered into the synagogue he was teaching. 22 And they were amazed because of his teaching, for he was teaching them as one having authority and but not like the scribes. 23 And immediately there was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit and he cried out saying, 24 “What to us and you, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” 25 And Jesus rebuked him saying, “Be silent and come out from him.” 26 And the unclean spirit convulsed the man and after crying out with a loud voice he went out from him. 27 And they were all amazed as to ask among themselves saying, “Who is this? He teaches with new authority, and he commands the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” 28 And his fame spread out immediately everywhere in the whole region of Galilee.

• 1:21 *Teaching in the Synagogue on Sabbath (Capernaum)*

- Capernaum means “village of Nahum.” Capernaum was the “base of operations” of Jesus. He probably had a house here (2:1; 9:33).
- Synagogue service probably had prayers and readings, a translation of the Hebrew text into Aramaic, a sermon, and a closing prayer.
- Visiting teachers were allowed to speak, it’s possible Jesus had already established himself as a “lay Rabbi” and thus was granted the privilege to speak. 1:22 *They were amazed at his teaching authority*
- He probably taught the message of the kingdom.
- He spoke *with authority* but not like the scholars (scribes). Scribes were an occupation and not a “sect.” A scribe could be a Pharisee or a Sadducee or even a priest.
- These were some of those who passed on oral traditions (some that were “traditions of the elders”). These traditions may or may not have been biblically-based.

• 1:23 *The Unclean Spirit*

- A “spirit that defiles” or a demon that is a spiritual entity in alliance with Satan.⁷
- This spirit disrupts one’s relationship with God in that it makes one hostile to God.

• 1:24 *“What do you want with us? I know who you are!”*

- This saying “what to us and you” is similar” to John 2:4.
- Jesus is invading the domain of the demons. This one speaks for others either in this man or in the realm of demons.
- Jesus has not yet announced his identity; but these supernatural beings, even evil ones, *know who Jesus is!*
- “Holy One of God” indicates one who is set apart for God’s service (Aaron Ps 106:16; Elisha 2 Kgs 4:9).

• 1:25 *Jesus Silences the Demon(s)*

⁷ Strauss, 91.

- This is the first instance in which Jesus commands silence during a miraculous event.
- Jesus exerts his authority over the demons, but silences them so he can reveal himself on his own schedule (cf. John 2:4).
- The demons thought they were working against him, but actually served his mission.

• **1:26 *The Demon Comes Out***

- Causes convulsions, shrieking in attempt to injure the host.
- Jesus only uses authority to cast it out and not spells, rituals, or incantations.⁸
- Physical healing is representative of the spiritual healing provided in Christ.

• **1:27 *Everyone is Amazed***

- A new teaching, with new authority (teaching/authority > exorcism).
- Jesus's miracles are not about the miracles but what they say about him.
- It's important to recognize that Satan and his demonic forces are real but blaming Satan and his demons for every disease or unfortunate event in life is not realistic. Taking up the "armor of God" in Christ helps us combat these (Eph 6:10–20).

• **1:28 *All of Galilee Finds Out.***⁹

Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-Law and Others (1:29–34)

1:29 And immediately after going out from the synagogue they went into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. 30 But the mother-in-law of Peter was laying while in fever, and immediately they spoke with him about her. 31 And after coming Jesus lifted her grasping her hand, and the fever left her and she was serving them. 32 And being evening, when the sun set, they brought to him all who were sickly and the ones being demon possessed. 33 And the whole city gathered at the door. 34 And he healed many of those who were sickly with various diseases and he cast out many demons and he was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew him.

• **1:29 *They left the synagogue and went to Simon and Andrew's Home***

- Only Simon, Andrew, James and John were listed as being present.
- Did Simon, Simon's wife (cf. 1 Cor 9:5), Andrew, and Simon's mother-in-law all share a house?

• **1:30 *Peter's Mother-in-Law is Ill***

- She "has a fever" or possibly more of a disease.¹⁰
- There's an urgency (immediately) about the situation. They probably asked Jesus to heal her.

• **1:31 *He raised her up, she serves them.***

⁸ Strauss, 93.

⁹ Josephus (*Antiquities* 18.3.3) claimed Jesus "did startling deeds" and the Jewish Babylonian Talmud (*Sahnhedrin* 43a) claims Jesus was executed for practicing magic and leading Israel astray. Even later pagan opponents of Christianity recognized that Jesus did do miraculous things (Origen, *Celsus* 1:38).

¹⁰ Strauss, 99.

- Jesus simply touched her and raised her up (this was on the Sabbath).
- Reveals his compassion and empathy.
- Peter's mother-in-law returns to normal and begins to serve them.
- 1:32 *After sunset, more people want healing.*
 - Sabbath is now over b/c of sunset.
 - People begin coming out to Jesus.
- 1:33–34 *The Whole City; Many Sick; More Demons who know Him.*
 - Jesus took time to heal people's earthly ailments.
 - This sets a ministry standard for healing people's spiritual ailments.
 - More demons are cast out but not permitted to speak. Their testimony (as spiritual forces) confirms his more-than-human nature.

Jesus' Prayer Life and Ministry Purpose (1:35–39)

1:35 And early in the morning when it was still dark after rising he went out and departed to a deserted place and there he was praying. 36 And Simon searched for him and those with him. 37 And they found him and said to him, "Everyone seeks you." 38 And Jesus said to them, "Let us go elsewhere to the nearby villages, in order that I might preach there also, for this is why I came." 39 So he went preaching in the synagogues in all of Galilee and casting out demons.

- 1:35 *Morning Prayer in a Secluded Place*
 - Even after a late night of ministry, Jesus gets up early to pray *before he resumes ministry*. Application?
 - Personal prayer with God was a priority. Jesus did nothing without guidance from and reliance on God.
- 1:36–37 *Disciples Look for Him; Everyone else is looking too*
 - Simon is the "spokesperson/representative" of the disciples (Andrew, James, and John).
 - The townspeople are seeking Jesus wanting more exorcisms and healings.
- 1:38 *Jesus desires to go elsewhere.*
 - People in Capernaum are interested in his miracles.
 - Jesus's purpose is greater than popular acclaim.
 - "Nearby villages" are just that and not the large cities in Galilee (Sepphoris, Tiberias, etc.)
- 1:39 *Preaching in Synagogues; Casting out demons*
 - Summary statement.
 - Exorcisms may have been more important than healings (cf. 3:14).¹¹

¹¹ Strauss, 107.

Jesus Heals a Leper (1:40–45)

1:40 And a leper came to him imploring him and saying to him, “If you desire, can you heal me to make me clean?” 41 And after having compassion on him [being angry at him] he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, “I will, be clean.” 42 And immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. 43 And Jesus charged him immediately sending him away 44 and he said to him, “See that you say nothing to no one, but go show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing which Moses commanded, for proof to them.” 45 But the man went out and began to proclaim greatly and spread the word, so that Jesus no longer was able to openly enter into a city, but he was out in deserted places and the people were coming to him from all directions.

• 1:40 *A Leper Begs Jesus for Healing*

- “Leper” (*lepos*/λεπρός) may refer to any kind of skin disease (inc. leprosy).
- One could not touch a leper lest they become ritually unclean.
- Only a priest could declare them clean (Lev 13).
- The man expresses faith in Jesus’s ability, but has some reservations.
- *Faith is necessary for physical healing (then). Faith is (now) necessary for spiritual healing provided in Christ.*

• 1:41–42 *Jesus Heals Him*

- There is a textual variant that reads “angry” instead of compassion.
- What was he angry at? Some think Jesus was angry at the disease itself and the social consequences of this (isolation).
- Jesus’s touching would have technically rendered him unclean. Uncleanliness was not sin, but part of normal life. But this uncleanliness was temporary and also probably reflects the coming changes of ritual purity and ceremony.¹²

• 1:43–44 *Jesus warns him, sends him away.*

- Jesus *sternly* warns him.
- Again Jesus requests silence after a healing event (cf. 45 was this why he was possibly angry?)
- The man must show himself to the priest and fulfill the Law (which hasn’t yet passed away).

• 1:45 *Consequences of the Healing*

- *To Jesus’s Advantage* — he is proclaimed everywhere.
- *To Jesus’s Disadvantage* — the healing limited his ability to enter places and fulfill his preaching. He had to go out into secluded areas but people kept coming to him in masses.
- *Ethical Question* — did the man disobey Jesus?

¹² cf. Strauss, 112–13.

Application

The kingdom of God brings “purity” that not only affects oneself (like the leper) but also affects others around us (the healed man telling everyone). It also indicates, indirectly, that the proper response to being healed by Christ is “preaching/proclaiming” it to everyone. Thus “unclean” society is not something to be feared and withdrawn from. What “goes in the body” does not defile a person but “what comes out of it” (Mark 7:18ff). Instead we should be a light to the world instead of “hiding it under a bushel” to protect our light. This does not, however, mean that we do whatever we want in the world “because it does not defile us.”

Conflicts with Religious Leaders (2:1–3:6)

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man (2:1–12)

2:1 And again he came to Capernaum after a few days it was heard that he was at home. 2 And many were gathered so that there was no longer room for anyone the door, and he was speaking the word to them. 3 And they came bearing to him a paralytic taken up by four. 4 And they were not able to bring to him on account of the crowd they uncovered the roof where he was, and after digging it out they lowered the bed down that the paralytic was lying on. 5 And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, “Child, your sins have been forgiven.” 6 But some of the scribes were there sitting and questioning in their hearts, 7 “Why does this man speak like this? He blasphemies, Who is able to forgive sins except the one God?” 8 And immediately Jesus knowing in his spirit that they debated in themselves said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? 9 What is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘your sins are being forgiven,’ or to say, ‘raise up and take up your pallet and walk?’ 10 But in order that you might know that the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins upon the earth.” He then said to the paralytic, 11 “I say to you, raise up take up your pallet and depart to your house.” 12 And he rose and immediately took up the bed and went out before all, so that all were amazed and glorified God saying that they had never seen anything like it.

- 2:1–2 *Jesus returns to Capernaum; Everyone Finds Out; They Crowd Him; Jesus begins to preach.*
 - This section connects a series of healing miracles to a series of conflicts with skeptical religious leaders.
 - Was this where Jesus had a house or just the house of Peter/Andrew?
 - The crowd was so large, there was no room even at the door.
 - Jesus’s popularity was growing.
- 2:3–4 *Paralyzed Man Brought by Four Men; Dug Hole in Roof; Lowered Him Down.*
 - Palestinian roofs were flat with wooden crossbeams with thatch and dirt.¹³
 - The four men would have dug through the dirt and pulled back the thatch.
 - The specifics of the man’s disease are not explained other than he cannot walk.
- 2:5 *Jesus recognizes their faith; Forgives the sins of the paralytic.*
 - The faith of the friends and the man.
 - When Jesus encounters sick people he: (1) heals them; (2) forgives their sins.

¹³ Strauss, 120.

- Through this healings and others, we learn how Jesus still works now.
- Jesus here acts as God’s spokesperson and announces forgiveness.
- **2:6–7 *Scribes are there (scholars of the Law of Moses); They Accuse Jesus.***
 - These scribes are here checking up on this “new teacher” and investigating him.
 - Convicted blasphemy receives the penalty of stoning (Lev 24:10–16).
 - Jesus is being accused of “usurping God’s power/oneness” by “claiming” to do something that only God can.¹⁴
- **2:8–9 *Jesus Knows What They Were Thinking; Challenges the Scribes***
 - At the same time they were thinking about him, Jesus knew “in his spirit” what they were saying (supernaturally).
 - Jesus uses a Jewish rabbinic argument *qal vahomer* (“lesser-to-greater”). If Jesus can do the harder one (heal the paralytic) then he can do the lesser (forgive sins).¹⁵
- **2:10–11 *The Son of Man Can Forgive Sin; “Get up and Go Home”***
 - The “Son of Man” title hints at his suffering.
 - This title expresses his (1) relationship with mankind; and (2) divinity but without political connotations (Son of David, Messiah). See Daniel 7:13ff for background.
 - Jesus’s power on earth parallels God’s power on heaven.
- **2:12 *The Paralytic Walks; Everyone is Amazed and Praises God!***
 - The healing was instant (“immediately”).
 - This healing confirms that he did forgive the man’s sins.¹⁶
 - Religious leaders would have lost honor before the people.

Jesus Calls Levi and Eats with Sinners (2:13–17)

2:13 And he went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. 14 And while passing by he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And after rising he followed him. 15 And he began to recline in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were coming to Jesus and his disciples, for there were many and they were following him. 16 And the Pharisaic scribes, seeing that he ate with the sinners and tax collectors, were saying to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” 17 And after hearing this Jesus said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician rather the ones who are sick, I did not come to call the righteous but the sinners.”

- **2:13 *Jesus Teaching Many Beside the Sea of Galilee***
 - Again we see that Jesus’s primary teaching area was beside the Sea of Galilee.

¹⁴ Strauss, 122.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Strauss, 124.

- It's possible that Levi and the other disciples knew Jesus or listened to his teachings *before* he explicitly called them.¹⁷
- “Everyone” the “whole crowd” means a lot of people but literally everyone.
- As was his practice, when a crowd formed, Jesus began to teach.

• 2:14 *Jesus Encounters Levi; “Follow Me”; He Follows*

- Who was Levi? Matthew calls him Matthew (Matt 9:9). This is probably the same individual.
- It seems that Levi had a brother (James son of Alphaeus cf. Mk 3:18)
- Was Matthew a Levite? If so, this means that he neglected his religious duty to collect taxes for the Romans/Herod Antipas and was despised by his countryman.¹⁸
- The “tax booth” was a “tollbooth” where he would have collected taxes on goods in transit from the sea or on the roads.
- Tax collecting was kind of like a pyramid scheme where the tax collectors would always collect more than asked for.
- Tax collectors were prohibited from giving money (for religious reasons) because it was obtained illegally (*m. B. Qam.* 10:1). The house a tax collector entered was considered unclean (*m. Tehar.* 7:6).

• 2:15 *Jesus and Disciples at Dinner Party with Tax Collectors and Sinners*

- They were reclining at the table in Greco-Roman fashion.
- Levi's friends were essentially other tax collectors and “riffraff,” unacceptable companions for “proper Jews.”
- Many tax collectors and sinners were following them.¹⁹

• 2:16 *Pharisee Scholars See Jesus Eating with “Them”; Question Disciples*

- Some scribes were Pharisees; other scribes were Sadducees. Scribes was an occupation (like fishermen) and not a “sect.”
- Pharisees arose from the *Hasidim* (“pious ones”) in response to the Greek oppressors during the Intertestamental Period (namely Antiochus IV Epiphanes).
 - * They were obsessed with holiness, “being separate,” strict adherence to the Torah (Pentateuch/OT), and the oral traditions (“traditions of the elders”).
 - * Jesus mostly agreed with the Pharisees but did not agree with the way they carried out their purposes (purity, etc). In their concern to “be pure” and external things they lost touch with the care of God's people.
- Eating meals was normally only done with those of the same social status. Pharisees would not eat with “commoners” because they weren't sure if their food was ceremonially clean. A kind of “elitism” developed.²⁰

¹⁷ Strauss, 129.

¹⁸ Strauss, 130.

¹⁹ Sinners is more of a social designation. This does not imply that Pharisees, Scribes, etc did not sin themselves but that these “sinners” were regarded negatively in society.

²⁰ In some respects, we still struggle with issues of eating and meals. This was one of the biggest problems in the early church (1 Cor) and remains so in the Churches of Christ. We are frequently guilty of maintaining our own social meal groups but for different reasons that, like the Pharisees, are ultimately selfish.

• 2:17 *“Healthy People Don’t Need a Doctor; I Came for the Sick not Righteous”*

- “Healthy people don’t need a doctor” is a common proverb.²¹
- The point is: Jesus didn’t come to invite people who think they are righteous but to invite the *Spiritually Needy* to his table for fellowship.²²
- **Application:** Believers must not build church walls to separate themselves from the world but to carry the message of Jesus into the world. This includes those who we might socially despise or look down upon.²³ *The church and Christian family cannot be the extent of our living our faith for Christ.*

Jesus is Questioned about Fasting (2:18–22)

2:18 And the disciples of John and the Pharisees were fasting. And they came and said to him, “Why do the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” 19 And Jesus said to them “Are the wedding guests able to fast while the bridegroom with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they are not able to fast. 20 But the days will come when the bridegroom must be taken from them, and then they will fast in those days. 21 No one sows a piece of unshrunk cloth upon an old garment; otherwise the patch tears away from it the new and the old become torn. 22 And no one puts new wine in old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the wineskins and both the wine and the skins are destroyed; rather the new wine is put into new wineskins.

• 2:18 *Pharisees and John’s Disciples Fast; Jesus’s Disciples Don’t*

- The common people were watching the popular religious groups to see how they acted: John’s disciples, the Pharisees, and Jesus’s disciples. Some people notice that Jesus’s disciples don’t act like the others and so decided to question him: You’re not behaving like the other religious people are supposed to.
- It’s possible that one of the biweekly fasts (Mon, Thurs) were being observed since there’s not a mention of a feast (cf. Luke 18:12).²⁴
- John’s disciples were likely praying and fasting because John was imprisoned.

• 2:19 *Wedding Guests /Groomsmen Don’t Fast when the Groom is Here*

- One did not fast at a wedding, they feasted!
- Jesus describes his disciples as special guests, or even as the groomsmen.
- Jesus considers himself as the host of a messianic banquet. Wedding imagery of Jesus being the groom to the bride of the church is implied here.

• 2:20 *Groom Will Be Taken Away; Then Disciples Fast*

- “In that day” = both (1) when Jesus is arrested and (2) after Jesus ascends to heaven.²⁵

²¹ Jewish *Mekilta* (commentary) on Exod 15:26. also in Greco-Roman writers Plutarch & Dio Chrysostom. For more historical references see Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 129.

²² Strauss, 133.

²³ Strauss (p. 133) lists modern social outcasts: gang members, drug addicts and dealers, alcoholics, prostitutes, practicing homosexuals, pornographers, those in prison or on parole, those with different religious traditions, elderly, those in care facilities, and those with mental illness.

²⁴ Strauss, 138.

²⁵ Strauss, 139.

• **2:21–22 *Unshrunk Cloth; New Wine in Old Wineskins***

- New wine would ferment and stretch old skins.
- The Old is incompatible with the new. Jesus/the Kingdom of God cannot be put into the “Old.”
- His mission is not to reform or “patch” Israel’s religion but begin something new.

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (2:23–3:6)

Picking Grain on the Sabbath (2:23–28)

2:23 And it happened on the Sabbath he was passing through the grain fields, and his disciples began plucking heads of grain along the way. 24 And the Pharisees were saying to him, “Behold why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” 25 And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he had need and was hungry and those with him also? 26 How he entered into the house of God before Abiathar the high priest and ate of the bread of presence, which is not lawful to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him.” 27 And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made on account of man not man on account of the Sabbath, 28 so also the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”

• **2:23–24 *Plucking Grain; Pharisees Accuse Jesus***

- Time was probably early summer since harvest was near. Plucking grain from someone else’s field was not a problem, just don’t use a sickle (Deut 23:25).²⁶
- But the disciples were working on the Sabbath which, in the Pharisee tradition, included “plucking” and obtaining food.

• **2:25–26 *David and the Showbread***

- Jesus references 1 Sam 21:1–6 where David asked for bread when fleeing Saul. The High Priest Ahimelech gave it to them.
- “Human need supersedes ritual observance” (Strauss).
- Jesus considered himself greater than David (Mk 12:35–40). So the logic is: *If David and his companions could eat the bread, how much more could Jesus and his companions break ritual?*

• **2:27–28 *Sabbath Made for Humanity; So Mankind rules over Sabbath***

- “Son of Man” can be both Jesus and mankind.

Healing on the Sabbath (3:1–6)

3:1 And he went in again into the synagogue. And there was a man who had a withered hand. 2 And they were watching him if on the Sabbath to see he would heal him, in order that they might accuse him. 3 And they said to the man who has the withered hand, “Come into the middle.” 4 And he said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save a soul or to kill it?” But they were silent. 5 And looking around them with anger, he became grieved by the hardness of their hearts then said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out and his hand was restored. 6 And after the Pharisees went out immediately with the Herodians they held council concerning how they might destroy him.

²⁶ Strauss, 144.

• **3:1 *He Went to the Synagogue; Man with Withered Hand***

- Going to the Synagogue on the Sabbath was expected. Jesus also went because people went to the Synagogue to focus on God.
- “Withered” = deformed, dried, etc.

• **3:2 *The Pharisees Watched Him to Accuse Him***

- Jesus had healed in the past, would he do it again? Very possible that the man with the withered hand was a setup.
- Medical care was only permissible (on the Sabbath) for (1) life or death situation; (2) childbirth; (3) circumcision.
- This man was none of these three, so it was a test for Jesus.
- Strauss asks (p. 147) was not their scheming actually working?

• **3:3–4 *“Stand in the Middle; What is Lawful on the Sabbath?”***

- Jesus directly challenges the Pharisees, places the man in the middle.
- Healing him was a good deed; not healing him demonstrates lack of compassion and was an evil deed.
- Their silence concedes guilt.

• **3:5 *Jesus is Angry; Heals the Man***

- Righteous anger at his enemies and lack of compassion.
- They’re more concerned about “doctrine” than caring for people. Jesus requires doing both equally.

• **3:6 *Pharisees Leave; Plot with Herodians to Kill Him***

- Herodians were politically connected to Herod Antipas.
- Herodians were aristocratic and pro-Roman and the Pharisees were anti-Roman so clearly politics is in view.
- Is “plotting for evil” a violation of the Sabbath?

Application

- Jesus’s authority supersedes the Sabbath and ritual Law.
 - He has come to establish something new that is incompatible with the old.
 - Jesus’s opponents (religious leaders) are shown to be arrogant and self-serving while the poor and humble and sinners need Christ.
 - The Sabbath would be replaced with ultimate salvation (i.e. life in heaven cf. Heb 3:19ff).
 - The Sabbath is no longer a special day. *Every Day* is to be given to the Lord (cf. Rom 14:5–6; Gal 4:10; Col 2:16).
-

The Disciple Family of the Messiah (3:7–6:6)

Summary of Jesus's Ministry (3:7–12)

3:7 And Jesus with his disciples withdrew by the sea, and a great crowd from Galilee [was following], and from Judea 8 And from Jerusalem and from Idumea and beyond the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon a great crowd was hearing all that he had done and came they to him. 9 And he said to his disciples in order that they might ready a small boat for him because of the crowd in order that they might not crush him, 10 For he healed many, as to fall on him in order that he might touch the ones having diseases. 11 And unclean spirits, whenever they were seeing him, they fell down before him and they were crying out saying that, "You are the son of God." 12 And many he ordered them in order that they might not make him known.

- **3:7–8 *Jesus & Disciples Withdraw; Great Crowds Come***

- They came from: * *Judea/Jerusalem* * *Idumea/Edom* — home of Herod the Great. This is where Esau's descendants lived (Gen 25:30; 36:1). They were forcibly converted to Judaism during the Intertestamental Period by John Hyrcanus.¹ * *Beyond the Jordan* — includes Decapolis, Perea, etc. They were under the rule of Herod Antipas (Luke 3:1). * *Tyre/Sidon* — Phoenician cities on the coast. Jesus will later visit these cities (7:24). These are historically Gentile cities. So *even the Gentiles* heard Jesus in the beginning of his ministry.

- * The "disciples" at this point include a much larger group than just the "Twelve." He has not yet chosen them (see below).

- **3:9 *Prepare a Boat; Lest They Be Crushed!***

- The boat allowed Jesus to put some physical distance between himself and the crowd; while also providing a platform to teach them (cf. 4:1).

- **3:10 *Many Were Coming for Healing***

- Their motive is not to hear him, but to receive something from him (healing).
- Jesus, however, was fulfilling their requests.
- People in the ancient world thought that touching a healer would heal them. Jesus will later emphasize that faith healed not some "power" they can access for themselves (5:24).

¹ Strauss, 153–54.

· 3:11 *Unclean Spirits Proclaim “You are the Son of God”*

- Before the disciples acknowledge it, the demons with supernatural knowledge know who Jesus is.
- Maybe they thought they could “influence him” by identifying him or calling out his name.²

· 3:12 *“Be Silent!”*

- Jesus again did not permit the demons to speak about him.
- It was not their place to announce his identity.

Choosing the Twelve (3:13–19)

3:13 And he went to the mountain and called whom he desired, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve [who were also called apostles] in order that they might be with him and that they might be sent out to preach 15 and to have authority to cast out demons; 16 [and he made them twelve,] and gave the name Peter to Simon, 17 And James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James and he gave to them the name Boanerges, who are Sons of Thunder; 18 And Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas and James the son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus and Simon the Canaanite 19 and Judas Iscariot, the one who also betrayed him.

- “Many of these individual will play no role in the subsequent narrative, so Mark’s purpose is to emphasize the constitute of the body rather than their individual roles.”³

· 3:13 *Summoned them on the Mountain*

- Mountain (*horos*/ὄρος) could indicate a mountainous area, not just a singular mountain.
- Jesus had a larger group of followers from whom he chose the twelve.

· 3:14–15 *Appointed Twelve to Preach and Cast Out Demons.*

- The immediate purpose of appointing the Twelve (apostles) was:
 1. So they would preach.
 2. So they could cast out demons.
 3. Be with him and by implication: watch what he does
- They are not explicitly identified as leaders of the church because this has not yet been revealed as a purpose of Jesus’s coming. All Jesus has done so far is basically these two things, so they were participating in his early ministry purposes.
- “He made them disciples” or “he commissioned them”⁴
- The number Twelve is a reference to what?
- Strauss writes, “Jesus viewed himself, in some sense, as restoring, reforming, or reconstituting the remnant of Israel.”

² Strauss, 155.

³ Strauss, 158.

⁴ Strauss, 159.

- “By not being one of the Twelve, Jesus considers himself symbolically above them in the way that God was to Israel.”
- 3:16–17 *Simon-Peter, James and John “Sons of Thunder”*
 - Simon Peter is always named first in lists of apostles (Matt 10:2–4; Luke 6:14–16; Acts 1:13).
 - * Jesus called him “Cephas” (rock, stone) in Aramaic which translates to “Peter” (rock) in Greek (Jn 1:42).
 - * This may be why Paul can call him by both names in Gal 2
 - Peter, James, and John were the “inner circle”.
 - “Sons of Thunder” refers to there volatile personalities? (10:35–39)⁵
- 3:18–19 *Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot.*
 - *Andrew* seems to have a close relationship with Philip (John 12:20–22).
 - *Philip* introduced Nathanael to Jesus (John 1:44–45).
 - *Bartholomew* is “Bar-Tholomew” thus “Son of Tolmai.” This was a “patronymic” (i.e. Bar-Jesus) and was not his real name. Maybe this is Nathanael.
 - *Thomas* aka Didymus (“the twin”)
 - *James the son of Alphaeus* or “James the Younger.” Brother of Matthew/Levi (2:14).
 - *Thaddaeus* was Judas the son of James? Nickname to avoid confusion?
 - *Simon the Canaanite* (Mark/Matt) or “the Zealot” (Luke).
 - *Judas the Iscariot* means Judas from Kerioth (a town in Judea).

Application: Modeling Discipleship

- “Jesus knew the best way to train his disciples was:
 1. *Model his life before them.*
 2. *Send them out to do it themselves.*⁶
 3. *Because people learn best not by reading manuals or being told what to do but by watching and doing.*
- Paul encouraged others to “Follow/Imitate Me” (1 Cor 1:11; Phil 3:17; etc).
- Our role in the church is to train people to do what we do. If elders, find people to serve as elders. If deacons, find more servant-minded people. If teachers, find people who have that gift. If encouragement, find people who... etc.

⁵ Strauss, 161.

⁶ Strauss, 163.

Jesus's True Family & the Beelzebul Controversy (3:20–35)

3:20 And he came home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they were unable to eat bread. 21 And after hearing his own came out to seize him, for they were saying that he is out of his mind. 22 And the scribes who are from Jerusalem after coming down said he was held by Beelzebul and that he casts out demons by the ruler of demons. 23 And after speaking to them in parables saying to them, “How is an adversary able to cast out adversary? 24 And if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom is not able to stand, 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house is not able to stand. 26 And if the Adversary (Satan) rose against himself and was divided, he would not be able to stand but would have end. 27 But no one is able to enter in the house of of the mighty to plunder his goods, if he does not first bind the mighty, and then plunder his house. 28 Truly I say to you that all the sins of the sons of men will be forgiven and the blasphemies as many as they blaspheme, 29 but whoever might blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, will not have forgiveness in this age, but is guilty of eternal sin.” 30 Because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.” 31 And his mother and siblings came and were standing outside they sent for him calling him. 32 And the crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Behold your mother and your brothers [and your sisters] are outside seeking you.” 33 And he answered them saying, “Who are my mother and [my] siblings?” 34 And looking around about him in a circle to those who are sitting he said, “Here are my mother and my siblings.” 35 [For] whoever might do the will of God, this one is my brother and my sister and my mother.

• **3:20 Returned Home; Crowd Gathers Again; They Cannot Eat**

- They return to the house that served as their “base of operations.” Probably the house of Peter and Andrew. Either way, this is the house where the paralytic was lowered down.
- They were unable to eat anything — *effective ministry/evangelism may sometimes deprive one of the time to attend to basic needs like eating! Putting those fleshy desires even for food aside may be necessary to fulfill our calling.*

• **3:21 His Family Comes; Try to Restrain Him**

- Vague reference here “his own” but reading down his family was there (v. 31).
- Probably included Mary, James/Jacob (cf. Acts 12:17; Gal 1:19), Joseph, Judas, and Simon and two sisters (cf. Mark 6:3).
- Because Jesus’s father is not listed, most assume he was dead at this point.
- Family traveled from Nazareth to Capernaum to try to reason with Jesus.
- His family did not quite understand what he was doing (cf. John 7:2–9)
 - * Even though Mary knew his role (to an extent), upsetting the religious authority and breaking religious traditions may have not been what they envisioned.
 - * Jesus was bringing shame to their family name (cf. 6:3) so the family was taking responsibility for him.
 - * Contemporary film (*Passion, Son of God, The Bible* which are Catholic) often takes liberties with Mary and denote her as constantly supportive/understanding of Jesus’s ministry. Initially, this was not the case. She too had to “come to faith.”

• **3:22 Scholars from Jerusalem Accuse Jesus**

- They had previously accused him of blasphemy and eating with sinners (ch. 2)

- * Closely associated with Pharisees.⁷
- * Probably sent “officially” from leadership in Jerusalem. If so, this may explain why going to Jerusalem was such an ominous threat to the disciples. There was talk from THE leaders of Jerusalem about Jesus (Mark 10:32).
- “Beelzebul ruler of the demons”?
 - * Linked with “Baal.” Jews called him Baal-Zebul (Judg 10:6; 2 Kgs 1:2–6) meaning “Lord of the Flies.”⁸
 - * Jesus replies to speak about Satan, so this was the obvious understanding of the word.
- Jesus’s opponents *knew* he performed exorcisms but tried to attribute it to something evil instead of God (blasphemy of the HS).
- 3:23–26 *Satan vs. Satan; Divided Kingdom*
 - Parables means “riddles, proverbs, metaphors, illustrations, etc.”⁹
 - Jesus reveals the absurdity of their claim: Would Satan really cast out his own demons?
 - Kingdom and house implies a royal dynasty of sorts (Herods?; N/S Kingdoms of Israel?)
- 3:27 *No One Can Rob a Strong Man*
 - Jesus has entered the “house” of Satan (the world) and tied him up and taking his property (the people possessed).¹⁰
 - The Kingdom of God is invading Satan’s Domain and overtaking it.
- 3:38–30 *Forgiveness for Every Sin EXCEPT Blasphemy of the Spirit*
 - Jesus’s opponents have attributed something to Satan (and called it evil) that came from God (the Holy Spirit).
 - Therefore they blasphemed the Holy Spirit which was unforgivable. Is this possible today? Attributing things to the work of Satan that are the work of God?
 - “Truly truly I say to you” reminds people of “Thus says the Lord” in the prophets.
- 3:31–32 *Jesus’s Family Arrives; Calls for Him; Crowd Tells Jesus*
 - Jesus did have sisters (6:3) they may have been here. Included in the word “brothers.”
 - Contrast between Jesus’s family which is outside and Jesus’s true family inside (his disciples). Those “outside” are said not to understand the parables, while disciples “inside” do.¹¹
- 3:33–35 *Who Are My Mother, Brothers, and Sisters? These Are!*
 - That Jesus denied his family and called his followers his family would have been shocking for this family-oriented, Jewish culture.

⁷ Strauss, 168.

⁸ Thus William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (1954) was about a bizarre idol cult that schoolboys formed on an island.

⁹ Strauss, 169.

¹⁰ Strauss, 170.

¹¹ Strauss, 171.

- Did Jesus disrespect his family? (contra Exod 20:12)
- Jesus was reframing who we should emphasize as our family. Earthly bonds are less important to the spiritual bonds of the family of God (spiritual relationships > blood relationships).
- Those that have no family find it in the church. Those that have family must be willing to prioritize their spiritual family over the obligations of the physical.

Parables about the Kingdom of God (4:1–34)

This section is primarily a prolonged teaching discourse by Jesus (cf. 4:1). It is the second longest only behind Mark 13. In general, Mark focuses less on detail of Jesus's teachings and emphasizes more of his actions in situations during the ministry.¹² These parables emphasize the kingdom of God and the need to *hear* and *respond* to the good news.

Parable of the Sower and its Explanation (4:1–20)

Mark 4:1 And again he began to teach besides the sea; and a great crowd gathered to him, so that he boarded a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. **2** And he was teaching them in many parables and he was saying to them in his teaching, **3** "Listen! Behold the sower went out to sow. **4** And it happened that while he was sowing some fell along the road, and the birds came and devoured it. **5** And some seed fell on the stony ground where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up because it did not have depth of soil; **6** And when the sun rose (the plant) was scorched and because it did not have root it was dried up. **7** And another seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it did not give fruit. **8** And others fell upon the good soil and giving fruit they grew up and being called to grow up it was bringing in thirty and in sixty and in hundredfold." **9** And he said, "Whoever has ears to hear, he should listen!"

· 4:1 *Teaching Beside the Sea*

- Jesus taught in several locations:
 1. *Synagogues* (1:21,39; 3:1; 6:2) — went directly to religious center.
 2. *In a House* (2:2; 3:20ff) — people came to him.
 3. *Beside the Sea* (2:13; 3:8; 4:1; 6:34) — people came to him.
 4. *Among villages* (6:6) — mixed.
 5. *On the Road* (8:27ff) — took advantage of situation.
 6. *The Temple* (11:15–12:44) — went directly to religious center.
 7. *Mt. Olives* (13:1ff) — took advantage of situation /semi-planned.
- Jesus's popularity is growing immensely, but he and his disciples adapted — now they know to have a boat ready (cf. 3:9).

· 4:2 *Teaching in Parables*

- Parables.

¹² Strauss, 175.

- * Heb (*māšāl*/מָשָׁל) Saying (Ezek 12:23), proverb (1 Sam 10:12), wisdom saying (1 Kgs 5:12)
- * Grk (*parabolē*/παράβολή) illustration, proverb, simile, figure of speech, allegory, metaphor, riddles, etc.

– “Stories from everyday life that illustrate spiritual truths.”¹³

• 4:3 *Listen! A Sower Went Out to Sow*

• 4:4 *Seed Fell On the Path*

- This would have been the hard-packed ground beside or on the road.
- Did farmers plow first then sow or sow first then plow? History is unclear.

• 4:5–6 *Rocky Ground: sprouted quickly, no roots, withered*

- This one grows more than the path, but never establishes roots.
- Roots were unable to establish sufficient moisture.

• 4:7 *Thorns: choked, no grain*

- This one grows and establish roots, but allows external factors to choke it.
- This one *was soil good enough to grow!* BUT *that soil had company!*

• 4:8 *Good Soil: See How it Grows!*

- Stages: (1) sprouts; (2) grows; and (3) produces an excellent harvest.

• 4:9 *Whoever has ears: Listen!*

- Recalls Jer 5:21 and Ezek 12:2.
- Everyone needs to listen and understand this saying.

The Explanation (4:10–20)

4:10 And when he was alone, the ones around him with the twelve were asking about the parables. 11 And he said to them, “To you the mystery of the kingdom of God was given, but for those who are outside all things are in parables, 12 in order that ‘*seeing they might see and they may not notice, and hearing they might hear and not understand, lest they turn and be forgiven.*’” 13 And he said to them, “You do not understand this parable, but how will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 But these are the ones along the road: where the the word is being sown and when they might hear, immediately the adversary comes and takes away the word which has been sown among them. 16 And these are the ones being sown on the rocky ground: who when they hear the word they receive it immediately with joy. 17 But they do not have root in themselves, rather they are temporary, then after tribulation or persecution comes on account of the word they are immediately caused to stumble. 18 And others are the ones sown among the thorns: these are the ones after hearing the word, 19 then the concerns of the age and the deceit of wealth and the eager desires around them of other things enter in and choke the word and it becomes unfruitful. 20 And these are the ones who after being upon the earth, whoever hears the word and accepts it and produces fruit in thirtyfold, in sixtyfold, in hundredfold.

¹³ Quote from Strauss, 179. Strauss suggests to keep parables in context of Jesus’s ministry of the kingdom. For helpful discussion of the parables, see Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 1–81.

• 4:10 *When Alone, the Twelve & Others Ask Him*

- Example of the broader circle of “12” + other disciples.
- This is one of the key moments Jesus talks with disciples in private.

• 4:11–12 *Mystery of Kingdom Given to Disciples*

- Inside v. Outside (remember the house in ch. 3).
- “Mystery” is a former secret that God has revealed to his people, not something strange or mysterious.¹⁴
- Verse 12 is quote of Isa 6:9–10 probably from Aramaic translation.
- Jesus told parables for blindness?
 - * This seems consistent with God’s judgement and rejection of His people.
 - * Rejection was necessary in order to accomplish divine purpose (cf. Rom 11:23–32).
 - * If the authorities knew who Jesus was, would they have killed Him? No, but it was still necessary for Jesus to die so God had to harden them.

• 4:13 *Will You Understand Any Parables?*

- Jesus emphasizes again that the disciples do not understand.
- “If you cannot understand this parable, you will not understand any of the parables.”
- The parable of the sower *is a parable about hearing parables.*

• 4:14–15 *Sower Sows the Word; Satan Snatches Word from Path*

- Farmer = Jesus; Later the farmer = disciples & when we teach the word.
- Those on “hard-packed path” are unresponsive to message (i.e. Pharisees).
- From the very beginning, they resist the word before any growth occurs.
- Satan comes and “snatches the word away from them.”

• 4:16–17 *Rocky Ground: No Roots! Persecution!*

- These are like those that flock to Jesus for healing, exorcisms, and free food — but leave when Jesus says “take up your cross” (cf. John 6:66).
- Here the seed fails because: (1) soil is poor quality; (2) external threat.¹⁵
- Persecution, trials, tribulations, etc can only be survived with deep spiritual roots.
- These are examples not of those who “don’t hear” but of those who do hear — *these are about what they do with the message!*

• 4:18–19 *Thorns: Hear, cares & wealth, desires, pull away*

- Initially there is success. It has passed trials, tribulations(?)

¹⁴ Strauss, 184.

¹⁵ Strauss, 188.

- But the concerns, anxieties, worries of the world and wealth distract and choke the word of God. *These things interfere with pure Christian life.*
- **4:20 Good Soil: Great Results**
 - Only this fourth group really accepts the message of Christ.
 - Statistics aren't great: only 25% actually accept God's word but with spectacular results.¹⁶

Application

- **Stages in belief towards salvation.**
 1. *Hear the message*
 2. *Respond with faith*
 3. *Produce fruit*
- **Spiritual Gardening 101**
 1. *Accept Seed* — listen to God, move past hardness of heart, avoid satan's snatching.
 2. *Dig Roots* — you've received it, so make root. Otherwise persecution and tribulation will stumble you (physical, psychological, emotional, etc). Without roots of a strong faith, "The message sounds good and [you] welcome it with joy. So then, church is a nice social club to meet and develop friendships... Christianity is being a good person and helping others."¹⁷
 3. *Weeding* — you've heard & received, but didn't tend the garden. Now the concerns of the world, wealth, and desires around you will choke out the word and prevent fruit.
 4. *Produce Fruit* — hears, accepts, and produces fruit. 'Production' is the goal. Hearing and understanding is not enough, but action.
- Anything other than #4 is a failure. If #'s 1–3 are evident then *one did not really hear and receive*. This does not mean that one can never move to #4, but one must work through the other stage(s) first.

More Parables (4:21–34)

Analogy of the Lamp on a Stand (4:21–23)

4:21 And he was saying to them, "Is a lamp is brought in order that it might be put under a basket or under a bed? Or is it not put on a lamp-stand? 22 For nothing is hidden except in order that it might be revealed, nor does anything become secret except in order that it might be brought into light. 23 If anyone has ears to hear let them hear."

- **4:21–22 The Lampstand**
 - What is the lamp? Message of the kingdom or the kingdom itself?
 - The lamp was a clay lamp with oil.

¹⁶ We all know the road is narrow and hard (Matt 8:13–14), but this does give some quantifiable sense of how narrow. Not all who claim to know and hear Jesus will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 7:21) — many will be partially there (Rocky, Thorns, etc). Not all in the church will produce good fruit but will be cast into the fire (Matt 7:19). This parable applies to baptized believers.

¹⁷ Strauss, 190.

- “The kingdom of God, though presently veiled, will one day be revealed.”¹⁸
 - But this also proposes: what do the hearers do with this light? Do you really hide such a thing?
 - To those open to the kingdom of God: parables reveal truth. Those who reject Jesus’s kingdom message: the parables conceal truth.
 - What are the implications of this if we do or don’t understand the message of the parables?
- **4:23 *If anyone has ears: Let them hear!***
 - Spiritual discernment is necessary. Pay attention.

Analogy of the Measure (4:24–25)

4:24 And he was saying to them, “Pay close attention to what you hear. By what you measure it will be measured to you and it will be added to you. 25 For the one who has, things will be given to him, but the one who does not have, also what he does have will be taken from him.”

- **4:24 *What You Measure Will Be Measured to You***
 - At the grain market, one’s integrity was measured by the accuracy of their scales.¹⁹
 - Similar to the “how you judge, you will be judged” sayings (Matt 7:2; Luke 6:37–38).
 - This one is about those who respond to the kingdom. They will receive their investment back if they hear and receive the kingdom.
 - Who does the measuring and the adding?
- **4:25 *Who Has Will Have More***
 - Again, Strauss thinks this is about response to the kingdom.
 - The one who receives the kingdom, God will give more.
 - The one who does not receive the kingdom, God will possibly “harden.”²⁰
 - Not “the rich will get richer” (Strauss, 202).

The Parable of the Growing Seed (4:26–29)

4:26 And he was saying, “This is the kingdom of God like a man who might scatter seed on the ground 27 and when he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows he does not know how. 28 By itself the earth produces fruit, first the stalk then the head then the full grain on the ear. 29 But when the fruit might be ripe, immediately he sends the sickle, since the harvest has come.”

- **4:26–28 *Scattering Seed; Sudden Growth***
 - Passage is unique to Mark. Closest parallel is Matt 13:24.

¹⁸ Strauss, 195.

¹⁹ Strauss, 196.

²⁰ Regarding the term kingdom (*basileia*/βασιλεία), it can mean “royal rule” or “reign” or “territory.” In the Gospel context, “reign of God” is probably best as opposed to a physical kingdom bordered by walls that we often over-associate with the church. Jesus was more about the creation of a spiritual kingdom rather than a physical one (although the latter was in view). To accept the kingdom is not merely to enter into the church but to accept God’s reign over us on earth.

- * Jesus taught a variety of seed /agricultural parables. Some of them are preserved in some Gospels and some in others.
 - * Parables are often grouped more thematically more so than chronologically.
 - When received properly, the kingdom grows without human intervention or understanding.
 - Kingdom is ultimately the work of God. Humans do play a role (planting, watering), but God is the one who give the increase (1 Cor 3:6).²¹
 - Consider the wise words of Rabbi Gamaliel: “For if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” (Acts 5:38–39)
- 4:29 *Grain is Ripe; Send the Sickle!*

The Parable of the Mustard Seed (4:30–32)

4:30 And he was saying, “How might we compare the kingdom of God or what parable might we present it with? 31 As the mustard seed, that whenever it might be sown upon the earth, the smallest of all the seeds upon the earth, and when it might be sown, it rises up and becomes greater than all the plants and makes great branches, so that under its shade the birds of the heavens are able to nest.”

- 4:31–32 *Mustard Seed*
- Literally speaking, the mustard seed is not the smallest — his language is not intended to a college botany lecture.²²
 - Kingdom would have “small and insignificant beginnings but grow into something great.”
 - Birds are likely the Gentiles finding rest under God’s kingdom.
 - Mustard trees were often threats to gardens. Perhaps Jesus was alluding to the fact that the kingdom would upset other carefully tended pieces of land — Judaism.²³

Summary (4:33–34)

4:33 And many such parables he was speaking to them the words just as they were able to hear, 34 but without parables he would not speak to them, but privately with his own disciples he was explaining everything.²⁴

- To disciples — Jesus revealed everything. To outsiders — they only heard the parables.
- Presumably one could join the group of disciples which was not exclusive since there were more than twelve. Then they could hear the fuller explanation. Possible that many walked away from Christ when hearing these parables because they did not “hear.”

²¹ fn-116225320

²² Strauss, 199.

²³ Witherington, *Mark*, 172.

²⁴ Did the explanation of the parable of the sower 4:10–21 actually best fall here (chronologically speaking?). There’s no break of when he “goes back before the crowd” in 4:12.

Jesus's Authority over Natural and Supernatural Powers (4:35–5:43)

Authority over Nature: Calming the Storm (4:35–41)

Mark 4:35 And he said to them on that day when evening came, "Let us cross to the other side." 36 And after leaving the crowd they took him since he was already in the boat, and other boats were with him. 37 And a great windstorm arose and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that it was already filling the boat. 38 But he himself was in the stern sleeping on a cushion. They woke him and said to him, "Teacher do you not care that we are perishing?" 39 And after rising up he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Be still, be quiet." And the wind ceased and there came a great calm. 40 And he said to them, "Why are you being cowardly? Have you still no faith?" 41 And they became greatly afraid and were saying to one another, "Who then is this that the wind and sea obey him?"

- **Similarities with Jonah.** "Like Jesus, Jonah is sleeping through a storm at sea. Jonah is awakened by sailors in fear for their lives. They prompt God to take action by throwing Jonah overboard. The sea calms. There is fear and awe for those on the boat."²⁵
- **4:35 *At Evening, Jesus Desires to Cross Over***
 - Jesus tells his disciples that he intends to cross over.
 - Seems he ends a busy day of ministry and decides to move on.
- **4:36 *Depart from the Onshore Crowds; Other Boats with Them***
 - Jesus was already in the boat, he had been teaching from it (4:1).
 - Sometimes we miss the detail "other boats."
- **4:37 *Windstorm, Waves Breaking into Boat***
 - Storms were frequent over Galilee.
 - Swimming was not necessarily a recreational activity. Drowning was a legitimate fear.
- **4:38 *Jesus is Sleeping, Disciples Wake Him***
 - "Teacher" is equivalent to "Rabbi."
 - Disciples are negative: "Do you care about us?"
- **4:39 *Jesus Rebukes the Wind and Silences the Sea***
 - Only God could command the forces of nature (Ps 89:9; 107:23–29).
 - The "great storm" is replaced by a "great calm."
- **4:40 *Why are you afraid? Do you have faith?***
 - Jesus rebukes the disciples as well.
 - Although they are the chosen few, their faith is still weak.

²⁵ cf. Strauss 205–6.

· 4:41 *The Wind and the Sea Obey Him?*

- “They feared a great fear.”
- That this man, Jesus, could command the sea was a serious claim. It claimed he was God.
- Storms are not disasters but opportunities to see God’s transforming power in our lives. Trials can make us strong.²⁶

Authority over Demons: The Gerasene Demoniac (5:1–20)

5:1 And they came to the other side of the sea to the region of the Gerasenes. 2 And he went out from the boat immediately encountered him from the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3 who was dwelling among the tombs and neither chains any more nor anything was able to bind him 4 because he often was bound with shackles and chains and but he tore apart the chains and he shattered the shackles, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 And because every day and night in tombs and in the mountains he was crying out and cutting himself with stones. 6 And seeing Jesus from afar he ran and bowed down to him 7 and crying out with a great voice he said, “What do you want, Jesus of son of the God Most High? I implore you by God, do not torment me!” 8 For he was saying to him, “Unclean spirit, come out from the man.” 9 And Jesus asked him, “What is your name.” And he said to him “My name is Legion, for we are many.” 10 And they begged him more in order that he might now send him out from the region. 11 But there was on the hill a great herd of pigs grazing, 12 and they begged him saying, “Send us into the pigs, so we might enter into them.” 13 And Jesus allowed them. And going out, the unclean spirit entered into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep slope into the sea, about two thousand drowned in the lake. 14 And those herding them fled and reported to the city and in the countryside, and they went out to see what happened 15 and they came to Jesus and the saw the demon-possessed man sitting having been clothed and in a right mind, the one having “Legion”, and they were afraid. 16 And the ones who saw told them how it happened to the demon-possessed man and about the pigs. 17 So they begged Jesus to depart from their boundary. 18 And while he was getting into the boat the demon-possessed man asked if he might go with him. 19 But Jesus did not permit him, rather he said to him, “Go to your house and to your people and report of them as much as the Lord has done for you and he has had mercy on you.” 20 And he departed and began to preach in the Decapolis (Ten Cities) as much as Jesus did to him, and all were amazed.

· 5:1 *Region of Gerasenes*

- SE shore of Galilee. Near the Decapolis region.
- Predominately Gentile region (pig farming).

· 5:2 *Man with Unclean Spirit Comes Out of Tombs*

- Mark uses “unclean spirit” interchangeably with “demons.”
- This spirit made him unclean and unable to enter the Temple (thus unable to be before God’s presence).²⁷
- Tombs, pigs, etc are unclean for Jews (cf. Isa 65:4).

· 5:3–4 *Among the Tombs; Cannot Restrain Him with Chains*

²⁶ Strauss, 211.

²⁷ cf. Strauss, 216.

- Shackles = “leg irons” and chains for restraints.
- Humans couldn’t do anything to stop or help him.
- 5:5 *Day and Night: Crying Out and Cutting Himself*
- 5:6–7 *What do you want with me, Jesus? Don’t torment me!*
 - The possessed man rushes out but falls in a heap of submission before Jesus.²⁸
 - Is the demon accusing Jesus of casting him out prematurely?
- 5:8 *“Come out of this man!”*
 - Jesus had *already* commanded him to come out, so it caused panic for the demon.
- 5:9 *“My name is Legion”*
 - Jesus has a conversation with the demon?!
 - The man was possessed by multiple demons.
 - A Roman legion had 6,000 men. Not necessarily 6k demons, but alot.
- 5:10–12 *“Let us enter the pigs”*
 - “Out of the region?” were demons confined to specific areas?
 - Entering the pigs allowed the demons to stay?
- 5:13 *Jesus permits them to enter the pigs; 2000 pigs drown*
 - This was a huge herd, probably valuable. Jesus did not wrong the herdsmen by killing their pigs, the pigs were “war casualties” between the kingdoms of God and Satan (Strauss).
 - That the pigs drowned themselves demonstrates the demons were real. This was not a psychological disorder.²⁹
- 5:14–15 *Herdsmen Flee; Tell Everyone; People Come to See*
 - Pig herders go to nearby town(s) and tell people what happened.
 - The man is calm (like the sea!) after Jesus frees him.
 - The people are afraid, just as the disciples were afraid when Jesus calmed the storm.
- 5:16–17 *“Leave us!”*
 - Those who witnessed the event explain what happened to the people who came to see what happened.
 - Were they upset about financial loss or about disruption to their peaceful lives? Their response misses the point of what happened.
 - Just as the demons begged Jesus not to make him leave, now the people beg Jesus to leave the area.

²⁸ Strauss, 217.

²⁹ Strauss, 219.

- 5:18 *Jesus embarks the boat; Man asks to follow him.*
 - The man who was healed desires to follow Jesus.
 - He had been healed.
- 5:19 *No, but go and tell what the Lord has done for you.*
 - Jesus, in essence, commissions the “first missionary to the Gentiles.”
 - Go tell about (1) what the Lord did; (2) his mercy for you.
 - Jesus did not command silence because the issue of his messiahship was not as threatening (nor bring the crowds) as it was in Jewish areas.³⁰
 - We, nor the disciples, should really be surprised when they are formally commissioned to go to the Gentiles in Acts.
- 5:20 *He Proclaims Jesus in the region of the Ten Cities*
 - This foreshadows the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles.
 - “Everyone who comes in contact with Jesus — whether friend or foe — cannot help but be amazed at the power of God evident in his word and deeds.”³¹

Application

- **Spiritual Warfare** — it’s important for us to recognize the reality of spiritual warfare (1 Pet 5:8; Eph), but without “finding a demon under every bush, or attributing every challenge, setback, or illness to Satan.” Satan does prowl the earth, but we have victory and power over it through Jesus and the Spirit and can be equipped for Spiritual warfare (cf. Eph 6). The only one whom we should fear is God (Matt 10:28).
- **Responding to Jesus** — the people in the town, for whatever reason (finances, disturbance) ask Jesus to leave. Their response misses the point of what happened. In the same way, while we may recognize the power of Jesus and who he is and what God accomplished through him — sometimes we let worldly concerns prevent us from truly seeing the point (the thorns!). Only one man responded favorably because he recognized what God had done in him.

Authority over Disease and Death (5:21–43)

“Markan Sandwich” Structure

- {BREAD} **Jairus Pleads (5:21–24)**
 - -MEAT- *Woman with the bleeding (5:25–34)*
- {BREAD} **Jairus’s Daughter Healed (5:35–43)**

³⁰ Strauss, 221.

³¹ Strauss, 222.

Jairus Pleads with Jesus for His Daughter (5:21–24)

5:21 And after Jesus crossed [in the boat] again to the other side a great crowd was gathering to him, and he was beside the sea. 22 And one of the rulers of the synagogue came, named Jairus, and after seeing him he fell at his feet 23 and urged him greatly saying that, “My daughter is dying, come in order that you might lay hands on her so that she might be saved and live!” 24 And Jesus went with him. And the great crowd followed him and they were pressing around him.

- 5:21 *Jesus Crosses Again*

- Back in Jewish territory: synagogue leaders (5:22), Jesus speaks in Aramaic (5:41).
- The crowd was waiting for him on the shore.

- 5:22–23 *Jesus meets Jairus: “Please heal my girl!”*

- Jairus was one of the synagogue administrators among a group of others (cf. Acts 13:15).
- Not many individuals are named in miracle stories (cf. 10:46) so why was Jairus remembered? Significant event? Later was a church leader in Galilee?
- Not all of Israel's leaders oppose Jesus. Interestingly, Jairus is not identified as a Pharisee but just as a leader. In Luke he is named, but Matt 9:18 is more vague about who this was. Protection?
- Laying on of hands was a common healing practice. Christians continued this.

- 5:24 *Jesus goes with Jairus; The Crowd Presses Around Him*

- “Crowds” are an indication of his popularity, but they also limit his ability to effectively minister.

Healing the Woman (5:25–34)

5:25 And there was a woman with a discharge of blood for twelve years 26 And after suffering under many physicians and after spending all she had and was no better rather she became worse, 27 When she heard about Jesus, after coming behind him in the crowd she touched his garment, 28 for she was saying that, “If I might touch him even his garment I will be made well.” 29 And immediately her flow of blood dried up and felt that her body had been healed of the disease. 30 And immediately Jesus after realizing in himself that some power went out from him after turning around to the crowd he was saying, “Who touched my garment?” 31 And his disciples were saying to him, “You see the crowd pressing around you and you say, ‘Who touched me?’” 32 But he looked around to see who did this. 33 But the woman with fear and trembling, knowing what happened to her, she came and fell before him and said to him all the truth. 34 But he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has saved you, go in peace and be healed from your disease.”

- 5:25–26 *Woman with Bleeding Approaches Jesus*

- She had a kind of menstrual bleed for 12 years.
- All her money was spent on medical care, no results.
- Her persistent bleeding *made her unclean* and so she was unable to worship properly.

- 5:27–28 *“If I can just touch him.”*

- Jesus was known to be a healer in Galilee.

- Superstitious thought was that one could touch a person and be healed — people thought touching Peter's shadow (Acs 5:15) or Paul's cloths (19:12) would impart healing.³²
- But the point is that *she had faith that Jesus could heal*.
- 5:29–30 *Immediately She is Healed; Jesus Notices Power Leave*
 - The effect of the healing is instant. Jesus feels power, which resided within him, leave him.
 - But yet, Jesus himself didn't know who touched him (he wasn't omniscient because of human limitations).
- 5:31–32 *"Look Jesus, There's Lots of People Around"*
 - "Everyone is touching you! They're all around!"
 - But Jesus keeps looking for her.
- 5:33 *The Woman Confesses Her Healing*
 - Perhaps she feared that she had rendered him unclean or that she had acted selfishly by acting in secret.
 - She falls down before him.
- 5:34 *"Go in Peace, Your Faith Saved You"*
 - She was healed because of faith (spiritual solution), not because of touching (physical solution).
- **Application**
 - Again we see this pattern: a sick woman comes to Jesus, her illness separates her from God, humans are unable to heal her, but she has faith that Jesus will be able to, so she touches Jesus and because of her faith she is healed both physically *and* likely spiritually as well.
 - God *heals the affliction of sin* because *humans are incapable* only their *faith in God's ability to save* is effective.

Jairus's Daughter Raised (5:35–43)

5:35 While he was still one came from the house of the synagogue ruler saying that, "Your daughter died. Why do you still trouble the teacher?" 36 But Jesus after overhearing the words he was saying said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." 37 And he did not permit anyone to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. 38 And they came into the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and he saw a commotion and weeping and great wailing, 39 And he went in and said to them, "Why do you uproar and cry? The child is not dead but sleeping." 40 And they were laughing at him. But he sent them all out and took the father and the mother of the child and with him they also went in where the child was. 41 And after grasping the child's hand he said to her, "*Talitha cumi*," which is translated, "Girl, I say to you, rise." 42 And immediately the girl rose and walked around, for she was twelve years old. And they were overcome [immediately] with great amazement. 43 And he charged them strongly in order that no one might know this and he told them to give her something to eat.

³² Strauss, 230.

• 5:35 *"Your daughter has died, don't bother him."*

- Jesus wasn't able to "get there in time." She has died whereas Jesus could have healed her affliction (cf. Lazarus in John 11).
- But people think, as in John, that Jesus can only heal not resurrect.

• 5:36 *"Do not fear, but believe"*

- Jesus "overheard" or alternatively "ignored their concerns."
- Stop fearing, trust in what is possible.

• 5:37 *Only Peter, James, and John Go With Him*

- The "inner circle" who accompany Jesus at key moments such as the Transfiguration and at Gethsemane. Andrew is there occasionally.
- Why only them? Practicality of space? Others kept crowd back? They were chosen leaders?

• 5:38–39 *They Arrive at the House; Commotion and Weeping*

- The child has died, mourning has begun. There were flute players present (Matt 9:23). This was to show respect for the one who died.
- "But she is only sleeping, your mourning is irrational."
- Sleep is a common euphemism for temporary death in the NT.³³

• 5:40 *They Laughed at Jesus; But He Takes in the Parents*

- Jesus shuts down the disruptive situation and throws out the mourners. Only the inner circle and parents remain.

• 5:41 *"Little girl I say to you: Arise!"*

- No magic rituals used, just his authority.
- "Talitha" means "little lamb," was used for children.

• 5:42 *The Girl Stands Up; She Walked Around; Everyone is Amazed*

- We learn she was only 12. Same amount of time woman suffered above.
- Mention of age was to explain she was capable of walking as opposed to being an infant. The parents have been using language of endearment, which may sound like she is much younger.
- Again people are amazed that she was healed — and in this case — *resurrected*. But their amazement does not necessarily equate to faith. So far, only those experiencing the healing actually have faith.

• 5:43 *"Tell No One, but Feed Her."*

- Jesus cared about her, was concerned that she was able to eat.
- Both of these stories show Jesus's concern for women who were socially minimized.

³³ Strauss, 234.

Unbelief in Nazareth (6:1–6)

Mark 6:1 And he went out from there and went into his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 And when it was the Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many after hearing were amazed saying, “From where does this man get these things, and what wisdom was given to him, and what are these powers being done by his hands? 3 Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us?” So they were offended by him. 4 And Jesus was saying to them that, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and among his own household. 5 And he was not able there to do any mighty work, except after laying hands on a few people he healed them. 6 And he was amazed by their unbelief. And he went around the villages teaching.

- In Jesus’s own town, we might expect another great miracle to follow. But in his own town, he faces opposition and rejection. They are unwilling to hear the word from one of their own.
- **6:1 *Returning to Nazareth w/Disciples***
 - Jesus is departing from Jarius’s town back to Nazareth.
 - His town is not named, but we know Jesus was from there (1:24).
 - * Nazareth was not viewed favorably. It was very “country” (cf. John 1:46).
- **6:2 *Teaching on Sabbath in Synagogue***
 - His usual custom. Jesus’s reputation (both as teacher and “hometown boy”) undoubtedly earned him the privilege to participate in the synagogue service and teach.
 - It’s kind of like if a preacher went to visit the small country church where he was raised: they would want preaching!
 - People had heard about his “abilities” and his “wisdom” and his “powers.” They wondered about where he obtained them. The reader knows it was from God, but the characters do not.
- **6:3 *“We Know Him: Son of Mary, Brother of James...”***
 - Jesus is called a τέκτων (*tektōn*). This means “carpenter” but also a “worker” or “builder” more generally.
 - The people are saying “He’s just a worker (like us), he’s no better than anyone else here.”³⁴
 - Jesus is the son of Mary. Where is Joseph? Was he now dead so that the family is now “Mary’s Family” instead of Joseph’s?
 - These were probably Mary’s and Joseph’s children after Jesus (cf. Matt 1:25).
 - * James (Jacob) is James who later wrote James 1:1 and was a leader of the church in Jerusalem (cf. Acts & Gal 1–2). James was probably the oldest because he was listed first.³⁵
 - * Jude (Judas) is Jude who wrote Jude.
 - * His sisters “here with us” may suggest they married local men and lived in Nazareth.³⁶
 - These brothers *did not believe in him* (John 7:5) but did later (cf. Acts 1:14; 1 Cor 9:5).

³⁴ Strauss, 242.

³⁵ Strauss, 242.

³⁶ Strauss, 243. France, *Mark*, 165.

- The people became offended because of the things he was saying but also because he was “pulling rank” more than his upbringing socially permitted.
- **6:4 *A Prophet Has No Honor in His Hometown***
 - Jesus addresses the situation immediately.
 - The proverb he cites is actually a Greek one, but well known to Jews.
 - This is like our saying “familiarity breeds contempt.”
- **6:5 *Unable to Do Miracles Except Healing a Few***
 - If miracles are a response to faith, and there is no faith, *Jesus cannot do miracles*.
 - Some showed faith and were healed.
- **6:6 *Jesus was Amazed; Taught Elsewhere***
 - The same word here “amazed, marveled” was just used for people being amazed at Jesus’s miracles (5:20).
 - This rejection recalls the family struggles in Mark 3.
 - But we really shouldn’t be surprised, *the rejection of God’s messengers and prophets is a common theme in biblical tradition* (Jezebel/Elijah, Micaiah, Zechariah, Jeremiah).³⁷
 - The rejection of Jesus forms a break in his ministry (see v. 7). In v. 6 we have a summary statement that usually forms “seams” (cf. 3:1–6) between connecting periods of Jesus’s life and ministry.
 - We have to wonder, what was “down time” like for Jesus and his disciples? One gets the impression in the Gospels that there was an ebb and flow to the ministry. It wasn’t always high conflict, teachings, and large-scale miracles. What were they teaching in the villages? The same thing over and over or different things we don’t know?³⁸

³⁷ Strauss, 246.

³⁸ One theory is that: the Gospels mostly contain *unique material* but Jesus’s life generally repeated these teachings about the kingdom. Perhaps this is why the writers did not seek to include everything but only the most important events. This does not mean what Jesus did elsewhere was unimportant, but that he often repeated teachings.

The Expanding Mission of the Messiah (6:6–8:21)

Sending Out the Twelve (6:6–13)

6:6b And he went around the villages teaching. 7 And he called the twelve and he began to send them two by two and was giving them authority over unclean spirits, 8 and he charged them in order that they might take nothing on the road except one staff, no bread, no bag, and no money in their belts, 9 rather wearing sandals, and that they might not wear two shirts. 10 And he was saying to them, “Whenever you might enter into a house, remain there until you might depart from there. 11 And any place that might not receive you nor listen to you, go out from there shake the dust from your feet as testimony to them. 12 And after going out they proclaimed in order that the people might repent, 13 And they cast out many demons, and were anointing the sick with oil and were healing them.

- Now Jesus sends them out to replicate the same ministry Jesus did in Galilee:¹ preaching, healing, and casting out demons.
- **6:6 *Teaching in Other Villages***
 - Jesus continued teaching, despite rejection at Nazareth.
- **6:7 *Sent Out Two by Two; Authority Over Spirits***
 - In OT Law, one needed two witnesses to confirm a testimony in court (Deut 17:6; 19:15).
 - This practice of two by two continued in the early church (cf. Acts 8:14; 11:30; etc).
 - Jesus has authority to: (1) preach, (2) heal, (3) cast out demons, (4) and pass on that authority to others.²
- **6:8–9 *Minimal Possessions for Journey***
 - No extra food nor money to purchase provisions.
 - The point is: *reliance on God*.
- **6:10–11 *Stay at Homes You Enter; Dust Your Feet Off***

¹ Strauss, 246.

² Strauss, 251.

- Depend on hospitality of others.
- Jesus foreshadows that some would reject the disciples just as Jesus was rejected. By now, they should come to expect this.

• **6:12–13 *Preached Repentance***

- Disciples' mission was (1) preaching, (2) exorcism, and (3) healing.
- Anointing with oil is only mentioned in Mark.

Application

• **Instruction to Take Few Provisions**

1. *Cultivate a simple lifestyle* — avoid wealth, accumulation of possessions, which distract us from God's purposes.³
2. *Depend on God rather than on our talents or resources* — trust in God for the next meal.⁴
3. *Show No Partiality* — disciples are instructed to only stay in one home in each town and only where they are accepted. In contemporary culture, special attention is often given to wealthy, talented, and influential people. But in Christ, all are equal and possess unique talents and resources to be used for God and not self-glorification.

• **Hospitality Is Key to Spread of the Gospel**

- This was the case in early Christianity. There's a writing called the *Didache* (non-inspired) but reflects Christians establishing a method for dealing with missionaries.
- The text says:

Let every apostle who comes to you be welcomed as if he were the Lord. But he is not to stay for more than one day, unless there is need, in which case he may stay another. But if he stays three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle leaves, he is to take nothing except bread until he finds his next night's lodging. But if he asks for money, he is a false prophet. (*Did.* 11:4–6)⁵

Flashback to Death of John the Baptist (6:14–29)

Mark 6:14 And King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name became known, and they were saying that it was John the Baptizer was raised from the dead and because of this powers were able to work in him. 15 But others were saying that he is Elijah, and others were saying that he is one of the prophets. 16 But after hearing Herod was saying, "The one whom I myself beheaded John, he has raised." 17 For it was Herod himself who after sending for John seized (him) and bound him in prison because of Herodias the wife of Philip his brother, since he married her, 18 For John was saying to Herod that, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 But Herodias had a grudge against him and desired him to be killed, and she was not able to, 20 for Herod feared John, knowing he was a righteous and holy

³ Prov 23:5; Matt 6:19; Mark 4:19; Luke 6:24–25; 16:13–15, 19–31; 18:18–25; 1 Tim 6:10, 17; Heb 13:5; Jas 5:1–6; 1 Pet 1:18.

⁴ Phil 4:10–19. The point of Phil 4:13 is not human empowerment "I CAN DO ANYTHING WITH GOD" but that one can survive and endure anything *with dependence on God*. Context of Paul's discussion is about surviving in prison.

⁵ Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 363.

man, so he protected him, and after listening to him he was greatly confused, and he listened to John gladly. 21 And an opportunity came one day when when Herod's birthday he gave a banquet to his nobles and the commanders and the prominent ones of Galilee, 22 and Herodias entered through his door and after dancing pleased Herod and the guests. The king said to the young girl, "Ask me whatever you might want, and I will give it to you," 23 and he made an oath to her, "Whatever you might ask of me I will give you up to half of my kingdom." 24 so she went and said to her mother, "What should I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptizer." 25 So she went immediately with haste to the king she asked saying, "I desire immediately that you might give to me on a platter the head of John the Baptizer." 26 And the king became sorrowful because of the oaths but because of the guests he was not able to reject her, 27 And immediately after the king sent the executioner he ordered to bring his head. So after departing they beheaded him in the prison 28 and the brought his head on a platter and gave it to the young girl, and she gave it to her mother. 29 And after hearing this his disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Only episode where Jesus is not prominent.

John is the model disciple who gives up his life for the gospel.

• **6:14–16 *Herod Antipas Hears About Jesus; Thinks He's John***

- Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great.
- Jesus's mission is catching ears of the king.
 - * People thought Jesus was John or Elijah or a prophet.
 - * Herod exclaims that Jesus is John, but mentions John's death.
 - * Herod's superstitious thinking attributes the miraculous powers to the ghost of John, and not an actual person.
 - * Following passages will proceed into a flashback of the death of John.

• **6:17–18 *FLASHBACK → Herod Arrests John Because of Preaching***

- Background: When Antipas married Herodias, he divorced the daughter of King Aretas IV (Nabatea, non-Jewish neighboring kingdom), Aretas warred against Antipas and defeated him.
- Herodias was a half-niece to Antipas. She was the daughter of one of his half-brothers (Aristobulus).
- John told Herod not to marry his brother's wife (Lev 18:6; 20:21). It was only permissible to marry a brother's wife when the brother died *and* was without offspring (Deut 25:5–10).
- Josephus, the Jewish historian, affirms the accuracy of this story.

• **6:19–20 *Herodias Desires to Kill John; Herod Feared John***

- Herodias bore a grudge, but Antipas feared John and protected him.
- Antipas was fascinated by his teaching, but didn't understand.

• **6:21 *Herod's Banquet for Important People***

- Political leaders, social elite, etc.
- Herod was known for lavish parties⁶

⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 18.4.5.

- This practice was not favorable to Jews.⁷
- 6:22–23 *Antipas Pleased by the Dance of Salome*
 - Salome, we know historically, was Herodias's daughter.
 - Unclear whether Salome is a child or a young woman dancing erotically. Latter is most likely.
 - Antipas grants her one wish in reward.
- 6:24–25 *Herodias Tells Salome to Ask for John's Head*
 - Herodias demands John's head *immediately*.
 - This requires Antipas submit to her before crowd.
- 6:26–28 *John Beheaded*
 - Antipas realizes his predicament, has John killed.
 - His head is brought out to Salome who gives it to her mother.
 - Antipas is more interested in saving himself than doing what's right.
- 6:29 *John's Body Placed in a Tomb*
 - John gave himself up for the gospel (cf. 8:35).
 - The position of this story between Jesus's commission of the disciples was to *show what true discipleship is — self sacrifice*.⁸

Feeding the Five Thousand (6:30–44)

Mark 6:30 And the apostles returned to Jesus and told him all the things they did and as much as they taught. **31** And he said to them, "Come yourselves away with me into a desolate place and rest for a little while." For they were coming and going often and did not have the leisure to eat. **32** And they departed by boat to a deserted place by themselves. **33** And they saw them departing and many recognized them and they ran on foot from all the towns there and went ahead of them. **34** And going out he saw a great crowd and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he began to teach many things. **35** And already being a late hour, his disciples came to him saying that, "This is a deserted place and the hour is now late, **36** send them away, in order that they might go into the surrounding fields and villages so that they might buy themselves something to eat." **37** But he answered saying to them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Should we go buy two hundred denarii of bread and give to them to eat?" **38** But he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go see." And after they knew they said, "Five, and two fish." **39** And he commanded them to recline all group by group upon the green grass. **40** And they reclined group by group by hundreds and by fifties. **41** And after taking the five loaves and the two fish after looking up into the heavens he blessed and broke the bread and he gave it to the disciples in order that they might set it before them, and the two fish he divided among all. **42** and all ate and were filled, **43** and they took up pieces twelve baskets full and of the fish. **44** And those who were eating [the bread] were five thousand men.

⁷ Strauss, 265. Citing *m. 'Abod. Zar.* 1:3.

⁸ Strauss, 267.

Jesus's Messianic banquet in contrast to Antipas's debauchery-filled romp.

• **6:30 *Apostles Return to Jesus***

- The “disciples” are now the “apostles” meaning “the ones sent out.”
- The apostles are beaming with all that has happened.

• **6:31–32 *Let's Rest***

- They have been doing so much ministry, they haven't been able to eat.
- Intense periods of ministry must be balanced with rest.
- They depart in a boat to escape (again).

• **6:33 *But the People Come Anyways***

- Perhaps they figured out where they were going.
- So they ran ahead and met them there.

• **6:34 *Jesus Has Compassion on the Crowd***

- Their boat lands on the shore, Jesus has compassion.
- Mark cites Num 27:17 which is a reference to the appointment of Joshua to be a spiritual leader.

• **6:35–37b *“Send the People Away!” Jesus says “You feed them.”***

- Disciples begin to complain about logistics again.
- They're worried about not being able to eat themselves.
- Jesus challenges them to find a solution.

• **6:37 200 *Denarii of Bread***

- Disciples give a practical response to a spiritual question.
- 1 denarius = 1 day's wage. So 200 in modern day, this may be about \$10,000–18,000+ (dep. on min wage).

• **6:38 *“Go and See How Much Bread: They Find 5 Loaves; 2 Fish.”***

- Pita-sized flatbread.⁹
- Andrew had found the boy (cf. John 6:9).

• **6:39–40 *Sit Down in Groups of 100s and 50s***

- “Recline” in “dining groups” (Strauss).
- “Green grass” = “he makes me lie down by green pastures”? (Ps 23:2)

• **6:41–42 *Jesus Blesses the Bread; Divides it Out; Everyone Eats until Satisfied.***

⁹ Strauss, 275.

• **6:43–44** *12 Baskets of Leftovers; 5000 People Were Fed*

- If there were 5000 men. Possibly more women/children.
- 12 baskets represent twelve tribes?
- Feeding miracle recalls the manna in the wilderness provided by God.

Walking on the Water (6:45–52)

Mark 6:45 Then immediately he compelled his disciples to embark in the boat and cross to the other side to Bethsaida, as he released the crowd. **46** And after taking leave of them he went up to the mountain to pray. **47** And when evening came the boat was in the middle of the sea, and he was alone on the land. **48** And he saw that they were making headway difficultly, for the wind was against them, about the fourth watch of the night he came to them walking on the sea and he desired to pass by them. **49** But seeing him walking upon the sea they supposed that he was a ghost, and they cried out. **50** For all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke with them, and he said to them, “Be courageous, It is I, do not be afraid.” **51** And he he went up to them into the boat and the wind ceased, and they were exceedingly amazed among themselves. **52** For they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were being hardened.

• **6:46–47** *Disciples Board Boat; Crowds Dismissed; Jesus Goes to Pray*

- Circumstances seem pressing, crowds are more aggressive (cf. John 6:14–15).
- Echo of Moses’s ascent to Mt Sinai (Exod 19)?

• **6:46** *Disciples on Boat; Jesus on Mountain*

- “Evening” may mean later at night.
- For discussion of the timeline, see Strauss, 285.

• **6:47–48** *Wind Against the Boat; Disciples Strain; Jesus Comes*

- “Fourth watch” is about 3–6 am.
- Jesus comes walking to them *on the water*.
- Only God treads on the waves of the sea (Job 9:8).
- Jesus “responds to their struggle.”¹⁰
- What does passing by mean? Was he ignoring them? Strauss suggests that this is a reference to God passing by Moses: “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you” (Exod 33:18–23) and also with Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:10–12.
- So by “passing by” Jesus is revealing his divinity.¹¹

• **6:49–50** *Jesus is Spotted; “He’s a Ghost!”; “Do Not Fear!”*

- They don’t think this is Jesus’s ghost (that Jesus is dead), but they assume it’s some sort of apparition.¹²

¹⁰ Strauss, 285.

¹¹ cf. Strauss 286.

¹² France, *Mark* (NIGTC): 272.

· **6:51–52 *Climbs Into Boat; Wind Stops; More Amazement***

- This is the second storm miracle.
- They were amazed “because they had not understood the loaves.”
- And so we ask “What did they not understand?!”
- Is there some sort of reference to Moses here?
 - * Feeding 5000 = Manna in the Wilderness.
 - * On the Mountain = Mt. Sinai.
 - * Walking on the Water = Parting the Sea.

Healings Near Gennesaret (6:53–56)

Mark 6:53 And after crossing over they came to the land to Gennesaret and they anchored. ⁵⁴ And when they got out from the boat immediately they recognized him ⁵⁵ running around that whole region and they began to bring the severely ill on their beds wherever they heard that he was. ⁵⁶ And wherever he came into a village or into a city or to the countryside, in the markets they laid the sick and were urging him so that if the fringe of his garment they might touch, and as many as might touched it were restored.

This passage highlights key themes of Jesus's Galilean ministry: boat trips, popularity, and healing.

· **6:53 *Landing at Gennesaret***

- NW shore of Galilee, between Capernaum and Magdala.
- This city is sometimes the namesake of the Sea of Galilee — Lake Kinnereth or Lake Gennesaret.

· **6:54–55 *People See Him; The Crowds Come***

- Again Jesus faces the large crowds demanding healing.

· **6:56 *Sick are Laid Before Jesus***

- This summary encompasses another period of time.
- Jesus is doing a lot of moving around (villages, towns, countryside).
- We don't know much from this time period.
- People touched his tassels, a Jewish requirement (Num 15:38–39; Deut 22:12).

Commandments of God and Human Traditions (7:1–23)

Mark 7:1 And gathering to him were the Pharisees and some of the Scribes coming from Jerusalem. ² And seeing some of his disciples with common hands, that is unclean, eating bread ³ — for the Pharisees and all the Jews unless they wash with a closed fist they do not eat, while keeping the traditions of the elders, ⁴ and (when coming) from the market unless they immerse they do not eat, and there are many other traditions to keep, the washing of cups and copper pots [and couches] — ⁵ And the Pharisees and the Scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the

traditions of the elders, rather eating bread with common hands?” 6 Then he said to them, “Isaiah prophesied correctly concerning you hypocrites, as it was written that, ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their heart are far from me, 7 but with no result they worship me teaching the teachings (and) commandments of man.’ 8 After leaving the commandments of God you keep the traditions of man.” 9 And he was saying to them, “Well you reject the commandments of God, in order that you might establish your traditions. 10 For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and ‘the one who curses father or mother will end with death.’ 11 But if you say: ‘If man says to his father or mother, ‘Corban, (that means a gift), whatever from me you might benefit,’” 12 No longer do you permit anyone to do anything to fathers or mothers, 13 After nullifying the word of God by your tradition that you pass down, and many similar things you do.” 14 And he summoned the crowd again saying to them, “Listen to me all of you and understand. 15 Nothing is outside a man that goes in him is able to defile him, but what comes out of man defiles the man.” 17 And when he entered into the house away from the crowd, the disciples were asking him concerning the parable. 18 And he said to them, “So are you also without understanding? Do you not understand that the things outside enter into a man are not able to defile him 19 since it does not enter his heart but into his stomach, and into the toilet it goes out?” (cleansing all foods). 20 But he was saying, “That which comes out of a man, is what defiles the man. 21 For from within the heart of man evil thoughts go out, sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, coyness, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, arrogance, foolishness; 23 all these things come from within and defile the man.

• 7:1–2 *Pharisees Come & Observe Disciples Eating w/Unclean Hands*

- Pharisees come and raise another issue of eating (cf. 2:16).
- Jerusalem is the source of those that come to oppose Jesus.

• 7:3–4 *Mark Explains About Jewish & Pharisee Rituals*

- In a few rare instances, the author himself speaks directly.
 - * This happens in other occasions where he is translating Aramaic words.
 - * Mark is explaining *for his Gentile readers*. Jews would have known this.
- “Fist” probably references the method of washing.¹³
- Jews would “immerse” (baptize) after coming from unclean places.¹⁴

• 7:5 *“Why Don’t Your Disciples Follow the Traditions?”*

- Disciples did not break the Law, but the “traditions of elders.”

• 7:6–8 *Isaiah’s Prophecy*

- Closer to the Greek Old Testament (Isa 29:13)
 - * Hebrew Bible: “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men.” (ESV)
 - * Septuagint: “These people draw near me; they honor me with their lips, while their heart is far from me, and in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts and teachings.” (NETS)

¹³ Strauss, 299.

¹⁴ Baptism is connected to ritual washing of Jews (1 Pet 3:21).

- 7:9 *“You Reject God & Obey Tradition”*

- Congratulations, instead of doing what God wants you’re actually rejecting his commandment!¹⁵

- 7:10 *Honor Your Father & Mother*

- Jesus lays out an example of how they reject the word of God.
- Not supporting parents, or slandering them was dishonor.

- 7:11–12 *“Corban”*

- A son could “withhold support for his parents by declaring his own property as dedicated to God and off limits to them.”¹⁶
- Think of Hannah and Samuel, instead of having him as her son, she would give him to the service of the Lord.
- Essentially the Pharisees claim their possessions and money are “God’s” therefore they can’t help their parents.

- 7:13 *“You Nullify the Word of God by Your Tradition”*

- 7:14–15 *Nothing that Enters a Person Defiles Him; But What Comes Out*

- Jesus now answers the question of ceremonial impurity.¹⁷
- Hear me *and* understand.

- [7:16] Verse is absent from oldest manuscripts of Mark. It’s a repeat of elsewhere (4:9, 23).

- 7:17 *Disciples Question Jesus in Private*

- 7:18–19 *All Foods are Clean*

- “That which enters” = “food” because it does not enter into heart.
- Mark himself explains “Thus he declared all foods clean.”

- 7:20–23 *What Comes Out Defiles a Person*

- Here we have one of the earliest vice lists. These are common in Paul’s writings.
- “Evil thoughts” are the primary sin, then he describes things which fall under sins.
 - * The NT often deals with sins in this way. Sins are, inherently, categories.
 - * We don’t have a verse that lists “pornography” as sin, but we know that pornography falls into the category of “lusting /adultery of the heart.”

¹⁵ Strauss suggests sarcasm here, p. 301.

¹⁶ Strauss, 302.

¹⁷ Strauss, 303.

*Application*1. *Traditionalism is Dangerous*

- Adding further rules to bind things that God did not bind and condemning things that are not inherently sins (but sometimes are sin).
 - Often people inconsistently condemn some things but not other things.
 - Paul deals with this issue regarding food in Romans 14.¹⁸
 - This can be taken to extremes by everyone:
 - * “It’s sinful to own a gun, defend yourself, or serve in military/police because you might murder someone.”
 - * “A man has a God-given duty to protect his family by having firearms to defend in case of a home invasion.”
 - * Both of these have Scriptural value (turning other cheek & providing for family), but binding them on the subject of gun control may be problematic.¹⁹
- When religion becomes a system of “Do this, don’t do this” then we tend to miss the heart of God and the big picture “i.e. love God, others & avoid sinful thoughts which lead to sinful actions.”

2. *The True Spirit of the Law: Loving God & Others*

- A righteous man may say, “I did not commit the act of adultery, therefore I kept the Law.” Jesus says, “You lusted in your heart and had the *intent* to commit adultery, therefore you broke the Law. You did not love her because your heart desired her.”
- “Love fulfills the Law” (Rom 13:8, 10; Gal 5:14).

The Faith of the Syrophenician Woman (7:24–30)

Mark 7:24 But from there, after rising, he went into the region of Tyre. And entering into a house he was desiring not to be recognized by anyone, but he was not able to be hidden, **25** Then immediately a woman after hearing about him, whose daughter had an unclean spirit, after coming she fell before his feet, **26** But the woman was a Greek, Syrophenician by birth, and she was asking him in order that he might cast the demon from her daughter. **27** And he was saying to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not good to take bread from the children and throw it to the dogs. **28** Then she answered and said to him, “Sir, even the dogs eat under the table from the crumbs of the children.” **29** And he said to her, “Because of this saying, go now, the demon has gone from your daughter.” **30** And after going into her house she found her child lying on the bed and the demon had gone out.

- *7:24 Leaves Gennesaret; Goes to Tyre; Tries to Remain “Incognito”*

¹⁸ Rom 14 basically says: If you think something is wrong and you break your conscience then it is sin. But don’t make your opinion a matter of “salvation” for someone else. This is hard because our views on these opinions can often change over the years. Important part is consistency when possible unless “breaking” your conscience fulfills a specific, Godly purpose.

¹⁹ Another hot-button issue is whether wives should stay at home. On the one hand, some say a woman must stay at home to fill her Godly duty by caring for and raising her children in the world. On the other, some women recognize the importance of contributing financially and being involved with people in the world. But both women can take this to an extreme by becoming self-focused and disengaging with people in their lives while thinking what they are doing is perfectly acceptable and right before God (and possibly condemning others). In my view, both are equally acceptable as long as both women are living their lives focused on active service to God whatever their environment may be.

- Tyre is in modern Lebanon. It was a Gentile city.
- Tyre and Sidon were not viewed favorably to Jews.
- Interesting that there's no mention of his disciples here.
- Whose house? Did he have connections there? Friends, family, rental?
- Jesus's reputation makes it difficult for him to avoid people.²⁰
- *7:25–26 Greek Woman, a Syrophenician, Comes to Jesus About Her Daughter*
 - She was a Phoenician living in province of Syria. Phoenicians, esp. Tyre/Sidon, were known for their ships and sea trade (cf. Isa 23:1; Jer 25:22)
- *7:27 Let the Children Eat First; It's Not Good for Dogs to Eat.*
 - Offensive analogy, “you’re a dog.” But Jesus has domesticated dogs in mind.
 - Children = Israel; Gentiles = little dogs under the table.
 - The dogs *will eat*, but the children of Israel must eat first.²¹
- *7:28 Even the Little Dogs Eat the Scraps.*
 - She identifies him as “Sir” or possibly “Lord.”
 - She humbly accepts the identity of “dogs” and proposes that the Gentiles receive scraps of good things i.e. salvation from the Jews.
- *7:29 Because of Your Answer, Your Daughter is Healed*
- *7:30 She Finds Her Daughter Without the Demon*

Application

- **Jews came first in salvation, then Greeks.**
 - Salvation for non-Jews was always the plan (Isa 2:2–3; 19:25; etc.)
 - Jesus's primary mission was the Jews, but foundation for the growth into the world was laid by the Son Himself.
- **Salvation Is For All**

²⁰ Strauss, 311. Without looking into this too much, I might suggest that there is a contemporary application. Sometimes we try to avoid ministry or take a break from it, but God sends people our way — even people we don't consider “ready” but they surprise us.

²¹ Strauss, 313.

Healing a Deaf and Mute Man (7:31–37)

Mark 7:31 And after going out again from the region of Tyre he went through Sidon unto Sea of Galilee through the middle of the region of Decapolis. **32** And they brought to him a deaf and mute man and urged him in order that he might lay his hands on him. **33** And after taking him from the crowd alone he put his fingers in his hears and after spitting he touched his tongue, **34** And after looking to heaven he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” **35** And [immediately] his eyes opened, his tongue was released and was speaking plainly. **36** And he charged them in order that no one might speak, but as much as he charged, the more emphatically they proclaimed it. **37** And they were greatly astonished saying, “Well all he has done, and he has made the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.

Healing story pattern: (1) request; (2) healing; (3) amazement.²² This story is very similar to the healing in Bethsaida (8:22–26)

- **7:31 *Left Tyre through Sidon to Galilee to Decapolis***

- Jesus travels from one Gentile area to another.
- Skirting Jewish areas where crowds are large and Herod may seek him.

- **7:32 *Deaf and Mute Man Brought to Jesus***

- Probably the man's friends, they beg Jesus.²³
- He had difficulty speaking, wasn't entirely mute.

- **7:33–34 *Jesus Took Him Away; Used Saliva; “Be Opened!”***

- Jesus performed the miracle in private.
- Unsure why Jesus used saliva in his healings. Jesus certainly touched the people to demonstrate compassion, but also probably to transfer healing powers.

- **7:35 *The Man Healed Immediately; He Spoke Clearly***

- Probably had a speech impediment.²⁴

- **7:36–37 *“Don’t Tell Anyone”; But They Tell Everyone***

- This is the first time Jesus has asked them to be silent in a Gentile area. Probably because even here popular interest grew.
- “He has done all things well.”
- cf. Isa 35:5–6 “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”²⁵

- **Application**

- Deafness can be spiritual as well. Failure or difficulty to hear God's voice.

²² Strauss, 319.

²³ Strauss, 321.

²⁴ Strauss, 323.

²⁵ Strauss, 324.

Feeding the Four Thousand (8:1–10)

Mark 8:1 In those days again there was a great crowd and they did not have anything to eat, after calling the disciples he said to them, ² “I have compassion on the crowd, because already three days they remain with me and they do not have anything to eat, ³ and if I might send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint along the road, even some of them have come from afar.” ⁴ And his disciples answered him, “Where will one be able to feed them with bread here in the desert?” ⁵ And he asked them, “How much bread do you have?” And they said, “Seven.” ⁶ And he commanded the crowd to recline upon the ground, and he took the seven loaves and after giving thanks he broke it and gave it to his disciples in order that they might distribute it, and they set it before the crowd. ⁷ And they had some fish, and after blessing them he said these also should be distributed. ⁸ They ate and were filled, and they took up the abundant fragments in seven baskets. ⁹ And there were about four thousand. And he sent them away. ¹⁰ And immediately after embarking in the boat with his disciples he went to the district of Dalmanutha.

- **8:1 *A Large Crowd Gathers***

- Jesus is probably still in the region of Decapolis: Gentile region.
- There are no indications he returned to Judean territory.
- Disciples are here at this point, so perhaps they were present with Syrophoenician.

- **8:2–3 *Nothing to Eat; Jesus Desires to Feed Them So They Don't Faint***

- The intent is to send them home, but first make sure they are sufficiently fed.
- In the 5000, Jesus is motivated to feed because “they were like sheep without a shepherd” (6:34) but here, “they had been with him three days.”
- “From afar” (μακρόθεν/*makrothen*) is often used in the OT/NT to indicate Gentiles or “the nations” (cf. Deut 28:49; Josh 9:6; 60:4; 1 Kgs 8:41). See especially Acts 2:39 “Those who are far off.”²⁶

- **8:4 *“Who Can Do This?”***

- Did the disciples forget what Jesus had done or did they presume Jesus did not always respond to needs with a miracle?²⁷
- Spiritual insensitivity/dullness seems key here.

- **8:5–7 *Loaves/Fish Prayed Over and Distributed***

- No clear symbolism of “seven” here as with “twelve tribes” earlier.
- Jesus “gives thanks” instead of “blesses” the bread; but “blesses” the fish.²⁸
- Emphasis is on the breaking of bread; fish are secondary.

- **8:8–9 *Ate until Satisfied; Seven Baskets Leftover; 4000 People***

- Seven, again, is not as symbolic. Maybe “completeness.”

²⁶ Strauss, 332.

²⁷ Strauss, 332.

²⁸ Strauss, *Mark ZECNT* 2 (Zondervan, 2014), 333.

- Four-thousand (4000) present, here likely includes men.
- Inclusion of Gentiles in this “Messianic Banquet” shadows the table fellowship with Gentiles that would come.
- 8:9b–10 *Dismissed Crowd; Jesus & Disciples Go to Dalmanutha*
 - Board the boat and travel back to Jewish Galilee (where he meets Pharisees cf. 8:11).
 - It’s unclear where Damanutha is. Some suggest near Magdala.

Requesting a Sign from Heaven (8:11–13)

Mark 8:11 And the Pharisees came out and began to argue with him, for they were seeking a sign from heaven, testing him. **12** So sighing deeply in his spirit he said, “Why does this generation desire a sign? Truly I say to you, a sign will not be given to this generation.” **13** And after leaving them again he embarked and went across.

- 8:11 *Pharisees Ask for a Sign from Heaven to Test Him*
 - Jesus cross the sea, has a brief conversation, then crosses again.
 - Opposition (likely) prevented him from staying.
 - With “sign” (σημεῖον/*sēmeion*) they mean “proof from heaven.”
 - * They want Jesus/God to do a miracle that proves his identity.
 - * Signs occur in the Bible:
 - From God Willingly (Exod 4:8–9, 17, 28; 10:1–2; Deut 4:34).
 - When Requested from God (Judg 6:36–40; 2 Kgs 20:8–11).
 - Case of Ahaz (cf. Isa 7:10–12).
 - Signs are sometimes considered negatively “testing” God (Matt 4:7; Luke 4:12; cf. Deut 6:16).²⁹
 - Individuals who refuse to believe evidence sometimes ask for signs (Matt 12:39; 16:4; Luke 11:16, 29; John 2:18–19; 6:30).
- 8:12 *This Generation Will Not Receive a Sign*
 - Sighing deeply = frustration with stubbornness.
 - The Jews/Pharisees *have already seen signs from Jesus*.
 - “This generation” recalls wilderness wanderings (Deut 1:35; 32:5, 20; Ps 95:10–11).³⁰
- 8:13 *Jesus Leaves; Embarks Boat; Crosses to Other Side*
 - Crosses to Bethsaida (cf. 8:22).

²⁹ Strauss, 338.

³⁰ Strauss, 339.

Warning against Pharisees & Herod (8:14–21)

Mark 8:14 Now they forgot to take bread and except for one loaf they had no bread with them in the boat. 15 And he ordered them saying, “Look, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” 16 But they were discussing among themselves that they did not have bread. 17 Then knowing he said to them, “Why do you discuss that you have no bread? Do you not yet understand or comprehend? Are your hearts hardened? 18 *Having eyes they do not see, and having ears they do not hear.* Do you also not remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?” They said to him, “Twelve.” 20 When (I broke) the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?” And they said [to him], “Seven.” 21 And he said to them, “Do you not yet comprehend?”

- **8:14 *They Forgot to Bring Bread Except One Loaf***

- One small loaf would only satisfy one person.
- In their thinking, this is insufficient (despite the miracles Jesus performed).³¹

- **8:15 *Beware the Leaven of the Pharisees and Herod***

- Generally “leaven” indicates something negative (cf. 1 Cor 5:6; Gal 5:9).
- Feast of Unleavened bread demanded as such, else severe punishment (Exod 12:14–20).
- The Pharisees and Herod are blind to who Jesus really is and so work against him and “corrupt” the “whole lump of dough.”

- **8:16 *Disciples Discuss Not Having Bread***

- Discuss or even “argue.”
- They ignore and do not understand the spiritual application Jesus made.

- **8:17–18 *Why Do You Argue; Do You Not Understand?***

- Jesus questions them.
- Use of “not yet” allows for future, possible understanding.

- **8:19–20 *Do You Not Remember When I Broke... Five & Seven Loaves?***

- Jesus asks concrete questions:
 - * How many were there before? five and seven.
 - * How many were there after? twelve and seven.
- There’s something here with Jesus asserting his authority but also indicating how God provides.³²

- **8:21 *Do You Still Not Yet Understand?***

- There’s still a possibility to yet understand!
- Still, Jesus is accusing them of being spiritually blind and deaf → both of which can be healed with faith! → but cannot be healed by human ways.

³¹ Strauss, 344.

³² Strauss misses this and says that Jesus still wants to emphasize being the “host of the messianic banquet,” 347.

Application

1. Avoid Spiritual Blindness.
2. Beware of sin that permeates the “whole lump.”
3. “Bread” (food) and worldly things distract from spiritual matters.
 - Our desire for food, pleasure, entertainment interfere with Christ.
 - These things also interfere with the church socially when they (food, pleasure, self, entertainment) take priority over the word of God.

Part V

The Suffering Way of the Messiah (8:22–10:52)

Revelation of the Messiah's Suffering (8:22–10:52)

Healing a Blind Man at Bethsaida (8:22–26)

Mark 8:22 And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought to him a blind man and begged him so that he might touch him. 23 Then after taking hold of the blind man's hand he carried him outside the village and spitting into his eye, when he laid on his hands he was asking him, "Do you see anything?" 24 And he answered saying, "I see men that look like trees walking around." 25 Then again he laid his hands on his eyes, and he saw clearly and he was restored and he was gazing at everything clearly. 26 So he sent him to his home saying, "Do not enter into the town."¹

- **8:22 *Arrive in Bethsaida; People Beg Jesus to Heal Blind Man***
 - Jesus and disciples tried to go here in 6:45 but ended up in Gennesaret.
 - Friends of the blind man ask for healing. Common pattern as before.
- **8:23 *Jesus Leads Man Out of Town; Spits in His Eyes; Lays Hands on Him***
 - Jesus avoids the publicity by going out of the town (esp. Judean territory).
 - Saliva is used only here, 7:33, and John 9:6.
 - "Can you see anything" is the only time Jesus asks about a healing.
- **8:24 *"I See People Like Trees Walking Around"***
 - Easily one of the strangest statements in the Gospels. One expects the man to be healed, but instead he sees mythological Ents prancing about Judea.
 - The man has not fully been healed so he sees people as trees and not clearly as human beings.
- **8:25 *Places Hands Again; Man Sees Clearly***
 - "He saw clearly, his sight was restored, he could see everything clearly" emphasizes in contrast to v. 24 that he was healed this time.
 - Why did this happen?

¹ This story is unique to Mark's Gospel (as is 7:37). Matthew may have chosen to exclude it for his Jewish audience because they might have regarded the "two attempts" as a failure.

- * *To demonstrate how people gradually become healed in their spiritual sight, sometimes it takes multiple encounters.*
- * *The disciples only partially understood who Jesus was and what he stood for.*

• **8:26 *Man Sent Home: "Don't Enter the Town"***

- Formerly blind man lived outside the main town.
- Again Jesus seeks to avoid excessive publicity.

Peter's Confession and the First Passion Prediction (8:27–33)

Mark 8:27 And Jesus went out and his disciples also into the villages of Caesarea Philippi, and along the road he asked his disciples saying to them, "Who do men say I am?" 28 And they said to him, "They are saying John the Baptizer, and others Elijah, and others that 'He is one of the prophets.'" 29 And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to him, "You are the Christ." 30 And he sternly charged him in order that they might tell no one concerning him. 31 And he began to teach them that it is necessary that the Son of Man suffer many things and to be rejected by the elders and the high priests and the scribes and might be fulfilled and after three days be lifted up, 32 With boldness he spoke the word. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples he rebuked Peter and said, "Depart from me, adversary (satan), for your mind is not on the things of God but the things of man."

• **8:27 *Jesus and Disciples Enter Caesarea-Philippi; He Asks "The" Question***

- Journey 25mi north from Bethsaida to villages surrounding Caesarea-Philippi.
- This was likely to put some distance between himself and the crowds.
- **This is the climatic moment of the Gospel of Mark.**
 - * Forms literal center of the book.
 - * 311 verses before it and about 361 verses after it.

• **8:28 *John the Baptist or Elijah or a Prophet***

- Reflects the common guesses about Jesus (cf. 6:14–16).
- Jesus did fit this type of individuals, but was different.

• **8:29 *"BUT WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?" Peter says, "YOU ARE THE MESSIAH"***

- Jesus is the "Anointed One", descended from David who will initiate God's final kingdom in this world.

• **8:30 *Do Not Tell Anyone Who I Am***

- Jesus strongly warned them (cf. "rebuke" 1:25; 4:39; 3:12).
- He may be concerned of sparking a revolt.²

² Strauss, 362.

- John says, “He did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people” (2:24). The issue with them knowing is ultimately their malicious and self-serving intents (“make him king” cf. John 6:15). Jesus only entrusted himself to God (1 Pet 2:23).
- **8:31 *Jesus Explains His Suffering***
 - Rejected by Jerusalem/Jewish Sanhedrin consisting of three parts: (1) elders, (2) chief priests, and (3) experts/scribes in the Law.
 - He would be killed, but rise after three days.
- **8:32 *Jesus Spoke Plainly/Boldly; Peter Pulls Him Aside and Rebukes Him***
 - Peter thought Jesus was being a “defeatist.”³
 - They couldn’t imagine God’s Anointed King coming to an end in the hands of his enemies. That kind of thing was only for the wicked kings of the OT.
- **8:33 *Get Behind Me Satan; You Are Concerned With Human Things***
 - “Turning and seeing his disciples” indicates the others thought the same as Peter.
 - Jesus calls Peter *Satan* meaning “Adversary” but also the name for God’s opponent (cf. 1:13; 3:23). He is the one who “snatches the seed of the word away” (4:15).
 - The fact that Peter quickly turned on Jesus and rebuked him indicates that they do not yet see clearly as with the first healing attempt of the blind man. They will only truly see after the resurrection (cf. John 2:22; 12:16).⁴

Application

1. *Our perceptions of Jesus are shaped by our felt needs: what we want.*
 - What we want/need affects how we read Scripture: only finding things which appeal to us or make us feel good about self.
2. *Jesus sets an example of servitude and sacrificial leadership: hardly the case in modern day churches and in denominations.*

Requirements of Discipleship (8:34–9:1)

Mark 8:34 And summoning the crowd with his disciples he said to them, “If anyone desires to follow after me, he should deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever might wish to save his life he will destroy it, but whoever loses his life for the sake of me the good news will save it. 36 For what profit is it if a man gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his life? 37 For what might a man give in exchange for his life? 38 For whoever might be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him, whenever he might come in the glory of his father and with the holy messengers. 9:1 And he was saying to them, “Truly I say to you that some who are standing here will not taste death until the kingdom of God comes with power.”

³ Strauss, 364.

⁴ Strauss, 357.

• 8:34 *“Deny Yourself; Take Up Your Cross; Follow Me”*

- Instructions for following Jesus: (1) deny oneself; (2) take up one’s cross; (3) follow him.
- A follower *“must take action...”* *To follow Jesus means more than just calling yourself a Christian. It means renouncing yourself and journeying with him even to death.* Thoughts?
 - * *Denying yourself* — giving up your desires, ambitions, personal goals, and submit to Christ.
 - * *Take up your cross* — be willing to follow Christ at whatever cost, even death.
- Crucifixion was practiced by Persians, Greeks, and others. It was a “means of exposing an executed corpse to shame and humiliation... to produce maximum torture and humiliation.”⁵
- For the Romans, crucifixion was a “weapon of terror” to warn revolutionaries what happens when one opposes Rome.

• 8:35 *“Want to Save Your Life = You Will Lose It; and Vice Versa*

- The only way to save one’s life is by losing their own life for Jesus and in submission to the good news (gospel).

• 8:36–37 *What Benefit to Gain the World but Lose Your Soul?*

- Why gain everything you want or society expects in the world instead of a relationship with God?
- What would one give of earthly blessing to have eternal life? Anything and everything. If so, why not?

• 8:38 *If You Are Ashamed of Me... I Will Be Ashamed of You*

- Those who are afraid of, reject, or refuse to follow Jesus will not be recognized by Jesus when he returns.
- This “adulterous and sinful generation” recalls Israel as an unfaithful wife to God (cf. Isa 1:4, 21; Ezek 16:32; Hos 2:3).

• 9:1 *Some Will Not Die Before the Kingdom Comes in Power.*⁶

- Some disciples will not die before what happens?
 1. Revealing of the kingdom in Jesus’s word and actions (now)
 2. A preview of the kingdom in the transfiguration of Jesus (soon)
 3. The crucifixion of Jesus.
 4. Death and resurrection as the beginning of the kingdom.
 5. Arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.
 6. Destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
 7. Return of Jesus on the Last Day.
- Strauss’s commentary suggests the transfiguration. Another possibility is the arrival of the Holy Spirit “in power.” Either way, Jesus’s return is probably not the meaning here.

⁵ Strauss, 373.

⁶ Strauss, 375–76.

Application

- Salvation both costs us *nothing* but yet it costs us *everything*.
- By dying *we live*.
- Faithfulness through humility, service, sacrifice, and possibly death will allow us to obtain eternal life.

The Transfiguration and the Question about Elijah (9:2–13)

Mark 9:2 And after six days Jesus took Peter and James and John and brought them up unto the high mountain along by themselves, and he was transformed before them, 3 And his garments became shining (with) a white light, as one who beaches on the earth is not able to bleach them. 4 And Elijah with Moses appeared to them and they were speaking with Jesus. 5 And Peter speaking up, said to Jesus, “Teacher, it is good for us to be here, so let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” 6 For he did not know what to say, for he became terrified. 7 And a cloud began to cast a shadow upon them, and there was a great voice from the cloud, “This is my beloved son, listen to him!” 8 And suddenly after looking around they no longer saw anything except Jesus alone with them. 9 And while they were coming down from the mountain he charged them in order that they might tell no one what they saw, not until the Son of Man might be raised up. 10 And they kept these words to themselves discussing what it means to rise from the dead. 11 And they were asking him saying, “Why do the scribes say that it is necessary for Elijah to come first?” 12 Then he said to them, “Elijah indeed came first to restore all things, and how it is written for the Son of Man in order that he might suffer many things and be scorned. 13 Rather I say to you that Elijah has come, and they did to him as they desired, just as it was written of him.

Table 16.1: Jesus & Moses on the Mountain

Jesus	Moses
Jesus takes three disciples on the mountain (9:2)	Moses goes up with three named people and 70 elders (Exod 24:1,9)
Jesus is transfigured and clothes become white (9:2–3)	Moses’s skin shines after talking with God (34:29)
God appears in a cloud (9:7)	God appears in a cloud (24:15–16, 18)
A voice speaks from the cloud (9:7)	A voice speaks from the cloud (24:16)
People are astonished and afraid (9:15)	People are astonished and afraid (35:30)

- **9:2 *Jesus Takes Peter, James, and John onto the Mountain; He is Transfigured.***
 - Six days later after saying “some will see the kingdom come in power” Jesus takes them up on the mountain.
 - The cloud was on Mt. Sinai for 6 days before God spoke (Exod 24:15–16).⁷
 - It’s unclear which mountain they are on (Tabor, Carmel, Meron, Hermon). The point is that they are *on a mountain* but which one is not really significant.
 - Jesus is “*changed in form*”

⁷ Strauss, 382.

· **9:3 *Clothing Becomes Whiter than Anyone Can Bleach Cloth.***

- His clothes are brighter than a clothing specialist is able to bleach cloth. Therefore: *no human could produce the brightness.*

· **9:4 *Elijah and Moses Appear and Talk with Jesus***

- The Messiah was said to be like Elijah (Mal 4:5) and Moses (Deut 18:15).
- Jesus here emphasizes that he is neither (cf. 8:28).
- How did the disciples know Moses and Elijah (revelation? stone tablets and a fiery chariot? Jesus told them? name tags? business cards?)⁸
- The point is that they are standing as witnesses beside Jesus to the divine pronouncement in v. 7.

· **9:5–6 *A Scared Peter Says, “It’s Good For Us to Be Here; Let Us Make Tents.”***

- Peter: eager and impulsive as always.
- The “tents” or “tabernacles” is not really the point. Peter is kinda rambling and at a loss to know what to say or do. Really the thing to do is watch and listen.⁹

· **9:7 *“This Is My Beloved Son; Listen to Him!”***

- Clouds signify the presence of God.
- This moment is similar to the word at Jesus’s baptism.
- “You must listen to him” (cf. Deut 18:15).
 - * Hear with understanding *AND*
 - * Do something about it.

· **9:8 *They Look Around; Only Jesus Remains***

- Event is clearly miraculous. Shows Jesus is more important than the two.¹⁰

· **9:9 *“Do Not Tell Anyone Until After the Son Rises from Death”***

- These “secret insider things” about Jesus may be told after he rises.
- Jesus still wants to prevent being a militaristic, political Messiah.

· **9:10 *They Kept it Secret; Discussed What Resurrection Meant***

- Indeed the disciples did obey his request.
- Did Jesus mean resurrection at the end of the age?

⁸ Strauss, 385.

⁹ Certainly sometime we struggle with as humans. We love to add commentary to everything we see around us: preaching, government, the Bible, other perceived problems, counseling other Christians (well this is why you’re suffering *a la* Job). Sometimes the best thing for us to do is be silent, listen, observe and be a present witness for Christ. It’s important that our concern for others in times of crisis or difficulty doesn’t come across as “being about us” or “being nosy.” Finding a balance of addressing needs, saying the right things, or just giving a hug can be very important.

¹⁰ Strauss, 386.

• **9:11** *Why Do the Scholars Say Elijah Must Come First*

- Seeing Elijah probably prompted this question: How does Elijah fit into what is happening?¹¹
- Elijah was closely related to “end time prophecy” (cf. Mal 4:5–6).

• **9:12–13** *Elijah Must Come First; Son of Man Must Suffer; Elijah Has Come!*

- Jesus agrees with the scribes/scholars of the Law.
- Elijah has come = John the Baptist.
- Elijah/John has come to *restore* but not on his own and with respect to the suffering of the Messiah.

Healing a Boy with an Evil Spirit (9:14–29)

Mark 9:14 And after coming to the disciples he saw a great crowd around them and scribes arguing with them. **15** Then Immediately all the crowd seeing Jesus was alarmed and running out were greeting him. **16** And he asked them, “Why are you arguing with them?” **17** But one from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, he has a mute spirit. **18** And whenever it seizes him it attacks him, and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.” **19** Then Jesus answered him, “O faithless generation, how long will I be with you? How long must I endure you? Bring him to me.” **20** They brought the boy to Jesus. When the spirit saw him immediately it caused the boy to convulse, and he fell on the ground rolling about and foaming at the mouth. **21** And Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. **22** Often it also cast him into the fire and into water in order that it might destroy him. But if you are able, help us, have compassion on us.” **23** And Jesus said to him, “If you can! All things are possible for the one who believes.” **24** Immediately the father of the child after crying out said, “I believe, help my unbelief!” **25** But Jesus seeing that the crowd drew near, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “Mute and deaf spirit, it is I who commands you, come out from him and do not enter him any more.” **26** After crying out and convulsing it came out and the boy was like a corpse, so that many were saying, “He died.” **27** But Jesus took his hand and lifted him up, and he was restored. **28** And going into the house his disciples were asking him privately, “Why were we not able to cast it out?” **29** And he said to them, “This kind is not able to be cast out except by prayer.”

• **9:14** *Large Crowd Gathers; Scribes Arguing with Other 9 Disciples*

- Disciples had (before this) tried to cast out the demon but they were unable.
- An argument, discussion, debate of some sort broke out over authority of Jesus.¹²

• **9:15** *Whole Crowd Sees Him; Amazed; Greets Him*

- Why were they amazed or alarmed? Perhaps Jesus had lingering effects of the transfiguration—was he still glowing?

• **9:16–18** *The Argument: A Boy with Unclean Spirit; Disciples Unable to Cast Out*

¹¹ Strauss, 387.

¹² Strauss, 395.

- Jesus inquires about the nature of the argument.
 - A man had come to Jesus with his son, but Jesus was absent so his disciples had tried to cast out the demon in his place. Since the disciples had done so in the past (3:15; 6:7, 13) it seemed reasonable they could here as well.¹³
 - Symptoms of the mute spirit are “remarkably similar to epilepsy” — seizures, foaming at the mouth, grinding teeth, temporary paralysis, etc. This does not mean it was epilepsy but the spirit caused similar symptoms.
- 9:19 *“O Unbelieving Generation!”*
 - “Faithless generation” is OT prophetic language against Israel.
 - Who did Jesus mean? Probably disciples, scribes, the father, and the crowd.
 - “How much longer must I endure your stubbornness and unbelief?!”¹⁴
- 9:20–22 *This Spirit Sees Jesus and Reacts; Father Describes Symptoms*
 - Immediately when the mute spirit saw Jesus, it caused harm to the boy. Jesus asks about the duration of the issues and the father explains from birth.
 - The spirit has been trying to kill the boy.
 - “Help us if you are able!”
- 9:23–24 *“If You Can? Everything is Possible for Those Who Believe!”*
 - God has the power to do anything. The point being faith in Him.
 - Jesus mostly did miracles as a response to belief in God.
 - The man’s second statement “Help my unbelief!” is an expression of faith.¹⁵
- 9:25 *Seeing the Gathering Crowd; Jesus Rebukes the Mute Spirit*
 - Crowd is growing rapidly. Jesus moves to heal to avoid issues.
 - The spirit caused muteness and deafness.
- 9:26–27 *This Spirit Convulses Once More; Comes Out; But Boy Appears Dead*
 - Demon was not mute, just causing muteness of the boy.
 - The boy does not seem to actually die, although the crowd thought so.
 - Jesus lifts up the boy as he did with Jarius’s daughter.
 - It is only Jesus and God with power over life and death.
- 9:28–29 *Why Were We Unable?” Jesus says “Only By Prayer.”*
 - Privately, the disciples question why they were unable. They had the authority and had cast out in the past, but why not now?

¹³ cf. Strauss, 396.

¹⁴ cf. Strauss, 397.

¹⁵ Strauss, 399.

- Are there different “kinds” of demons or more generally “kind” of spiritual warfare?
- Prayer to God + faith would have accomplished a healing here.
- “The disciples have no power on their own. It is only by faith through prayer.”¹⁶

Second Passion Prediction and Teaching on Discipleship (9:30–50)

Mark 9:30 They went out and passed through Galilee, and he did not want anyone to know, 31 for he was teaching his disciples saying to them that, “The Son of Man will be delivered to into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and when they kill him after three days he will be raised. 32 But they did not understand this saying, and they were afraid to ask him. 33 Then they went to Capernaum. And after Jesus came into the house he asked him, “What were you arguing along the way?” 34 But they were silent, for they had argued with one another along the road as to who was greater. 35 After sitting down, he summoned the twelve and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he will be last of all and servant of all.” 36 He took a child placing it among them and he took it into his arms and said to them, 37 “Whoever might receive one of these children for my name receives me, and whoever receives me does not receive me but the one who sent me.” Mark 9:38 John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone in your name casting out demons and we forbid him, because he has not followed us.” 39 But Jesus said, “Do not forbid him. For no one who will do a miracle in my name will be quickly able to speak evil of me. 40 For the one who is not against us, he is for us. 41 For the one who might give a drink to you of cold water because you belong to Christ, truly I say to you that he will not lose his reward. 42 And whoever might cause one of these little ones who believe [in me] to sin, it is better for him if he is bound with donkey’s millstone around his neck and be thrown into the sea. 43 And if your hand might cause you to sin, cut it off. For it is better for you crippled to enter into life than having two hands to enter into hell, to the fire that is inextinguishable. 45 And if your foot might cause you to sin, cut it off. For it is better for you lame to enter life than having two feet to be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye might cause you to sin, take it out. For it is better for you one-eyed to enter into the kingdom of God than having two eyes be thrown into hell. 48 Where *‘the worm itself never dies and the fire is not extinguished.’* 49 Everyone will be salted with fire. 50 Salt is good, but if the salt becomes unsalty, how will one season with it? Have salt in yourselves and have peace with one another.

- 9:30 *Leaving Area of Caesarea-Philippi; Passing Through Galilee toward Capernaum*
- 9:30–31 *Obscurity is Desired to Teach Disciples: “Son of Man Must Be Killed But Will Rise.”*
 - Jesus here sought alone time with his disciples to prepare his disciples for what is to come.¹⁷
 - He “will be handed over” or “will be betrayed” to human hands.
- 9:32 *They Did Not Understand and Were Afraid to Ask.*
 - Struggled to understand: (1) God’s Messiah would suffer; and (2) God’s Messiah would rise from the dead.¹⁸
 - Perhaps disciples were afraid to admit they lacked understanding.

¹⁶ Strauss, 401.

¹⁷ Strauss, 407.

¹⁸ Strauss, 407–8.

• 9:33–34 *In Capernaum; Jesus Asks About Disciples' Argument.*

- Disciples explain they were disputing who was the greatest.
- This may be normal for their culture especially in light of their assumption of Jesus establishing an earthly kingdom.

• 9:35 *"If Anyone Wants to Be First; They Must Be Last.*

- Jesus sits, like a Jewish rabbi teaching his students.
- If you want to be great, you have to be a servant.
- James and John were the ones debating (John 10:43–44).
- Zebedee's wife (mother of James/John) asked for places for her sons (Matt 20:20).

• 9:36–37 *Taking a Child Jesus Explains One Must Welcome a Child.*

- Strauss ponders whether this was one of Peter's children: *they are likely in his house.*¹⁹
- Welcoming a child is like welcoming Jesus. Welcoming Jesus is like welcoming God.
- The adverse would imply a negative result: If you do not welcome a child you do not welcome Jesus and ultimately God.
- Who does "children mean"? (1) actual children; (2) lowly members in society; (3) believers (cf. 1 Jn 2:1).²⁰ Probably all the above. If you cause those who are vulnerable or naïve Christians or actual children to stumble.

• 9:38 *John says: We Saw Someone Casting Out Demons; We Tried to Stop Him*

- He wasn't "one of us" so we tried to control him and stop him.
- Since John was probably the one discussing his position, it fits for him to answer. John and James wanted to call down fire on Samaritans (cf. Luke 9:51–55). This event is similar.
- It seems a disciple of Jesus, but not one of the twelve or those given authority, was casting out demons in Jesus's name. They had to believe else it would not work. It's interesting they say "they weren't one of us" and not "they weren't following you, Jesus." It's a matter of the self-superiority of the Twelve.

• 9:39–40 *"Don't Stop Him; If It's In My Name They Are For Us"*

- Those who use Christ's name are truly his followers. They won't speak evil.
- Some who prophesy, perform miracles, and cast out demons in his name; Jesus would say to them "I never knew you" (Matt 7:21–23).
- The issue is with an inner-disciple cliques. The Twelve seem to think they are superior to other disciples more than Jesus granted to them.
- See a similar situation in Num 11:26–30.²¹

• 9:41 *If Someone Gives a Cup of Water to Disciples; They Will Not Lose Reward*

¹⁹ Strauss, 409.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Strauss, 411.

- If someone gives a cup of water *in my name*.
- “Those who provide love and support for Jesus’s lowly and persecuted disciples are working for the kingdom and will be rewarded.”²²
- **9:42 *If Someone Causes a Child to Stumble; Hang Millstone and Drown!***
 - Little ones could mean a believer or child who are easily influenced.
- **9:43–48 *If Your Hand, Foot, or Eye Causes Sin; Cut It Off!***
 - It is better to enter into life without one of them than to have them and perish.
 - This refers to temptations within.
 - Gehenna = γέννα — *gê ben hinnôn* — “valley of the son of Hinnom” (Josh 15:8; Neh 11:30)
 - * It was a place where sacrifices to Canaanite gods Molech and Baal were offered.
 - * Josiah attempted to stop the practice (2 Kgs 23:10)
 - * Israelites used the place for burning garbage.
- **9:49 *Everyone Will Be Salted with Fire***
- **9:50 *Salt is Good; Unsalty Salt is Bad; Be Salty Yourself!***
 - Salt is a preservative. It’s a good thing.

Application

1. **Beware of Personal Pride. Period.**
2. **Welcome the Smallest and Least Significant**
 - Our society, even in churches, encourages greeting those who are most important.
 - Leaders in the church sometimes struggle with only greeting other leaders.
 - Visiting preachers are honored while a church member is never recognized.
3. **Don’t Cause Others to Stumble**
4. **Danger in Group Pride of “Our Group” vs. “Your Group”**
 - Not as much about “denominations” as it is churches against other churches or social groups against social groups or leadership groups vs. people.
 - We have to be careful of “my group is better than your group” if we are all legitimately trying to follow Christ. Sometimes, however, this is precisely the issue “my group” is accusing “your group” of being unfaithful.
 - See Paul’s concern in Philippians 1:15–18. Those preaching Christ from poor motives.
 - Some churches that are well-known sometimes struggle with being praised by visiting members or preachers “we’ve heard so many good things about your church.” It becomes easy to think the kingdom of God revolves around such congregation.

²² Strauss, 412.

Teaching on Divorce (10:1–12)

Mark 10:1 And from there they went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan, and again crowds gathered to him, and as was his custom he was teaching them. **2** And the Pharisees came to him asking him if it is lawful for man to divorce his wife, testing him. **3** But answering he said to them, “What did Moses command to you?” **4** Then they said, “The book of Moses permits a certificate to divorce and release.” **5** But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hearts this commandment was written to you. **6** But from the beginning of creation male and female he made them. **7** Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother [and cleave to his wife.] **8** And the two will become one flesh, so that no longer they are two but one flesh. **9** Therefore that which God joined together man must not separate.” **10** And in the house again the disciples asked him concerning this. **11** And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. **12** And if she, after divorcing her husband, might marry another commits adultery.

- **10:1** *Leaving Capernaum → Judea → crosses the Jordan → Perea*
- **10:2** *Pharisees Test Jesus, “Is it Lawful to Divorce?”*
 - Why ask? Most Jews knew they could (Deut 24:1–4).
 - The issue is *why could someone divorce?* This was a Pharisaic debate.
 - * Rabbi Shammi & Followers — only for adultery.
 - * Rabbi Hillel & Followers — almost any reason, even burning dinner.²³
 - In Judaism, only men could initiate divorce. But sometimes upper-class women did (Josephus, *Ant.* 15.7.10).
 - Perhaps the Pharisees were seeking to trap Jesus because John had taken an unpopular position on divorce. Remember: they were in Perea, this is Herod’s territory. Perhaps Jesus’s position would result in Herod’s wrath once more.²⁴
- **10:3** *Jesus Responds, “What Did Moses Command You?”*
 - God through Moses commanded lifelong commitment.
 - He *permitted* divorce because of the hardness of hearts.
- **10:4** *Moses Permitted a Man to Write a Certificate and Send Her Away*
 - Their quote is from Deut 24:1–4.
 - * This passage does not necessarily give permission to divorce.
 - * It is to forbid a husband from remarrying his wife after he divorced her and remarries.
- **10:5** *“Moses Wrote This Because of Your Hard Hearts”*
- **10:6–8** *God Made Them Male & Female... Leave and Cleave...*
 - Created order for marital relationships is male/female.

²³ See Strauss, 423. The Rabbi Akiba at the end of the first century said one could divorce if a man “found another fairer than she” (*m. Git.* 9:10).

²⁴ For more on this, see Strauss, 423.

- Marital relationship takes precedent over family relationships.
- “One flesh” means covenant and sexual union.²⁵
- 10:9 *“What God Joined; Do Not Separate!”*
 - Specifically “do not let the husband break it off.”
- 10:10 *Disciples Ask Jesus in Private*
- 10:11 *“If You Divorce and Re-Marry; You Commit Adultery*
 - Divorce is a reality, but Jesus does not seem to condone it nor prohibit it.
 - Divorce is not what God intends.
- 10:12 *If a Wife Divorces and Re-Marries; She Commits Adultery*
 - This law applies for both men and women.
 - Probably what’s being said here is a response to the initial question “Can we divorce for whatever reason we feel like [and remarry]?” Jesus’s answer is, “No, and if you remarry you commit adultery.”

Application

1. Jesus focuses on the reason divorce happens instead of the nitty-gritty details of it: *Because of human hearts being hard.*
2. God’s will is a faithful marriage, not divorce.
3. Marriages are not easily dissolved. It’s a covenant with God.
4. Divorce is always a result of sin, no matter the issue.
5. Compare this statement with Matt 5:32 and 19:9 where the one exception given is “sexual immorality”? Is this a contradiction?
 - a) Also important for us to look at this issue in broader biblical context and not just this passage.

Blessing the Children (10:13–16)

Mark 10:13 And they were bringing children to him in order that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. **14** But seeing them Jesus was angry and said to them, “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them, for such are the kingdom of God. **15** Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a child, he will not enter into enter into it.” **16** Then after taking them in his arms he blessed them laying hands upon them.

- 10:13 *Children Brought to Jesus; Disciples Rebuke the Families*
 - Parents or families are seeking a blessing (v. 16).
 - These children could be anywhere from 0–12. Greek is not specific.

²⁵ Strauss, 425.

- 10:14–15 *Jesus Becomes Angry; “Let the Children Come...”*
 - The kingdom of God belongs to those who are like children in their faith.
 - This means “small insignificant, needy, and without social status.”²⁶
- 10:15b *Whoever Does Not Receive the Kingdom Like a Child Will Not Enter*
 - A child-like person *depends on God*.
 - Those who receive (present) will enter (future).
- 10:16 *Jesus Takes the Children in His Arms and Blesses Them*

Riches and the Kingdom of God (10:17–31)

Mark 10:17 After setting off on his way a man ran to him and after kneeling he asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do in order to inherit eternal life?” **18** Then Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except the one God. **19** You know the commandments, ‘You should not murder, you should not commit adultery, you should not steal, you should not bear false witness, you should not steal, honor your father and your mother.’” **20** Then he said to Jesus, “Teacher, all these things I kept from my youth.” **21** Then Jesus after looking at him he loved him and said to him, “In you lacks one thing: Go! As much as you have sell it and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and now follow me!” **22** Shocked because of these words, he went away sorrowful, for he was having many possessions. **23** And after looking around Jesus said to his disciples, “How difficult for one who has wealth to enter into the kingdom of God. **24** Then the disciples were amazed because of his words. So Jesus again after answering said to them, “Children, how difficult it is to enter into the kingdom of God. **25** It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than one who is rich to enter into the kingdom of God. **26** But they were even more amazed saying to one another, “And who is able to be saved?” **27** After looking at them Jesus said, “For man it is not possible, but for God, all things are possible with God.” **28** Peter began to say to him, “See we left everything and have followed you!” **29** Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left their house and brothers and sisters and mother and father and children and lands for my sake and for the good news, **30** who will not receive hundredfold now in this time these houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. **31** But many who are first will be last and the last will be first.

- 10:17 *Man Runs to Jesus; Kneels; “What Must I Do to Inherit Life?”*
 - Running and kneeling shows his submission before Christ as a slave.
 - Inherit life = be saved = entering the kingdom.
- 10:18 *“Why Call Me Good? God Alone is Good”*
 - Jesus is not denying his goodness. He’s correcting his perception.
- 10:19 *The Commandments: “Do not murder, nor commit adultery, nor steal, nor give false testimony, nor defraud, but honor father and mother.”*

²⁶ Strauss, 433.

- Order is the same except honoring parents moved around and Jesus emphasizes to this rich man “don’t defraud someone” (which is similar to covetousness—rich man may have obtained his wealth immorally).
- 10:20 *“I Have Done These Since My Youth”*
- 10:21 *Jesus Loved Him and said, “Now Sell All You Have and Give to the Poor; Lay Up in Heaven; Follow Me”*
 - This man is earnestly sincere, he’s so close to the kingdom!
 - But now he must give up his life, everything he values, and follow Jesus.
 - He is too trusting of himself, his riches, and his own resources. He loves money.
 - The riches to come are not mansions over the hilltop but eternal life with God.
- 10:22 *Stunned, He Goes Away Sorrowful, He Very Wealthy*
- 10:23–24 *“How Difficult it is for Wealthy People to Enter the Kingdom of God!”*
 - Why are the disciples amazed? Was it because Jews thought riches were a sign of blessing and divine favor (Prov 10:22)?²⁷
- 10:25 *“Easier for Camel to Pass Through Needle than Wealthy to Enter Kingdom”*
 - Strauss writes, “It is indeed impossible to enter the kingdom of God without divine intervention. What is impossible for human beings has been made possible by God. No rich person can enter the kingdom of God while trusting in their riches.”
- 10:26–27 *Disciples are Shocked, “Who Can be Saved?; Jesus says, “Only Possible with God”*
 - If the disciples are shocked and think no one can be saved: does this mean they considered themselves rich?
 - If so, what does this imply about how we view wealth today?
- 10:28 *Peter, “See We Left Everything to Follow You.”*
 - Peter asserts that the disciples did such. But Peter still had his home and boat.
 - The issue was not with practical things, but impractical things that impede faith.
- 10:29–30 *“The One Who Leaves.... For My Sake and the Gospel will Receive 100x More in the Age to Come and Eternal Life.”*
 - Spouses are not mentioned here (cf. Luke 18:29). Perhaps this is to suggest that some traveled with their wives. We know Peter did in his missionary work.
- 10:31 *“First Will Be Last; Last Will Be First”*

²⁷ Strauss, 443.

Application

1. Giving up everything one owned is not required. Giving up what pulls us away from God is required.
 - Many people supported the church with their wealth.
 - Many people still do. But if that wealth distracts from their faith, it must go.
2. Riches, possessions, things, love of neat stuff, obsessively collecting, anything. If it doesn't serve God's purposes, it might be sinful.
3. Wealth is ultimately a resource for God's kingdom, not for our personal disposal.
 - a) Before making purchases we need to ask ourselves, every time:
 - i. How will this help accomplish *God's purpose* on earth?
 - ii. With this purchase am I seeking God's kingdom or my selfish desires?²⁸
 - b) With what we presently have, we need to ask:
 - i. Does this help accomplish God's purpose on earth?
 - ii. Does my use of it seek God's kingdom or fulfill my selfish desires?²⁹

Third Passion Prediction and the Request of James and John (10:32–45)

Mark 10:32 Then they were on the road going to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them, but they were amazed and those who followed him were afraid. And again he took the twelve and he began to tell them the things that were about to happen **33** "See that we are going into Jerusalem, then the Son of Man will be delivered to the high priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him and they will deliver him to the Gentiles **34** and they will mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him, and after three days he will rise up. **35** And they came to him, James and John the sons of Zebedee, saying to him, "Teacher, we desire so that whatever might ask you might do for us." **36** And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" **37** And they said to him, "Give to us that we might sit one on your right hand and one on your left in your glory." **38** Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized?" **39** But they said "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink and the baptism that I am baptized you will be baptized. **40** But to sit at my right or my left is not mine to give, but for those whom it has been prepared." **41** And after the ten heard it they began to be angry towards James and John. **42** And Jesus summoned them and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord over them and their great ones exercise authority over them. **43** But this way will not be among you, but those who desire to become great among you will be your servant, **44** and those that desire to be first among you will be last of all, **45** but the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom in place of many."

- **10:32** *Going Up to Jerusalem; They Were Afraid; Jesus Prepares Them*

²⁸ Strauss, 448.

²⁹ And yes I think that in some regards, this includes TV, computers, games, phones, tablets, and uses of our stuff to please ourselves. While appropriate entertainment is less explicitly "bad" than, say, pornography, we do need to really reconsider what we do with our free-time as Christians.

- Do they think Jesus is going up to Jerusalem to sit on the throne?
- Do they think war is about to break out?
- So Jesus stops and explains to them.
- 10:33–34 *“Son of Man Will Be Delivered to Rulers; Condemn Him to Death; Hand Over to Gentiles; Mock, Spit, Flog, and Kill Him. After Three Days, He Will Arise*
- 10:35–36 *James and John Approach Jesus*
 - They ask him to do whatever they ask.
 - This is probably a continuation of argument in 9:33–38ff.
 - James and John are letting the prestige get to their heads.
- 10:37 *“Let Us Sit On Your Right and Left Hand in Glory”*
 - They’re probably asking to sit in thrones beside Jesus.³⁰
 - Probably an earthly kingdom they think Jesus is about to setup.
- 10:38 *“You Don’t Know What You’re Asking...”*
 - Cup, baptism = symbols for his death.
 - Drink the cup of death that is offered; baptized with suffering?
 - Perhaps also references to the Lord’s Supper and actual baptism.
- 10:39–40 *“Yes We Can!”; Jesus says, “You Will; But I Cannot Grant You to Sit at My Right or Left.”*
 - Perhaps they are ready to die in service of Jesus. Jesus then explains that they will.
 - The places they ask for are prepared for others by God. Jesus cannot assign them.
 - The context hints at the solution *the last will be first... the children in faith...*
- 10:41 *Disciples Become Angry at James and John* — everyone wants the best seats!
- 10:42–44 *Jesus Talks About Rulers of the Gentiles. Explains that Kingdom is Opposite: Last Will Be First*
 - The world’s way is that the great people rule over others. The disciples knew this from their experience of Herod and Romans in Judea.
 - God’s way is that the great people become a servant and slave.
- 10:45 *Son of Man Came to Not to Be Served but To Serve & Give Life*
 - Jesus became a “ransom” — paid the price of release [from sin].
 - Jesus redeemed, liberated his people [just as God liberated from Egypt].
 - One who died for many. Jesus did die for all. It’s a contrast between “one” and “many.”³¹
 - Background of this verse is Isa 53 and Dan 7.

³⁰ Strauss, 454.

³¹ Strauss, 459.

Restoring Blind Bartimaeus's Sight (10:46–52)

Mark 10:46 And they came to Jericho. And when he was leaving from Jericho along with his disciples and a great crowd, the son of Timaeus Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting along the road. **47** And hearing that it was Jesus the Nazarene he began to cry out and to say, "Jesus son of David, have mercy on me!" **48** And many rebuked him so he might be silent. But even more he cried out, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" **49** Jesus stopped and said, "You all call him." And they called the blind man saying to him, "Be courageous, get up, he calls you." **50** And casting off his garment he stood up and came to Jesus. **51** Then answering him Jesus said, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me regain sight." **52** And Jesus said to him, "Go, your faith has saved you." And immediately he regained his sight and he followed him on the road.

• **10:46** *They Came to Jericho; Leave Jericho; Meet Bartimaeus*

- Jericho is 17mi NE of Jerusalem. It's a very ancient city.³²
- Why is Bartimaeus named and not others? Was he a Christian known to Mark's readers? What about his father Timaeus?

• **10:47** *Bartimaeus Cries Out "Jesus Son of David; Have Mercy On Me!"*

- A blind man ironically announces the coming of the king's descendant. This is a very high honor indeed to be David's son. People were killed over this in the OT lineage of kings.
- Was it common knowledge of Jesus's lineage or did Bartimaeus have divine knowledge?

• **10:48** *People Rebuke Bartimaeus; But He Yells More*

- This is probably a social issue with people shushing the inferior.

• **10:49–50** *Jesus Calls for Him; He Jumps Up and Comes*

- Jesus asks the crowd to bring him. The crowd reassures him and brings him out to Jesus.
- In his joy, he leaps up and throws his outer garment off.

• **10:51** *"What do you want me to do?"; "Please Let Me See!"*

- Same question Jesus asked J&J (10:36), he now asks a lowly person.
- Jesus, as in other cases, talks with the person before healing them outright.
- Did the man want money or something else? He explains he wants healing.

• **10:52** *Go, Your Faith Has Saved You. He Sees and Follows Jesus*

- "Saved" means both physical and spiritual healing.
- Jesus grants the request of the weak person in faith; but Jesus denies the request of the brothers who suppose themselves to be great.

³² Strauss, 467.

The Messiah Confronts Jerusalem (11:1–13:37)

The Triumphal Entry (11:1–11)

Mark 11:1 And when they came near to Jerusalem to Bethpage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives, he sent out two of his disciples ² and said to them, “Go to the village before you, and immediately when you enter into it find a colt tied up upon which no man has yet sat: release it and bring it. ³ And if someone might say to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ Say, ‘The Lord has need of it, and immediately he will send it back here.’” ⁴ Then they departed and found a colt tied up by a doorway outside on the street and they released it. ⁵ And some of those standing there were saying to them, “Why do you release the colt?” ⁶ But they said to them just as Jesus said, and the people permitted them. ⁷ So they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and Jesus sat on it. ⁸ Then many spread their cloaks on the road, but others branches they cut down from the field. ⁹ And those leading and those following were crying out, “*Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*” ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! *Hosanna in the highest!*” ¹¹ And he entered into Jerusalem and into the temple and he looked around at everything, but already it was evening the hour was late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

- **11:1a *They Approach Jerusalem coming to Bethpage (near Bethany, near Mount of Olives)***
 - Traveling from Jericho to the area of Bethpage and Bethany.
 - “On that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east” (Zech 14:14 ESV). This is where the Lord would stand on the day of judgement.
 - Bethany is where Lazarus lived. Jesus probably stayed with them (11:11).
- **11:1a–2 *Disciples Sent to Find Unridden Colt***
 - Disciples and the village are unnamed.
 - This is to fulfill Zech 9:9: *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*
- **11:3 *If Anyone Questions You; Say the Lord Needs It; He Will Return It***
 - Kings were permitted to temporarily borrow resources for royal purposes (cf. 1 Sam 8:10–18). This is what Jesus seems to be doing when he calls himself “Lord.”

- We have a “different” Jesus than we have seen in most of Mark. Never before does Jesus openly admit to being “Lord” (=God).
- 11:4–6 *Disciples Find Colt, Untie It, Are Questioned, But They Let Them Take It*
- 11:7–8 *Colt Brought and They Make a Saddle; Others Spread Branches*
 - This event is special to fulfill Zech 9:9.
 1. The people rejoice at his coming (Daughters of Jerusalem, Zion)
 2. The king Jesus is coming, he is righteous. He is victorious.
 3. He is humble and riding on a colt.
 4. He will make peace *even to the Gentiles* (=nations).
 5. He will rule the whole world.
 - Branches are the “red carpet treatment” for a king.¹
 - Only kings are treated in this way.²
- 11:9–10 *Hosanna! Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord!...*
 - Jesus is surrounded on all sides by people in the procession.
 - First two are quotes of Ps 118:26.
 - *Hosanna* (ὡσαννά; הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא) means “Save Now..”
 - *In the Highest* — in God’s presence, in heaven.
 - Jesus is expected to be the new King David.
- 11:11 *Jesus Enters Jerusalem; Goes to Temple Courts; Looks Around; Leaves*
 - Jesus did not come to worship, gawk as a tourist, to offer prayer or sacrifice, but to inspect his domain.³
 - Great numbers of people came to Jerusalem for Passover, so it’s not surprising that they leave and go to Bethany.

Prophetic Action in the Temple and Cursing a Fig Tree (11:12–25)

Mark 11:12 And on the next day, Jesus went out from Bethany and he was hungry. 13 Then seeing from afar a fig tree that has leaves he went (to see) if he would find anything on it, and coming up to it he found nothing except leaves, for it was not the time for figs. 14 And answering he said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard. 15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And when he entered into the temple he began to cast out those selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those selling pigeons, 16 And he did not permit anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17 And he was teaching and saying to them, “Is it not written that ‘*my house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations?*’ But you have made it ‘*a den of robbers.*’” 18 Then the chief priests and the scribes heard and they were seeking how they might destroy him — for they feared him, for the all the crowd was amazed at his teaching. 19 And

¹ Strauss, 481.

² Solomon (1 Kgs 1:32–48); Jehu (2 Kgs 9:1–13); and in the Intertestamental Period, Simon Maccabeus (1 Macc 13:50–51).

³ David E. Garland, *Mark*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 428–29.

when evening came, they went out of the city. 20 Then passing by in the morning they saw the fig tree having dried up from its roots. 21 And remembering Peter said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has dried up.” 22 Then answering Jesus said to them, “Have faith in God. 23 Truly I say to you that whoever says to this mountain, ‘Lift up and be thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but might believe that what he says can happen, it will be done for him. 24 Therefore this I say to you, anything as much as you pray and ask, believe that you receive, and it will be yours. 25 And whenever you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven might also forgive you your trespasses.”

• 11:12–13 *Leaving Bethany; Jesus Was Hungry; Spots a Fig Tree*

- Mark again reveals a human emotion: *Jesus was hungry*.
- There are two seasons of figs, Jesus is looking for the “early fruit.”
- From this, we can guess that it’s March or April.⁴

• 11:13–14 *Jesus Finds No Figs; Curses the Tree and the Disciples Notice.*

- It’s not fig season, but the tree is unfruitful. Jesus curses it.
- Jesus is teaching the disciples a lesson, not being vindictive.
- Jesus is silently pronouncing judgement on the unfruitfulness of Jerusalem, its leaders, its corrupt religious system.
- When he travels to Jerusalem he finds “leaves on the tree” but “no fruit.” Jerusalem and the temple *appears* to be Godly, but really are unfaithful.⁵

• 11:15–16 *Arriving in Jerusalem; Jesus Cleanses the Temple*

- Likely took place in the “Court of the Gentiles.”
- Merchants offered:
 1. Money exchanging for the temple tax (ev. Jewish male over 20yrs).
 2. Doves or pigeons (used in sacrifices).
 3. Sheep and oxen (cf. John 2:15).
- These merchants originally sat on the Mount of Olives, but seemingly established themselves in the Temple under Caiaphas. [Epstein1964aa]
- Jesus was not angry at the transactions but their *location* in the temple that compromises it being a “house of prayer.”⁶

• 11:17 *House of Prayer; Den of Robbers*

- Jesus quotes from Isa 56:7 and then Jer 7:11.
- Jewish kings traditionally cleansed the temple: Joash and Josiah removed idols (2 Kgs 12:2–17; 23:1–37). In the Second Temple Period, Judas Maccabaeus cleansed and rededicated the temple after Antiochus IV Epiphanes desecrated it with the offered pig (1 Macc 4:36–59).

⁴ While Christmas is often dated incorrectly, the placement of Easter with Passover is relatively reliable. This is at most a week before Passover/Easter.

⁵ Strauss, 493–94.

⁶ Strauss, 495.

- 11:18 *Ruling Priests and Scribes Hear and Seek to Destroy Jesus.*
 - Their motivation was envy: *because the crowd was impressed.*
- 11:19 *When Evening Came; They Left Jerusalem.*
- 11:20–21 *The Next Day: They See the Fig Tree, It Withered*
- 11:22–23 *Jesus Teaches on Faith and Prayer*
 - We might expect Jesus to explain this “parable” but he does not.
 - Instead, he discusses the power of faith if one truly believes.
 - Proverbially, “whatever is impossible with man is possible with God.”
- 11:24 *Whatever You Pray For, If You Believe, You Will Receive.*
- 11:25 *When You Pray: If You Have a Grudge, Forgive Them So God Forgives You.*

Controversies in the Temple (11:27–12:44)

A Challenge to Jesus’s Authority (11:27–33)

Mark 11:27 And he came again to Jerusalem. And while he was walking in the temple courts the chief priests came to him and the scribes and the elders **28** And they were saying to him, “By what authority do you do these things? Or who gave you the authority that you might do these things?” **29** Then Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question, and after you answer me I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. **30** Was the baptism of John from man or from heaven? Answer me!” **31** And they were discussing amongst themselves saying, “If we say ‘from heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why did you not believe him?’ **32** But if we say, ‘from man?’ They were afraid of the people, for all held that John certainly was a prophet. **33** And answering Jesus they said, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

- 11:27–28 *In the Temple; Jesus Approached by Priests, Scribes, and Elders; Challenges Jesus’s Authority*
 - “Who gave you this authority?”⁷
 - The ruling Jews seek evidence for or against Jesus’s actions.
- 11:29–30 *Counter Question: John’s Baptism from God or Man?*
 - Counter-questioning was a style of Jewish teachers.
 - This rhetorical question also affirms the ministry and baptizing of John was legitimate and from God. It is unclear if Jesus affirms its continuation, although we do know Jesus baptized people (John 4:2).
- 11:31–32 *To Affirm = They Did Not Believe; To Deny = Upset the Crowd*
 - The rulers weigh the risks of both decisions.

⁷ Strauss, 505.

- John “was widely regarded as an authentic prophet.”⁸
- Basically, if they accept John was from God then they would have to accept Jesus is from God too.
- Motivations are not about what is true but by avoiding conflict with either Jesus or the crowds.⁹

• **11:33 “We Don’t Know”; So Jesus Denies An Answer**

- They decide to politically lie to protect themselves and choose an agnostic response.
- They *know* John was from God, but because of their selfishness they refuse to acknowledge him.
- These “leaders” are not worthy of their titles.
- *How often do we choose avoidance over truth?*

The Parable of the Tenants (12:1–12)

Mark 12:1 And he began speaking in parables saying, “A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress and built a tower and leased it to tenants and went away. **2** He sent a servant for the tenants at the season in order that from the tenants he might receive from the fruit of the vineyard, **3** and after taking him they beat him and released him without result. **4** And again he sent to them another servant, and they hit him on the head and dishonored him. **5** And he sent another, and they killed him, and many others, some they were beating, and some they killed. **6** Still he had one beloved son, he sent him last to them saying that, ‘They will respect my son.’ **7** But those tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir, come let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours.’ **8** And after taking him they killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. **9** What will the master of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. **10** Have you not read this Scripture, ‘*The stone that the builders rejected, he has become the cornerstone*, **11** *For the Lord did this and is it marvelous in our eyes?*’” **12** And they were seeking to arrest him, but feared the crowd, for they knew that he spoke the parable against them. And they left him and went away.

• **Re-contextualization of Isa 5:1–7**

- Jesus adapts the parable from Isa 5 to fit his circumstances.
- The parable fits well with the agrarian context of the day.
- The original parable is *allegory* and therefore can be reinterpreted, especially by Jesus.
- This parable is more about the prophets and Jesus’s rejection by the “tenants” or caretakers of Israel/Jerusalem.

• **12:1 *A Man Planted a Vineyard; Enclosed It; Dug a Winepress; Built a Watchtower; Leased it to Tenant-Farmers***

- Vineyards were the most lucrative kinds of agriculture, but it was a lengthier production process. Building one took more investment on the front end but yielded more in the long-term. Poor farmers generally could not afford to wait for a solid crop of grapes to feed their families.
- Wealthy owners being absent from the farm was common in Galilee/Judea. A contemporary parallel might be a property owner (apartments, leased warehouse, etc) who lives in another state but has local management.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Strauss, 506.

- The Players
 - * Man = God
 - * Vineyard = Israel
 - * Tenant-farmers = leaders, priests, etc.
- Parable here and in Isaiah are both about judgement of Israel for unfaithfulness. In Isaiah, the vineyard itself (Israel) will be destroyed (as it was) but here the vineyard remains but will be given to others (i.e. Gentiles).
- 12:2 *Owner Sends Servant to Collect Harvest*
 - Harvest time, or even years later when the grapes or perhaps wine matures a decent crop.
 - Servant functions as a representative and spokesperson of his master like *one of the prophets*.
- 12:3–5 *Tenants Beat Servant; Send Him Away Empty-handed; They Beat and Kill Other Servants Sent*
 - God continued to send prophets to Israel despite that they rejected, beat, and killed many of them.
- 12:6 *The Master Sends His Son; “Surely They Will Accept Him”*
 - It seems unreasonable for God to send his Son but expect different results besides death.
 - But yet this is exactly why he does send him.
- 12:7–8 *Tenants Conspire to Kill the Son; Hope to Inherit the Vineyard; So They Kill Him and Cast Him Out*
 - The body was thrown outside and expose without proper burial.¹⁰
 - Why do the tenants expect to inherit the vineyard after killing the heir? Wouldn't the master simply be angry?
 - The religious leaders of Israel thought that Israel was theirs and not God's.¹¹
- 12:9 *Jesus Then Asks, “What Will the Owner Do?” He Will Destroy the Tenant-Farmers and Give the Vineyard to Others*
 - Wicked rulers will be destroyed and vineyard transferred to others who will respect it.
 - Those who try to destroy Jesus will receive worse than they dished out.
 - The church with Jesus at its head, the apostles, and the Christians to come are the “others” who inherit the vineyard and usurp the human authority of these so-called rulers.¹²
- 12:10–11 *Have You Not Read? The Stone the Builders Rejected = the Cornerstone*
 - Quote from Ps 118:22–23.
 - Cornerstone is the “headstone” or the most important in a structure.
 - Jesus is in the Temple and so claims to be the cornerstone of the “new temple.”¹³

¹⁰ Strauss, 516.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Strauss, 517.

¹³ Timothy C. Gray, *The Temple in the Gospel of Mark: A Study of Its Narrative Role* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 76.

• **12:12** *They Sought to Arrest Him; But Feared the Crowd; They Knew This Parable Was About Them; They Left Jesus*

- Unlike other parables, this parable was clear to them.
- Statement is similar to Mark 11:32 “they feared the crowd because everyone thought John was a prophet.”

Applications

1. God indeed is patient with the wickedness of man: he sends many servants, including his Son, to speak to us.
2. We must produce fruit for God, not for ourselves. God will come to the vineyard to collect fruit, we can't withhold it for ourselves.
3. Those who reject the Son will be destroyed, no matter what they accomplish in their life. They thought they had it good for killing the servants!

A Question about Paying Taxes to Caesar (12:13–17)

Mark 12:13 And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians so that they might catch him in speech. **14** And when they came they said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are true and are not concerned with anyone. For you do not look at the face of man, but upon truth you teach the way of God. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or no? Should we give them or not?” **15** But knowing their hypocrisy he said to them, “Why do you test me? Bring me a denarius so I can see it.” **16** And they brought it. Then he said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?” They said to him, “Caesar.” **17** Then Jesus said to them, “What is Caesar's pay to Caesar and what is God's pay to God. And they were amazed by him.

• **12:13** *Pharisees and Herodians Sent to Trap Jesus*

- “They” are the rulers of Jerusalem, sent people to trick him.
- Still looking for evidence against Jesus.

• **12:14** *They Flatter Jesus; Then Ask About Taxes to Rome*

- Although they want to trap him, they falsely praise him.

• **12:15–16** *Jesus Knew Their Hypocrisy; Asks For Denarius*

- Denarius was inscribed with “TIBERIUS CAESAR, SON OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS...”
- The rear said, “HIGH PRIEST” (meaning Caesar).¹⁴

• **12:17** *“Give to Caesar What is Caesar's; Give to God What is God's”*

- Clearly Caesar bore authority over some areas of Jewish life. Jews and later Christians necessarily had to submit to authorities set up by God (Rom 13).
- But the things which belonged to God must be given to God.
- What things belong to God?

¹⁴ Strauss, 525.

A Question about Marriage at the Resurrection (12:18–27)

Mark 12:18 Then Sadducees came to him, who say there is no resurrection, and they were asking him saying, 19 “Teacher, Moses wrote to us that ‘If someone’s brother dies’ and leaves a wife ‘and leaves no child,’ so that ‘the man must take his brother’s wife and raise up offspring for his brother.’ 20 There were seven brothers: and the first took a wife and when he died he did not leave an offspring. 21 Then the second took her and he died without leaving an offspring. And the third likewise. 22 And the seven did not leave offspring. Last of all the woman also died. 23 In the resurrection, [when they rise], whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as a wife.” 24 Jesus said to them, “Is not because of this you are wrong not knowing the Scripture nor the power of God? 25 For when they rise from the dead they will not marry nor be given in marriage, but they are like messengers in heaven. 26 But concerning the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses about the bush, how God spoke to him saying, ‘*I am the God of Abraham and [the] God of Isaac and [the] God of Jacob*’” 27 He is not God of the dead, but the living. You are deceived.”

- **12:18 Sadducees Come; They Don’t Believe in Resurrection**

- Sadducees are generally associated with the priestly aristocracy and thus the Temple.
- Pharisees affirmed that the dead would rise; the Sadducees denied the resurrection (cf. Acts 4:2; 23:4–6). This led to disputes between the two.
- Sadducees also did not believe in angels (Acts 23:8).

- **12:19 Moses Wrote About Marrying a Brother’s Wife**

- In OT law, *levirate marriage* was a custom in which a man married his dead relative’s spouse in order to continue the family line with heirs and materially (Ruth and Boaz).
- Onan was judged by God for not fulfilling this duty (Gen 38:8–10).

- **12:20–23 Story of the Seven Brothers**

- Sadducees offer a hypothetical situation, as humans often like to do, asking “*What if* a woman married seven times? For you that say there is a resurrection, whose wife will she be?”
- Their thought is that resurrection is impossible because of the complexities that might cause her to be a polygamist.¹⁵

- **12:24 “You Are Mistaken Because (1) You Don’t Know Scripture and (2) You Don’t Know the Power of God”**

- Sadducees only believed in Gen, Exod, Lev, Num, Deut as the books for life.
- But even these, as Jesus will show, affirm resurrection.

- **12:25 In Resurrection There is No Marriage**

- In the “life to come” marriage is not present. While this statement is concerning, our relationships in heaven will *supersede* those of the present earth. It’s unlikely God will reduce such important relationships but transform them so that our earthly conceptions are virtually insufficient descriptors of this newly changed life. Culture has the idea that heaven will be a stale place in which our personhood is reduced to a genderless orb that is mindless (no pain, sorrow, etc) cannot remember those who went to hell, and only think good happy thoughts and sing to God. I think this is an unfortunate reduction and we should avoid cultural definitions of heaven.

¹⁵ Strauss, 533.

- Not saying people became angels but *like* angels.
- 12:26–27 *God is God of the Living (Exod 3:1–22)*
 - Jesus affirms that God cannot be God over dead people, but that God is God over living people.
 - Therefore those who die are not dead but living.

A Question about the Great Commandment (12:28–34)

Mark 12:28 And one of the scribes after coming up heard them arguing, seeing that he answered them well he asked him (Jesus), “Which commandment is first of all?” 29 Jesus answered that, “The first is, ‘Listen Israel, the Lord your God is one, 30 and you will love your God out of your whole heart and out of your whole soul and out of your whole mind and out of your whole strength.’ 31 The second is this, ‘You will love your neighbor as yourself.’ There are no other commandments greater than these.” 32 And the scribe said to him, “Right, teacher you speak truthfully that ‘He is one and that there is no other besides Him,’ 33 and ‘to love Him from your whole heart and from your whole understanding and from your whole strength and to love your neighbor as yourself’ is greater than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. 34 And Jesus after seeing that he answered wisely said to him, “You are not far off from the kingdom of God.” And no one any longer dared to ask him anything.

- 12:28 *A Scribe Approaches Jesus; Asks About the Most Important Commandment*
 - One of the scribes identifies Jesus as a skilled teacher, approaches him and wants to know his thoughts on the Law.
 - This scribe does not seem particularly opposed to Jesus — *not all Jewish leaders were* (Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, perhaps Gamaliel etc).
 - Hillel, a Pharisee rabbi in the first-century, was once asked by a Gentile to teach him the whole Law while the Gentile stood on one foot. Hillel said, “Do not do to your neighbor what is hateful to you: this is the whole Torah, the rest is commentary” (*b. Šabb. 31.a*; cf. Tob 4:15).
- 12:29–30 *Jesus Answers with the “First Commandment”: Love God (Deut 6:4–5)*
 - “Hear O Israel...” (the *Shema*) is easily the most important passage in the OT.
 - Jews frequently recited this every morning and evening as a prayer.¹⁶
 - Read *Shema* Heb.
- 12:30–31 *Second Commandment: Love Neighbor (Lev 19:17–18)*
 - “Those who truly love God will also love those who are created in his image.”¹⁷
 - Love for fellow Israelites was important, Jews struggled with love for enemies and non-Jews (Gentiles: Romans, Greeks, Arabians, Egyptians, etc).
- 12:32–33 *Scribe Tells Jesus He Spoke Well and Repeats*
 - He adds “this is more important than sacrifices” (1 Sam 15:22; Ps 40:6; 51:16–17; Isa 1:11; Jer 6:20; 7:21–23; Hos 6:6).

¹⁶ Strauss, 541.

¹⁷ Strauss, 542.

- Again, Jews and leaders *knew this* but struggled to practice.
- The sacrifices only mean something if your heart is in it, same with baptism and the Lord's supper.
- **12:34 *Jesus Says: "You Are Not Far from the Kingdom of God"***
 - The scribe had answered "wisely, sensibly, thoughtful, or prudently."¹⁸
 - This leader of Jerusalem *was very close to the truth!* (in contrast to the rich young ruler).
 - This is a positive thing, not pointing out failure.

A Question about David's Son (12:35–37)

Mark 12:35 And Jesus after answering was speaking, teaching in the temple, "How do the scribes say that Christ is the son of David? 36 David himself said by the Holy Spirit, 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I might put your enemies under your feet.' 37 David calls himself Lord, and how is he the son?" And the great crowd heard him gladly.

- **12:35 *Jesus Taught; Asks About Scribe's View of the Messiah***
 - We learn that the scribes believe the Messiah is David's son. Technically this is correct, in the sense that Jesus is from David's lineage.
 - Nathan the prophet said that a messianic king would arise from David's lineage (2 Sam 7:11–16).¹⁹
 - The title "Son of David" (10:47–48) was a common referent for the Messiah.
- **12:36 *David Said, "The Lord Said to My Lord..."***
 - Admittedly, this is a perplexing statement. Basically it is saying that God said to David/Jesus, sit at my right hand.
 - David spoke *by the Holy Spirit* — that is, inspired.
 - Jesus cites Ps 110:1, the most-cited passage in the NT.²⁰
 - * It is a Psalm that honors and promises protection for a God-appointed king.
 - * Psalm is both royal (=referring to David) and Messianic (=prediction of Jesus).²¹
- **12:37a *David Calls Him Lord; How Can He Be His Son?***
 - If Jesus is LORD, he can't strictly be a human son. Jesus is superior to David.
 - The irony: a descendent of David is both God and greater than David.
- **12:37b *The Crowd Enjoys Listening to Him***

¹⁸ Strauss, 544.

¹⁹ Strauss, 549.

²⁰ Strauss, 550.

²¹ Strauss, 551.

Warning about the Experts in the Law and the Widow's Offering (12:38–44)

Mark 12:38 And in his teaching he was saying, “See from the scribes they desire to walk around in robes and greetings in the marketplaces 39 and the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor in the feasts, 40 who devour the houses of widows and defend this in long prayers, they will receive greater condemnation. 41 And they sat across from the treasury they were watching how the crowd cast money into the offering box. And many rich people cast in a great amount, 42 and after coming one poor widow cast in two small coins, this equals a penny. 43 And after calling his disciples he said to them, “Truly I say to you that this poor widow put much more than all those contributing to the offering box, 44 for out of their abundance they gave, but she gave from her poverty everything as much as she had.”

- **12:38–39 *Beware the Scribes Who Love Being Important***

- The pride, arrogance, and entitlement of their educated status.
- Scribes dressed like priests with these robes to appear important.²²
- They enjoyed public praise and greetings. Jews continued this practice (*y. Ber. 2.1*).
- “Most important seats” are like our seats on the stage — but they sat there every week.

- **12:40 *They Devour Widow's Homes and Pray Long Prayers***

- Because of their attitudes, they will receive severe condemnation.
- Such temptations come with leadership, power, knowledge, etc.
- “Devouring widows’ homes” probably means taking advantage of hospitality or their monetary donations.
- Show off with their prayers.

- **12:41 *They Watch the Treasury Boxes; Rich People Give Alot***

- Inside the inner court of the temple “Court of Women.”
- When the wealthy dropped coins, it would make more noise.

- **12:42 *A Poor Widow Drops Two Small Coins***

- Two *lepta* = one *quadrans* = 1/64 a denarius.
- Very small amount.

- **12:43–44 *She Put in All She Had; Rich Gave From Leftovers***

- Amount is not the issue but proportion or percentage of our entire possessions.
- Rich are probably giving around 10%, requirement for tithing.
- While this is “more” it’s not a sacrifice.
- Need to balance our arguments for *giving as we prosper* so that we don’t fall into the trap of *giving of our abundance*.

²² Strauss, 557.

Application

1. What are our motivations in serving God? Selfish gain/achievement or sacrifice of this earthly life?
2. Pride can destroy us. Most church issues arise from this (1 Cor 1–4; Phil 2:1–11).²³

The Olivet Discourse (13:1–37)***Introduction and the Coming Destruction of Jerusalem (13:1–23)***

Mark 13:1 And when he came out from the temple one of his disciples said to him, “Teacher, look what magnificent stones and what magnificent buildings.” **2** And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone upon stone will be left here that will not be destroyed.” **3** And while sitting by him on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple Peter and James and John and Andrew were asking him privately, **4** “Tell us, when will these things be and what will be the sign that these things are about to be accomplished?” **5** Then Jesus began to say to them, “See that no one might mislead you, **6** many will come by my name saying that ‘I am he,’ and many will be misled. **7** But whenever you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed, it is necessary to happen, but the end is not yet. **8** For nation will rise up against nation and kingdom against kingdom, there will be earthquakes throughout places, there will be famines, these are the beginning of birth-pains. **9** But see to yourselves, they will deliver you to the councils and you will be beaten in the synagogues and you will stand before kings for my sake to be witnesses before them. **10** And to all the nations first it is necessary to preach the good news. **11** And whenever they might bring you to deliver you over, do not worry what you might say, rather whatever is given to you in that hour, it is not for you to speak but the Holy Spirit. **12** And brother will deliver brother unto death and father child, and children will rise against their parents and put them to death. **13** And you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures unto the end he will be saved. **14** But whenever you see the *abomination of desolation* standing where he should not—let the reader understand—then those in Judea must flee to the mountains. **15** The one on the roof should not go down nor enter into his house to take anything, **16** and the one in the field should not turn back to take his cloak. **17** But woe to those who are pregnant and nursing in those days. **18** But pray in order that it does not happen in winter, **19** For those days will be tribulation as has not been such since the beginning of creation that God created until now and will never be. **20** And unless the Lord shortened the days, not all humans would be saved, but because he chose the elect he shortened the days. **21** And then if anyone says to you, ‘Look here is the Christ! Look there!’ Do not believe. **22** For false messiahs will rise up and false-prophets and preform signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, the elect. **23** But you must be watchful, [since] I have told you all things in advance.”

• **Concerns with Chapter 13**

- The disciples ask for signs of the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - * Jesus answers about Jerusalem and also the end of time.
 - * Are these events separate or the same?
- Jesus says “this generation will not pass away until these things take place” (13:30)
 - * Did Jesus wrongly predict the end of the world?

²³ Strauss, 560.

- * Is he saying the disciples will see the end of the world? We know they didn't so what's going on in this chapter?

• **13:1 *Leaving the Temple Courts; Disciples Notice the Beauty of the Temple***

- Leaving the Temple after many controversial discussions, Jesus begins to discuss the downfall of the Holy City.
- Interesting connection with Ezek 10:18–19; 11:22–23 in which God's glory departs from the city and stops above the mountain east of it (Olives).²⁴
- This unnamed disciple is proud of the Temple and what it stands for. It's a kind of religious nationalism.

• **13:2 *Jesus Says Not One Stone Will Remain***

- Jesus would later be accused of threatening to destroy the Temple (14:38; 15:29).
- Jesus does not threaten to destroy the Temple, but predicts its destruction (14:57).
 - * Micah and Jeremiah predicted the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar (Micah 3:12; Jer 7:12–15; 12:7; etc).
 - * Josephus, the Jewish historian, said that the temple's destruction was a fulfillment of the OT prophets.²⁵
- While, literally, not every stone was actually destroyed, the Temple was virtually useless from a practical standpoint.

• **13:3–4 *Sitting on Mt. Olives Overlooking Temple; Disciples Ask "When?"***

- Peter, James, John, and Andrew (inner circle) ask two questions: (1) *when will these things happen?* and (2) *what signs should they look for?*
- These things = the whole series of events.

• **13:5–6 *"Watch Out So You Aren't Deceived. Many Will Claim to Be the Messiah"***

- Persecution is not the greatest danger, but *false teachers*.²⁶
 - * This is evident from the letters of James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, and 1–2 Timothy, Titus.
- People would come claiming to be the Messiah. Is there historical proof?
 1. Gamaliel in Acts 5 discusses Theudas who "claimed to be somebody", rallied 400 men, and were killed.
 2. Gamaliel also mentions Judas the Galilean who led a revolt against Rome (5:36–37)²⁷
 3. Paul was mistaken for an Egyptian who led 4,000 Jews for some sort of messianic movement (Acts 21:38). Josephus mentions this same figure who led 30,000 followers to the Mount of Olives and said the Temple would fall.²⁸

²⁴ Strauss, 568. See France, 495.

²⁵ Josephus, *Jewish War*, 6.21; 6.5.4. See Strauss, 570.

²⁶ Strauss, 572.

²⁷ Gamaliel here makes the famous statement: "see if they are from man their ways will fail (just as Theudas and Judas did). But if they are from God they will prosper."

²⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.8.6; *B.J.* 2.13.5.

4. In AD 132–135, Simon bar-Kosiba led what would become known as Bar-Kochba Revolt (“Son of the Star”) which was a messianic-type revolt that failed.
- 13:7–8 *“Wars and Rumors of Wars are Not to Be Feared; Nations against Nations; Kingdoms against Kingdoms; Earthquakes*
 - Jesus explains that wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes/natural disasters, kingdoms and nations threatening one another *do not signal the end times*. Such catastrophic events do not mean the end is near.²⁹
 - These events are merely the beginning of “birth pains” — suffering and anticipation for the eventual joy.
 - 13:9 *“Watch Out; They Will Hand You Over to Councils; Flog You in Synagogues; But You Will Stand Witness to Governors and Kings.*
 - Persecution is coming too: arrest, trial, courts, testifying before judges, etc.
 - Jesus *does not guarantee civil protection!* Our rights and freedoms here in America are a blessing, but *we are not entitled to religious freedom as a Christian.*³⁰
 - Many of these predictions would come true for the Apostles and Paul (Herod Agrippa I, Festus, Caesar) in Acts.
 - 13:10 *“The Gospel Must First Be Preached to ALL NATIONS*
 - The good news of Jesus will go to the Gentiles.
 - By Paul’s imprisonment in Rome, the gospel had gone to most of the known world (Col 1:6, 23; Acts 1:8).
 - 13:11 *“When Going to Trial; Don’t Worry About What to Say; The Spirit Will Help”*
 - The Holy Spirit will help the disciples know what to say during a trial.
 - Jesus does not promise they will be released, but that the Holy Spirit will help them proclaim the Gospel to important figures.³¹
 - This does not mean we shouldn’t learn the Bible or be prepared to preach/teach. This is about those who are suddenly arrested for Christ — trust the Spirit of God for guidance.
 - 13:12 *The Gospel Will Divide Families: Brother v. Brother; Father v. Child.*
 - Brothers will hand over their brothers to be killed for being Christian. Fathers will turn in their children and children will turn in Christian parents (cf. Mic 7:6; Isa 19:2).
 - 13:13 *“All Will Hate You Because of Me; The One Who Endures (Persecution) Will Be Saved”*
 - Even family will hate you (v. 12). Everyone including society will be against you.

²⁹ Strauss, 573.

³⁰ Politically, we need to check our motivations sometimes. Do we vote against gay marriage and abortion because we believe this is what God wants or do we vote against it because it makes it easier for us not to have to minister to these people?

³¹ Strauss, 576.

- Those who endure *true* persecution with faithfulness will be saved spiritually.³²
- 13:14a *“When You See the Abomination of Desolation; Let the Reader Understand”*
 - The most specific sign of the destruction of Jerusalem is the “Abomination of Desolation” (see Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11).
 - * Daniel predicted an “abomination” carried out by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167 BC who sacrificed an unclean pig in the Temple (1 Macc 1:54–59; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.5.4).
 - * This precise event of Jesus’s abomination is disputed, but the general reference is to events leading up to the destruction of the Temple when the Zealots defiled the Temple and set themselves up as leaders of Israel with John Gischala.³³
 - “Let the reader understand” is a direct aside from the author to the reader.
 - * It probably reminds the readers that *these events are about to happen*.
 - * If so, then Mark’s Gospel was probably written around the year AD 60 (since the Temple was destroyed in 69/70).
- 13:14b–16 *“Those in Judea Must Flee; Don’t Turn Back to Pack!”*
 - Instead of hiding in a walled city, run to the hills! Jerusalem is no longer safe.
 - There is no time to pack, not even for basic necessities like a “cloak” that would keep one warm in winter and serve as a blanket. Just go.³⁴
- 13:17–18 *“Woe to Pregnant & Nursing Women When It Happens; Pray It’s Not During Winter”*
 - It would be quite difficult for women to survive this.
 - If it’s cold and wet (winter=rainy season) the ground would be soggy and difficult to cross.
- 13:19 *“Nothing Like This Has Been Seen or Will Ever Be Seen Again”*
 - History tells us about this event.
 1. So many were crucified, they ran out of wood.
 2. Inside the city there was infighting, murder, famine, disease, and cannibalism.³⁵
 3. Thousands were slaughtered, Josephus claims that 1.1 million people were killed or died and that 97,000 were taken captive.³⁶
- 13:20 *“The Lord Will Shorten Those Days for the Elect”*

³² Let’s be careful about how we label “persecution.” Sometimes the term is used by self-righteous people to justify bad behavior or sin. Christians who are very harsh and hateful towards the world might receive lots of criticism and to affirm their ways they say “I am being persecuted for God.” Christians who take certain positions on a controversial topic and receive criticism from fellow Christians may say “I am being persecuted for what’s right and they are ignorant.” Indeed it could be that critical backlash is what we need to hear and humble ourselves with.

³³ Strauss, 579.

³⁴ Strauss, 581.

³⁵ Famous story of a starving woman who ran out of food and cooked her infant. Roving city defenders smelled food and demanded some. She offered half her child, but in horror they fled and the report spread around the city. This caused great distress amongst the people (Josephus, *B.J.* 6.3.4).

³⁶ Josephus, *B.J.* 6.9.3.

- God decided to limit this horror for the sake of the church.
- Otherwise, no one would survive.
- 13:21–22 *False Messiahs Will Come and Deceive People*
 - Some will claim Messiahs have come. These will deceive people or lead them astray and perform false signs and miracles to deceive people, even Christians.
 - This did happen as many tried to claim kingship or divinity to gain followers.³⁷
- 13:23 *“You Have Been Warned: Watch Out”*

Application

1. Consider historical context of Mark’s readers which is key to interpreting this passage.
2. Be prepared to discern truth from error regarding false teachers.
3. Let’s not speculate about the “end times” based on “signs” in the world. Jesus explained that these are part of normal anticipation for the second coming. Our role is to proclaim and live out the gospel, not speculate about the end.³⁸
4. Persecution is coming.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think about the way we live in society: is it easy? Is it hard? Should it be easier or harder? What should our relationship with the government look like?
2. How do we identify false teachers? How do we know who is teaching good doctrine or bad doctrine? How do we go about correcting wrong teaching?

The Coming of the Son of Man and Parables Related to Watchfulness (13:24–37)

Mark 13:24 But in those days tribulation after that tribulation ‘*the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give light.*’ 25 And ‘*the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.*’ 26 And then they will see the Son of Man coming on clouds with great powers and glory. 27 And then he will send the messengers and gather together [his] elect from the four winds from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. 28 But from the fig tree learn the parable: Whenever her tender branches appear and puts out the leaf you know that summer is near. 29 So you also, whenever you see this happen, you know that he is near to the doors. 30 Truly I say to you that this generation will not pass away until all these things happen. 31 And heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away. 32 But concerning that day or hour no one knows, neither the messengers in heaven nor the son, but only the father. 33 See, keep watch, for you do not know when the time comes. 34 As a man away on a journey after leaving his house and after giving his servants the authority each his work and he commands the doorkeeper so that he might be watchful. 35 Therefore keep watch, for you do not know when the lord of the house comes, at evening, or at midnight or at the crowing of the rooster, or early in the morning. 36 lest after coming suddenly he might find you sleeping. 37 But what I say to you I say to all, keep watch.

³⁷ Strauss, 583.

³⁸ Strauss, 585.

• **13:24–25 *In Those Days “Sun, Moon Darkened; Stars Falling; Heavens Shaken (Isa 13:10; 34:4)***

- Jesus seems to directly connect the destruction of Jerusalem with the coming of the Son of Man.
- *In those days* is not “the days of the destruction of Jerusalem.” This is often used in non-specific “end times language” in the OT (Jer 3:16, 18; Joel 3:1, etc).³⁹
 - * Indeed Jesus says “no one will know when the master of the house comes.”
 - * Practically: if the writers of the Gospels *really thought* Jesus was coming back after Jerusalem was destroyed, then why did these documents remain? Wouldn’t Christians have hidden them for being proved wrong?
- *Solution: v. 24ff is a separate discussion of the Second Coming of Christ.*
- These two events are connected: *end of Israel; rise of the church and end of the church; beginning of eternal life.* Their association is because of *content* NOT chronological proximity.

• **13:26 *Son of Man Seen Coming in the Clouds with Power and Glory***

- Key background is Dan 7:13–14 “Son of Man” passages.
- For all those that never saw Jesus, on that Day they *will see* Him coming with power and glory in a manner that is not-of-this world.
- Matt 24:29–31 speaks of how all the wicked will see the Jesus and they will mourn [b/c of their lives].

• **13:27 *Angels Will Gather the Chosen Ones from Across Earth***

- The elect or chosen ones are Jesus’s followers: faithful Christians.
- Similar to ascension language of 1 Thess 5:16–17.

• **13:28–29 *Fig Tree: Branches Grow Leaves = Summer is Near***

- Just as a tree growing leaves is a sign of summer, so are these things a sign of the end of the world.
- This fig tree is not allegorical for Judea/Jerusalem like in Mark 11:13, 20–21.

• **13:30 *This Generation Will Not Pass Away Until These Things Happen***

- Here is the most challenging statement. It appears that Jesus said that He will return before his disciples die.
 1. So was Jesus wrong?
 2. Was His return related to the destruction of Jerusalem?
 3. Does “this generation” mean something else?
- Some suggest “these things” are the destruction of the Temple, not the end of the world. Maybe this is a solution.

• **13:31 *“The Heavens and Earth Will Pass Away; My Words Will Not”***

- Jesus’s words are *eternal*.

³⁹ Strauss, 590.

· **13:32 *No One Knows When It Will Happen***

- “But concerning That Day [of the end]... No one knows: not angels, not Jesus, but only the Father.
- Jesus said in Acts 1:7, “It is not for you to know the times or the dates the Father has set by his own authority.”

· **13:33 *Be Watchful! You Do Not Know When It Comes!***

· **13:34 *Man On a Journey; Leaves Servants in Charge; Doorkeeper Remains Alert and Awaits the Return of the Master.***

- Since we do not know when Jesus will return, we have to be watchful and ready.
- Mild reminder that “tomorrow is not guaranteed.”

· **13:35–36 *Be Alert! The Lord May Come Anytime***

- Jesus cites examples of when the Lord may return: evening, midnight, at rooster’s crow (4–5am) or at dawn.
- If he comes suddenly, *you might be sleeping*.
 - * Disciples would later be caught for sleeping (14:32–39).
 - * Sleeping could also mean Christian laziness.

· **13:37 *My Warning is For Everyone: BE ALERT!***

Application

1. **Speculating about the end-times based on erroneous signs of wars and catastrophes or trying to calculate the end.**
 - a) Such attempts to “decide the end” is man trying to control a situation that really belongs to God alone.
 - b) The only sign given to us is the coming of Jesus on the cloud. Then, it’s too late.
2. **We Must Be Watchful and Alert (cf. 1 Cor 16:13–14)**
 - This means living for God daily, because we don’t want to be found sleeping as a Christian.
 - If our Christian life is sleepy, we need to rethink and reassert our commitment.
3. **Jesus Will Return and Vindicate His People**

The Passion the Messiah in Jerusalem (14:1–15:47)

The Plot, Anointing, and Betrayal (14:1–11)

· *Note the Markan Sandwich*

- vv. 1–2 *Plot against Jesus*
- * vv. 3–9 *Anointing at Bethany*
- vv. 10–11 *Plot against Jesus*

Mark 14:1 But after two days the passover and the feast of unleavened bread happened. And the high priests and the scribes were seeking him in deceit to grab him that they might kill him, 2 for they were saying, “Not during the feast, lest there be unrest among the people.”

3 And he was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, while he was reclining a woman came with a flask of expensive ointment of pure nard, after breaking the flask she poured it on his head. 4 For some of them had indignation amongst themselves, “For why had she wasted the ointment? 5 For this ointment could be sold for over one hundred denarii and given to the poor,” so they were rebuking her. 6 But Jesus said, “Leave her alone! Why do you trouble her? A beautiful deed was done for me. 7 For always you will have the poor with you and whenever you want you will be able to do good to them, but you will not always have me. 8 She did what she could, taking beforehand she anointed my body for burial. 9 But truly I say to you, wherever the good news might be preached in the whole world, also what she did will be spoken of in memory of her.

10 Then Judas Iscariot, he being one of the twelve, went to the high priest in order that he might deliver Jesus to them. 11 Then after hearing him they were glad and promised to give him silver. So he sought the opportunity when he might deliver him over.

· **14:1–2** *Passover, Festival of Unleavened Bread is 2 Days Away; Ruling Priests and Scholars Seek to Kill Jesus, But After the Festival*

- First Markan reference to a specific time of year.¹

¹ Strauss, *Mark*, 605.

- Passover celebrates the Exodus from Egypt when the angel of death killed the firstborn Egyptian sons but *passed over* the Israelites (Exod 12:1–13ff).
- * Passover was celebrated on the Jewish month of Nisan on the 14/15th (April/May).
- * Israelites were required to remove unleavened bread during this festival (Exod 12:15–20; 23:15; 24:18; Num 28:17; Deut 16:1–8).
- Passover “provoked strong nationalistic feelings” from the Jews and “made the Romans nervous.” Pilate would come down from Caesarea Maratima and reside in Jerusalem to watch the crowds.²
- **14:3 *At Bethany in Simon the Leper’s House: A Woman Anoints Jesus***
 - Jesus returns to his “home base” in Bethany.
 - The woman is not named in Matthew 26:6–13 John 12:18 *seems* to be the same occasion where Mary anoints his feet. Luke 7:36–50 may be a different story.
 - Anointing oil could indicate:
 - * *Installing a priest or king* (Exod 29:7; 1 Sam 10:1)
 - * *A sign of devotion or hospitality* (Pss 23:5; 133:2; Luke 7:46).³
 - * *A burial anointing* (Mark 14:8)
- **14:4–5 *Some Become Angry; B/c Wasted Perfume; 300 Denarii***
 - The nard, native to India (cf. Song 1:12), is worth 300 denarii (a year’s salary ~\$20,000–30,000).
 - John 12:4–6 indicates Judas made this comment. Other disciples may have been guilty here (Matt 26:8).
 - Giving gifts to the poor was common around passover.⁴
- **14:6 *“Leave Her Alone! She Has Done a Beautiful Thing.”***
- **14:7 *“You Always Have the Poor; You Will Not Always Have Me”***
 - “You always have the poor and you can do good for them whenever you wish” almost sounds like Jesus is discouraging giving to the poor.
 - Perhaps Jesus intends to echo Deut 15:11 *“For there will never cease to be poor in the land.”*
 - While the poor are important, Jesus is here to bring salvation by defeating sin, death, and beginning the kingdom of God.⁵
- **14:8 *“She Did What She Could: Anointed My Body for Burial”***
 - It’s unclear if this expense was a total sacrifice for the woman — but it was significant. Recalls story of widow in Mark 12:41–44.
- **14:9 *“Whenever the Gospel in is Preached; This Story Will Be Told in Her Memory.”***

² Strauss, *Mark*, 606.

³ Strauss, 607; Collins, *Mark*, 642.

⁴ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions in the New Testament Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 126–34.

⁵ Strauss, 608.

• **14:10–11 *Judas Goes to Ruling Priest and Looks to Betray Him***

- Although the priests had resolved not to do anything until after Passover, this opportunity from one of Jesus's own disciples is too good to pass up.
- At this point, it's unclear why exactly Judas betrayed Jesus.
- Mark does not name the price of silver (Matt 26:15; 27:3; cf. Zech 11:12–13).⁶

The Last Supper (14:12–26) & Predicting Peter's Denial (14:26–31)

Mark 14:12 And on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, when the passover lamb was sacrificed, his disciples said to him, "Where do you desire us to go in order that we might prepare to eat the Passover meal?" 13 Then he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a jar of water, follow him 14 and wherever he enters say to the housekeeper that the the teacher says, 'Where is my guest room that I might eat the Passover meal with my disciples?' 15 And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready, so there prepare for us." 16 So the disciples went out and went into the city and found things just as he told them and they prepared for the Passover. 17 And after evening had come he came with the twelve. 18 And they were reclining and while eating Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will deliver me over, one who is eating with me." 19 They began to be grieved and said to him one by one, "Not I!?" 20 But he said to them, "One of the twelve, who is dipping with me in the dish. 21 Since indeed the Son of Man departs just as it was written concerning him, woe to the man by whom the Son of Man is handed over, it is better to him if that man were not to be born. 22 Then while they were eating he took bread and after blessing it he broke and gave it to his disciples and he said, "Take, this is my body." 23 And after taking a cup, blessing it, he gave it to them and all of them drank. 24 Then he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant that is poured out for many. 25 Truly I say to you that not I will not drink of fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. 26 After singing a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives. 27 Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will stumble, since it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.' 28 But after I am raised up I will lead you to Galilee." 29 But Peter said to him, "Everyone may fall away, but I will not." 30 Then Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you that this night before the rooster crows twice you will deny me three thrice." 31 But he was saying emphatically, "If it is necessary for me to die for you, I will not deny you." And they all were saying likewise.

• **14:12 *Disciples Ask Jesus About Preparing for the Passover***

- Passover was celebrated on "preparation day" when the sacrifices took place.
- For interesting reading, compare Mark, Matt, Luke vs. John's scheduling.
- They are presently in Bethany but plan to eat it in Jerusalem.⁷

• **14:13–15 *Find the Man with a Water Jar; Ask About the Upper Room***

- Jesus sends Peter and John (cf. Luke 22:8).
- What's unusual about this arrangement?⁸

⁶ Strauss, 610.

⁷ Strauss, 619.

⁸ Women carry water jars, not men!

- This person “will meet them.” So was this divine insight or prearrangement?
- **14:16 *Disciples Depart to Jerusalem; Find Things as Jesus Said; Begin Preparing***
 - Obtaining a lamb, having it sacrificed in the temple, procuring the food: unleavened bread, wine, herbs, and a *haroseth* (fruit) sauce for dipping.⁹
- **14:17–18 *Jesus Arrives at Evening; “One of You Will Betray Me”***
 - The group “reclines” in customary fashion. Passover was a celebration for all, even the poorest were included (*m. Pesah* 10:1).
 - The person who betrays Jesus is a disciple! He even eats with them (cf. Ps 41:9).
- **14:19–20 *Everyone Says: “Surely Not Me?!”; Jesus Confirms = One of the 12***
 - In this account, the betrayer is not identified (as in John 13:21ff), although even the earliest readers of Mark knew the story.
- **14:21 *The Son of Man Will Go; As It’s Written; Woe to the Betrayer!***
 - Jesus must die so the Scriptures are fulfilled. He does not indicate which passages in this case.
- **14:22 *After Blessing the Bread “Take, Eat, This is My Body”***
 - The Unleavened Bread was an element of the Passover meal. Jesus took parts of this meal and *reappropriated them* for a feast in the last days.
 - As the Passover meal was about God’s salvation (out of Egypt) through the blood of lambs, so also is the Lord’s Supper about God’s salvation (out of sin) through the blood of Jesus.
- **14:23–24 *Taking the Cup He Gave Thanks; “This is My Blood of the Covenant...”***
 - Although they had individual cups at the table, Jesus passed his own cup around to show the unity that comes through those that partake in his blood.¹⁰
 - The disciples would not have thought this “drinking blood” (Lev 3:17; 7:26–27; 17:14) was literal.¹¹
 - It’s unclear whether Judas took part in this. If he did, we can infer that even those who *appear to be a disciple*, even partaking in the body and blood of Christ, may not necessarily be a true disciple.
- **14:25 *“I Will Not Drink Fruit of the Vine Until the Kingdom***
- **14:26 *They Sang a Hymn and Went Out to the Mount of Olives***
 - Probably sang one of the Hallel Psalms (Pss 113–18), a Passover tradition.¹²
 - It was a little bit before midnight.
- **14:27 *“You Will All Fall Away” (Zech 13:7)***
- **14:28 *“After I am Raised; I Will Go Before You to Galilee”***
- **14:29–31 *Peter: “I Will Not Fall Away”; Jesus: “You Will 3x Before Rooster Crows Twice”; Peter: “I Will Not Deny You”***

⁹ Strauss, 620.

¹⁰ Strauss, 624–25.

¹¹ Strauss, 625.

¹² Strauss, 626.

The Agony of Gethsemane (14:32–42)

Mark 14:32 And they came to a place which is named Gethsemane and he said to his disciples, “Sit here so I may pray.” 33 Then he took Peter and James and John with him and he became overwhelmed and very distressed 34 and he said to them, “*My soul is deeply grieved*’ even to death: remain here and be watchful. 35 Then after going a little farther he fell on the ground and he prayed so that if it is possible the hour might pass from him, 36 Then he continued to pray, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. But not what I want but what you want.” 37 And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “Simon, why do you sleep? Are you not able to be awake for one hour? 38 Stay awake and pray so that you do not come into temptation. The spirit on the one hand is willing but the flesh is weak.” 39 So when departed again he prayed the same saying. 40 And again when he came he found them sleeping, for their eyes kept falling shut, and they did not know what to answer him. 41 Then he came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look! The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Get up! Let’s go. Look! My betrayer has come.”

• **14:32 *In Gethsemane; Disciples Told to Sit While He Prays***

- They cross the Kidron Valley (John 18:1) to the western side of the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39).
- Gethsemane is Aramaic for “olive press”¹³ This was a usual gathering place for Jesus and his disciples (Luke 22:39; John 18:2).

• **14:33–34 *Peter, James, and John Go Further; Jesus is Distressed; Tells Them to Wait***

- Again inner circle is at the forefront (5:37; 9:2; cf. 13:3).
- Jesus is “moved to an intense emotional state” along the lines of troubled/distressed/anxious in the sense of dread and fear.¹⁴
- He experiences emotions just like a human: fatigue (4:38), hunger (11:12), anger and indignation (1:41; 3:5; 10:14), frustration (8:17, 21), and overwhelming sorrow and distress.¹⁵ See Hebrews 5:7–9.
- Jesus recalls Pss 42:5, 6, 11.
- He wants the disciples to stay alert and pray while they wait.

• **14:35–36 *Jesus Prays For It All To Go Away; But He Prays for God’s Will***

- Abba (ʾAββā) or “Father” in Aramaic is an intimate means of addressing the Father. Paul discusses the word in relation to spiritual adoption (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6).
- Abba does not mean “daddy” as some have proposed.¹⁶
- “Cup” is a common image for suffering in the OT.
- “This prayer represents a model for believers in that Jesus *brings his needs and desires to God*, but emphasizes most of all *his submission to God’s will*. Prayer should be focused primarily on getting what we want, but on aligning our will with God’s.”¹⁷

¹³ Strauss, 632.

¹⁴ Strauss, 633.

¹⁵ Strauss, 638.

¹⁶ James Barr, “Abba Isn’t ‘DADDY,’” *JTS* 39 (1988): 28–47.

¹⁷ Strauss, 634.

• 14:37–38 *Jesus Finds Them Sleeping; “Watch and Pray”*

- Peter is probably singled out because he strongly affirmed he would remain supportive (14:29–31).¹⁸
- The weakness and exhaustion of their physical flesh overcomes their willpower.

• 14:39–40 *Jesus Prays the Same Thing Again; Finds Disciples Sleeping Again*

- They got caught sleeping, are embarrassed, and don't know what to say.
- They aren't following Jesus like they claimed.

• 14:41–42 *Jesus Catches them a Third Time; But THE HOUR Has Come; The Betrayer Comes*

- Despite that Judas would hand Jesus over, all of this is God's will (14:36).
- Jesus identifies the religious leaders of Jerusalem as “sinners.”

The Betrayal and Arrest (14:43–52)

Mark 14:43 And immediately while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived and with him a crowd, armed with swords and clubs, came from the High Priest, the scribes, and the elders. 44 But the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, The one whom I kiss is him, seize him and take him securely. 45 And immediately when Judas came after going up to him he said, “Rabbi,” and kissed him. 46 Then they laid their hands on him and they seized him. 47 But one of the bystanders after drawing his sword he struck the servant of the High Priest and he cut off his ear. 48 Then answering Jesus said to them, “Am I a revolutionary that you come out with swords and clubs to catch me? 49 Day after day I taught you in the temple courts and you did not seize me, but this was so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.” 50 Then leaving him all the disciples fled. 51 And a young man who was following him had been wearing a linen cloth over his nakedness, and they seized him, 52 but after leaving the garment he fled naked.

• 14:43 *Judas Arrives with an Armed Mob from the Jerusalem Authorities*

- “One of the Twelve” emphasizes that it was a disciple.¹⁹
- Temple police, Jewish soldiers who kept order in the Temple (cf. Luke 22:47, 52).
- A small Roman squad of soliders may have been present too (John 18:3, 12).²⁰

• 14:44 *The Sign of the Kiss Explained (Flashback)*

• 14:45–46 *Judas Kisses Rabbi Jesus; They Arrest Him*

- See Proverbs 27:6

• 14:46–47 *Someone Strikes the High Priest's Servant*

- Only in John is Peter striking Malchus (18:10).

¹⁸ Strauss, 635.

¹⁹ Strauss, 642.

²⁰ Strauss, 643.

- Only in Luke is the healing mentioned (22:51).
- Only in Matt is the “all who draw the sword will die by the sword” (Matt 26:52).
- Why is this disciple (Peter) not named?²¹
- **14:48–49** *Why Do You Seize Me Like a Revolutionary? I Taught Openly But You Did Nothing; The Scriptures Must Be Fulfilled*
 - Exposes the problem that they didn’t have a reason to arrest Jesus.
- **14:50** *Deserting Him, They All Flee*
 - All his disciples flee as predicted (14:27; Zech 13:7).
- **14:51–52** *A Young Man Flees Naked*
 - Easily one of the strangest incidents in the Gospels.²²
 - This is either an unknown follower of Jesus or perhaps is John Mark.
 - * Why else would this be included *only in Mark*? Was this where the author enters the story.
 - * John Mark’s mother was relatively wealthy and lived nearby in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12).

Application: Responses to Jesus

1. *Outright Rejection* (Judas)
2. *Abandonment* (Disciples)
3. *Inappropriate Action* (Sword)

Jesus before the Sanhedrin (14:53–65)

Mark 14:53 Then they led Jesus to the High Priest, and they came together — all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. **54** And Peter from afar followed him, until inside the High Priest’s courtyard and he was sitting together with the guards and warming himself beside the fire. **55** But the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were seeking evidence against Jesus to put him to death, but they were not finding anything. **56** For many were giving false testimony against him, but their testimony did not agree. **57** And when some stood they were giving false testimony against him, saying, **58** that “we heard him saying that ‘I will destroy this Temple that is made with hands and after three days another not made with hands I will build.’” **59** Yet even on this their testimony did not agree. **60** Then the High Priest after standing before them he asked Jesus saying, “Do you answer anything? What is this they are testifying against you?” **61** But he was silent and he did not answer anything. Again the High priest asked him and he said to him, “Are you the Christ the Son of the Blessed One?” **62** But Jesus said, “I Am. And you will see ‘*the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power*’ and ‘*coming with the clouds of heaven*’” **63** So the High Priest tore his shirt and said, “Why do we still have need of witnesses? **64** You heard the blasphemy, what is your verdict?” Then they all condemn him to be guilty of death. **65** So some of them began to spit on him and to cover his face and strike him and to say to him, “Prophesy!” And the guards took him and beat him.

²¹ Trying to protect him from being with Jesus? Trying to protect him from negative reactions within the church?

²² Strauss, 645.

- 14:53 *Jesus Taken to the High Priest and Sanhedrin*
 - High Priest is not named here, elsewhere Caiaphas (Matt 26:57).²³
 - Sanhedrin consists of ruling priests, elders, and scholars of the Law.
- 14:54 *Peter Followed But Sits in Courtyard by Fire with the Guards*
 - Peter ran, but doubles back and follows Jesus and his captors.²⁴
 - John explains that another disciple (John?) knew people in Caiaphas's house and let Peter come in (18:16).
- 14:55–56 *High Priest and Sanhedrin Seek Evidence; Can't Find Any Despite Inconsistent, False Testimonies*
- 14:57–59 *Falsely Accused of Threatening the Temple; Still Inconsistent Testimony*
 - Jesus did 'threaten' the Temple when clearing it and predicting its destruction, he never does this (except maybe John 2:19).²⁵
 - This accusation alludes to his resurrection "after three days."
- 14:60–61 *High Priest Accuses Jesus of Silence; Jesus Says Nothing; Priest Asks "Are You the Messiah?"*
 - Recalls Isa 53:7.
- 14:62 *Jesus Agrees; Cites Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13*
 - Jesus will be exalted to a seat of honor beside God.
 - Ps 110:1 is the most cited text in the NT.
- 14:63–64 *High Priest Tears Garments; Sufficent Testimony of Blasphemy; They Condemn Him To Death*
 - Jesus claimed to be God = blasphemy.
 - Sanhedrin seems to take a borderline illegal conviction here.
- 14:65 *They Spit; Blindfold; Strike Him; Mock; And Drag Him Off For More Beatings*
 - Some of the council spit on him.²⁶

²³ Strauss, 652.

²⁴ Strauss, 653.

²⁵ Strauss, 654.

²⁶ Strauss, 658.

Peter's Denial of Jesus (14:66–72)

Mark 14:66 And when Peter was in the courtyard below one of the high priest's servant girls came 67 and seeing Peter warming himself she looked closely at him and said, "Were you not also one of the Nazarene Jesus?" 68 But he denied it saying, "I neither know nor undersatnd what you say." And he went out into the the gateway [and a rooster crowed]. 69 Then when the servant girl saw him she began again to say to those standing that, "He is one of them." 70 But again he kept denying it. And after a little while again those standing kept saying to Peter, "Truly you are one of them, for you are also a Galilean." 71 And he began to make curses and swear oaths that, "I do not know the man you talk about." 72 And immediately a rooster crowed a second time and Peter remembered the word that Jesus said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice: three times you will deny me." And breaking down he wept.

- **14:66–67 *Peter is Approached by Servant Girl; "You Were With Jesus"***
 - Jesus is in an upstairs room, Peter is "below."²⁷
 - Servant girl was probably passing through on her duties.²⁸
 - "Nazarene" could be derogatory.
- **14:68 *Peter Denies "I Have No Idea What You Mean"***
 - Peter makes his denial, and moves to another part of the courtyard.
- **14:69–70a *Servant Sees Him; Points Him Out to Others; Peter Keeps Denying***
 - Bystanders "presumably includes the guards involved in the arrest, who had been warming themselves with Peter by the fire (14:54)."²⁹
- **14:70b–71 *Bystanders Accuse Peter of Being a Galilean; Peter Swears and Denies Him Again***
 - Matthew says "your speech/accent gives it away" (Matt 26:76).
 - Peter is not cussing but calling down curses on the people there. Perhaps something like "go to hell."³⁰
- **14:72 *Rooster Crows a Second Time; Peter Remembers and Weeps***
 - Peter immediately realizes what he has done and is remorseful.

Application

1. *Jesus's prophecy about his death and Peter's denial is fulfilled.*
2. *Jesus's own bold stand before the trial contrasts with Peter's failure.* — thus, are we, as disciples, really ready to lose our lives or do we still want to save our own skin when it comes down to it? "Whoever confesses me before men..." (cf. Matt 10:32; Luke 12:8)
3. *There is hope Peter will see Jesus again and be restored* — we know by his life in Acts (but other failure in Galatians) and final death for Christ that much is possible.

²⁷ Strauss, 663.

²⁸ Strauss, 663.

²⁹ Strauss, 664.

³⁰ Strauss, 665.

The Trial Before Pilate (15:1–15)

Mark 15:1 And immediately in the morning the chief priests were holding council with the elders and scribes and all of the Sanhedrin, after binding Jesus they carried him off and gave him to Pilate. **2** And Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” And answering him he said, “You say so.” **3** And the chief priests kept accusing him of many things. **4** But Pilate again asked him saying, “Do you answer anything? See how much they charge you.” **5** But Jesus no longer answered anything, so it amazed Pilate. **6** But during the feast he usually released to them one prisoner whom they were requesting. **7** But there was one called Barabbas among the bound rebels who in the revolt had committed murder. **8** And after coming up the crowd began to ask just as he usually did for them. **9** Then Pilate answered them saying, “Do you wish that I might release the king of the Jews?” **10** For he began to realize that, because of envy, the high priests tried to hand him over. **11** Then the high priests stirred the crowd so instead Barabbas might be released to them. **12** Then Pilate again after answering was saying to them, “Then what [do you want] me do with [the one you call] the king of the Jews?” **13** And again they cried out, “Crucify him!” **14** Then Pilate tried to say to them, “What evil did he do?” But all the more they cried out, “Crucify him.” **15** Then Pilate wishing to satisfy the crowd released Barabbas to them, and he handed Jesus over after scourging him so that he might be crucified.

• **15:1** *Whole Sanhedrin Decides to Turn Jesus over to the Romans*

- Romans prohibited the Jews from exercising capital punishment, so the Jewish trial(s) was to prepare a case for the Roman governor Pilate.
- It's possible Roman trials usually began at dawn.³¹
- Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea from AD 26–32 and was the representative of emperor Tiberius Caesar. His headquarters was in the town of Caesarea Maritima, a port city on the Mediterranean built by Herod the Great. During Jewish festivals, the Romans occupied Jerusalem with a show of force to quell any uprisings.
- Pilate had a troubled history with the Jews and frequently overstepped bounds: murdering and violating the Temple with idols. Above all, he was interested in self-preservation, including appeasing the Jews, and this encounter with Jesus certainly supports it. Not agreeing could risk open revolt or the Jews sending an embassy to Rome against Pilate (which was done on occasion).³²

• **15:2** *Pilate Asks: “Are You the King of the Jews” Jesus Agrees*

- Accusations of blasphemy and messianic claims were not a threat to the Romans, but a claim to kingship was a political threat. It appears the Jews framed their accusations politically as to provoke a Roman response.³³
- Although Jesus affirms the response, he isn't agreeing to Pilate's political definition of the term.

• **15:3–5** *Chief Priests Accuse Jesus; Pilate Interrogates Jesus Further; Jesus Makes No Defense*

- Unclear what charges are brought (cf. Luke 23:2), but we can assume what actions offended the Jews.
- “Oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth” (Isa 53:7).

³¹ Seneca, *Ira*. 2.7.3.

³² Strauss, 671, 674.

³³ Strauss, 675.

- 15:6 *During Passover, Pilate Normally Released a Prisoner*
 - Some historical sources point to the release of prisoners, but the situation in the Gospels is a unique event.³⁴
- 15:7 *Barabbas Introduced: Imprisoned with the Murderous Rebels*
 - Aramaic *Bar-Abba* “Son of the Father.”
 - He was involved with some sort of rebellion that was quelled.
- 15:8 *Crowd Requests the Custom of Releasing a Prisoner*
- 15:9–10 *Pilate Suggests Release of King of the Jews; Recognizes the Selfish Motives of the Jews*
 - Pilate realizes the Jews were envious of Jesus (his followers, acclaim and notoriety?)
 - Politically, it makes more sense to release Jesus who is otherwise harmful. Barabbas, on the other hand, is a political threat.³⁵
- 15:11 *Priests Stir Crowd to Have Barabbas Released*
- 15:12–14 *“What Shall I Do With Jesus?” Crowd: “Crucify Him”*
 - Crowd becomes embroiled against Jesus, despite the logical proposals of Pilate.
 - Pilate proposes his innocence, but the crowd is not pleased.
- 15:15 *Pilate Satisfies Crowd, Releases Barabbas, Has Jesus Flogged and Crucified*
 - Such lashing was not limited 40 lashes like the Jews, it was a flogging tearing through skin and muscle to the bone.³⁷
 - Here we see, on display, the innocent suffering servant of God going to his death for the cause of mankind.
 - In modern times, there has been some mild debate as to who actually killed Jesus. Against accusing the Jews in a post-Holocaust era, they accuse the Romans. In reality, it was a small subset of the corrupt Jewish establishment who took advantage of a pragmatic Roman governor.³⁸

³⁴ Strauss, 676–77 identifies two instances from Josephus: G. Septimus Vegetus in AD 85 (*Ant.* 17.8.4) and Albinus about AD 64 (*Ant.* 20.9.5). Although not identical, Evans explains that it's unlikely that the Gospel writers would make up a fictional custom: this would cause problems for the early church's authenticity Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, WBC 34B (Nashville: Nelson, 2001), 480.

³⁵ In History Channel and Mark Burnett's *The Bible*, Barabbas appears frequently as questioning Jesus on matters of Roman authority including paying taxes to Caesar. Barabbas is portrayed as angry when Jesus tells them to pay taxes to the Romans.³⁶

³⁷ See Josephus, *B.J.* 6.5.3.

³⁸ See extensive discussion on Strauss, 682–83.

The Mocking & Crucifixion of Jesus (15:16–32)

Mark 15:16 Then soldiers took him away inside the palace, that is the praetorium, and they called together the whole cohort. **17** And they clothed him in purple and after twisting a crown of thorns they put it on him, **18** and they began to mock him, “Hail, king of the Jews!” **19** And they kept striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling and worshipped him. **20** And while they mocked him, they stripped him of the purple robe and put on his garments. And they brought him out in order that they might crucify him. **21** And they requisitioned one who was passing by, Simon the Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, in order that he might carry his cross. **22** And they brought him to the place [called] Golgotha, which is translated “Place of the Skull.” **23** And they were offering him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. **24** And they crucified him and divided his garments, casting lots for them as to who might take what. **25** But it was the third hour and they crucified him. **26** And the inscription of his accusation had been written, “The King of the Jews.” **27** And with him they crucified two revolutionaries, one on the right and one on his left. **28** [And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “And he was numbered with the transgressors.”] **29** Then the ones passing by were blaspheming him wagging their heads and saying, “Ha, you who destroy the temple and build it up in three days, **30** save yourself and come down from the cross.” **31** In the same way the high-priests with the scribes were ridiculing with one another saying, “He saved others, but he cannot save himself! **32** Let Christ the King of Israel come down now from the cross, that we might see and believe.” And those who had been crucified with him were mocking him.

- **15:16 *Roman Soldiers Lead Him to Palace Courtyard (Praetorium) and Assemble the Cohort***
 - Praetorium was the courtyard of Pilate’s headquarters.
 - A cohort was about 600 soldiers, here it indicates the on-duty soldiers.³⁹
- **15:17–19 *Purple Robe, Crown of Thorns, “Hail King of the Jews”; Striking with the Reed; Spitting; Mock Worshipping***
 - Matt 27:28 has “scarlet robe” so probably not actually a purple one but one that was close enough to purpose to appear royal.⁴⁰
 - Isaiah’s servant was spit on (Isa 50:6–7).
- **15:20 *After Mocking They Put His Clothes Back On and Lead Him to be Crucified***
 - Romans generally crucified people naked. Strauss suggests Jesus was clothed in respect to Jewish concerns with nudity.⁴¹
- **15:21 *Simon of Cyrene (father of Alexander and Rufus) Compelled to Carry Jesus’s Cross***
 - Jesus did not carry a cross like [†] but a *cross-beam* (*patibulum*) [-] that was affixed to the upright beam (*palus*) [|] to form a cross [†].
 - Simon of Cyrene was “conscripted” to carry the cross of Jesus.
 - Cyrene is a city in North Africa from where Simon probably came for Passover (cf. Acts 2:10).

³⁹ Strauss, 687.

⁴⁰ Strauss, 687.

⁴¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 19.4.5. Strauss, 688.

* Simon's sons were known to the church or churches that Mark wrote, else he wouldn't name them.

* Is this the same Rufus in Rome (Rom 16:13). Rome and North Africa (esp. Carthage) had close connections. If so, it seems Mark wrote this Gospel account to Rome.⁴²

• 15:22 *Jesus Brought to Golgotha (Place of the Skull)*

- Aramaic name Golgotha is translated for the Greek readers.
- “Calvary” comes from Latin *calvarie locus* meaning Place of the Skull.⁴³
- Jesus was taken outside the city walls for execution, as was Jewish custom (Lev 24:12; John 19:17; cf. Heb 13:12). It was probably near a major road in order to intimidate Jews.⁴⁴

• 15:23 *Jesus Offered Wine Mixed with Myrrh; He Rejects It*

- Wine mixed with Myrrh *might* have been to dull his pain (cf. Prov 31:6), or more mockery since myrrh in wine was a delicacy.
- Jesus refuses the wine possibly because of his promise in Mark 14:25 and also a refusal to participate in their “games.”⁴⁵

• 15:24 *Cast Lots to Divide Garments*

- Crucifixion was the worst means of punishment. Usually reserved for non-Romans who were rebellious or dangerous.
- There were two types of crosses:
 1. *Crux comissa* [T]
 2. *Crux immissa* [†]
- Crucifixion was done upside down at times, as impaling, or traditionally as Jesus was.⁴⁶
- Sometimes crucified victims were given a footrest to prolong their suffocation and torture. Some hung on the cross for days.

• 15:25 *They Crucified Him at the Third Hour (9am)*

- Gospels differ on timing, possibly using different time-systems (Roman vs. Jewish).
- Time, dates, etc were less precise in the ancient world in general. Remembering the “right” time is not as important as the fact that Jesus did. Our modern concerns with accuracy can sometimes interfere with faith in the event.⁴⁷

• 15:26 *Inscription: “King of the Jews”*

- Matthew: *This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.*

⁴² Strauss, 689.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Quintilian, *Decl.* 274. Strauss, 689.

⁴⁵ Strauss, 690.

⁴⁶ Seneca, *Marc.* 20.3.

⁴⁷ See Strauss on the timing options, 692.

- Luke: *This is the King of the Jews.*
- John: *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.*
 - * John adds it was in Hebrew/Aramaic, Latin and Greek.
 - * The Jews protested calling him king (John 19:20–21).
- 15:27 *They Crucified Two Rebels With Him; One On Each Side*
 - Romans saw them as common criminals or thieves. Jews probably saw them as freedom fighters.⁴⁸
 - Right and left (cf. James and John in Mark 10:37, 40).
 - Mark 15:28 cites Isa 53:12. It is a later addition by Christians.
- 15:29–30 *Passerbys Mocked Jesus for His Claims about the Temple “Save Yourself!”*
 - Passerbys (indicating they’re along a road), religious leaders, and those being crucified with him mocked him.
- 15:31–32 *Ruling Priests and Scribes Mock Him; “He Cannot Save Himself; Come Down So We Can Believe”*
 - They’re “congratulating one another” for their victory over him.⁴⁹
 - Again, they demand a sign. Ironically, they’ve become a part of God’s work of salvation in the world.

The Death & Burial of Jesus (15:33–47)

Mark 15:33 And being the sixth hour, darkness came upon the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 Then at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi eloi lema sabachthani.” That is translated, “My God My God, why have you forsaken me?” 35 And some of those standing there after hearing began to say, “Look he calls Elijah.” 36 Then someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, placed it on a reed, offered it to him saying, “Wait let us see if Elijah comes to take him down.” 37 And Jesus after giving out a loud cry he breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39 But a centurion who had been standing by facing him after seeing the way he breathed his last said, “Truly this man was a son of God.” 40 But there were women watching from a distance, among who were also Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of James the younger and Joses and Salome, 41 When he was in Galilee they were following him and ministering to him, and many others came to Jerusalem. 42 And when evening came, since it was the day of preparation that is before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph from Arimathea, a respected councillor came, who was also one waiting for the kingdom of God, after summoning his courage he entered to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 But Pilate was amazed that he had already died and summoning the centurion he asked him whether he died, 45 and learning this from the centurion he gave the body to Joseph. 46 So (Joseph) bought fine linen and after taking him down he wrapped him in the fine linen and placed him in a tomb that had been cut from rock and he rolled a stone before the door of the tomb. 47 Then Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Joses saw where they laid him.

- 15:33 *Darkness Comes from the Sixth (12p) to Ninth Hour (3p)*

⁴⁸ Strauss, 693.

⁴⁹ Strauss, 694.

- Darkness is often associated with judgement like the plague of darkness (Exod 10:21–23) and the day of judgement of Israel (Isa 13:9–13; Joel 2:10; 3:14–15; Amos 8:9).⁵⁰
- In Greek and Roman traditions, darkness was associated with the deaths of great men like Caesar and Alexander.⁵¹
- **15:34 *Jesus Cries Out “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani”***
 - Jesus has now been on the cross six hours.
 - He quotes Ps 22:1 in Aramaic, Mark provides a Greek translation.
 - Mark quotes Jesus’s Aramaic at dramatic points: healing of Jarius’s daughter (5:41 *Talitha koum*); healing of a deaf/mute (7:34; *Epaphatha*); in the garden of Gethsemane (14:36; *Abba*).⁵²
 - Unclear if Jesus means God actually left him, the Spirit left, or what. Mark does not explain what Jesus means here and we should be careful about making arguments on this statement.
- **15:35–36 *Some Think Jesus Calls for Elijah; Get a Sponge with Sour Wine***
 - Many people thought Elijah would return (Mark 6:15; 8:28; etc), so the confusion here is understandable. There were traditions that Elijah would come to rescue people from situations of distress.⁵³
 - The man who gets the wine is a Jew (mentions Elijah).
 - Sour wine was probably there for the soliders, relieved thirst.⁵⁴
- **15:37 *Jesus Lets Out A Loud Cry Then Dies***
- **15:38 *The Curtain of the Temple Was Torn in Two***
 - Probably was the inner curtain in the Temple.
 - What was the symbolism of this event?
 1. *Symbolizes the Temple’s Destruction and Judgement Against the Leaders and Jewish Nation* (cf. Mark 11:12–14ff)
 2. *Symbolizes the End of Temple Sacrifices and Opens a New Way to God* (cf. Heb 10:19–20).
 - Anyone recall the first time something “ripped” in Mark?
- **15:39 *Roman Centurion, “Truly This Man Was a Son of God”***
 - A centurion commanded 100 men. Part of the group carrying out the crucifixion.
 - He was impressed with Jesus’s final breath and events regarding his death.
 - A Gentile recognizes Jesus’s identity! He died for all, not merely the Jews.
- **15:40–41 *Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James and Joseph and Salome Watching; They Were Among Followers from Galilee***

⁵⁰ Strauss, 701.

⁵¹ Virgil, *Georg.* 1.463–68 (Caesar). Strauss, 701.

⁵² Strauss, 702.

⁵³ On this, see Strauss, 703 n. 12.

⁵⁴ Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 715.

- Ironically, it is the women who remained at the cross while the Twelve men were gone.
 - Luke talks about how these women supported Jesus and his disciples (Luke 8:2–3).
 - Mark only mentions Mary of Magdala once. There's no evidence she was a prostitute. This arose from confusion of Mary with Mary of Bethany who anointed Jesus's feet (John 12:1–8; Luke 10:38–41), another woman who anointed Jesus who was sinful (Luke 7:36–50), and the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53–8:11).⁵⁵
 - Nothing is known about Mary the mother of James and Joseph. Maybe the mother of James the son of Alphaeus (3:18) or the wife of Clopas (John 19:25). Probably not Jesus's mother.⁵⁶
 - Salome is the mother of James in John (cf. Matt 27:56; 20:20).
- 15:42–43 *On the Day of Preparation; Joseph of Arimathea Requests the Body of Jesus from Pilate*
 - Bodies must be buried before night (Deut 21:22–23) and especially before Sabbath when work is prohibited.⁵⁷
 - Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin council. Like Nicodemus, not all Jewish leaders opposed Jesus (cf. Luke 23:51).
 - He was wealthy (Matt 27:57) and a secret disciple of Jesus (Matt 27:57; John 19:38).
 - 15:44–45 *Pilate is Surprised that Jesus Died Already; Verifies with his Centurion; Releases the Corpse to Joseph*
 - 15:46 *Joseph Buys a Linen Cloth; Takes Jesus Down; Lays Him in a Tomb; Rolls a Stone to Block the Entrance*
 - Body is washed and wrapped and covered in spices (*m. Šabb.* 23:5).
 - Laid on a stone bench hewn into the rock. Often the body decomposed, the bones put in a box, and another member of the family was buried there.
 - Strauss suggests Joseph's servants probably did this work (p. 710).
 - In John 19:38–42, Nicodemus helps Joseph and provides myrrh and aloes for the anointing.
 - 15:47 *Mary Magdalene and Mary mother of Joseph Watch*

⁵⁵ Strauss, 707.

⁵⁶ Strauss, 707.

⁵⁷ Strauss, 708.

Part VI

Epilogue: The Resurrection Announced (16:1–8)

The Resurrection & Empty Tomb (16:1–8)

Mark 16:1 And after the Sabbath passed, Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of James and Salome purchased spices in order to go anoint him. 2 And early in the morning on the first day of the week they went to the tomb after the rising of the sun. 3 And they kept saying to themselves, “Who will roll the stone for us away from the entrance to the tomb?” 4 And after looking up they saw that the stone had been rolled away, for it was very large. 5 After going into the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right side clothed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. 6 Then he said to the women, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus the Nazarene who has been crucified. He has risen, he is not here. Look! The place where they laid him. 7 Go and tell his disciples and Peter that he goes before you into Galilee, there you will see him, just as he told you.” 8 So they went out from the tomb and fled, for they were trembling and astonished, and they did not tell anyone what he said, for they were afraid.

• **16:1 *Sabbath Ends; Women Buy Spices and Plan to Visit Tomb***

- Women are coming to pay their respects and pay additional homage to the body of Jesus.¹
- These are the same women from the cross (15:40, 47).
- In first-century Judaism, the testimony of women was not considered reliable. Why would anyone have fabricated a story where women were the only witnesses to the resurrection?
 - * It might make more sense to say that 12 Jewish rabbis found the tomb empty.
 - * Or that 7 Roman soldiers found it empty.
 - * But instead we have the witness of women.

• **16:2 *On Sunday, At Sunrise, They Go to the Tomb***

- All Gospels state Jesus rose on Sunday morning (Matt 28:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1).

• **16:3–4 *Who Will Roll the Stone Away? But It Was Already Moved!***

- “Looking up” is characteristic of dramatic discovery in the Bible
 - * *Abraham meets the three angels* (Gen 18:2)
 - * *Abraham lifts up his eyes to see a ram in the thicket before he slaughters Isaac* (Gen 22:13)
 - * *Joshua looks up and sees the Angel of the Lord before the Battle of Jericho* (Josh 5:13)

¹ Strauss, 717.

* *Daniel looks up and sees an angel* (Dan 10:5)

- They expect to have to deal with a large stone, but this prepares us for what is to come: it's gone!!!

• **16:5 *They Enter the Tomb; See a Young Man in White; Become Afraid***

- Not explicitly an angel, but the white robes are a clue.
- As expected — they are afraid. This is not Jesus!
- Alarm, fear is very common at a divine event (Judg 6:22–23; Dan 8:16–17; Mark 9:15).²

• **16:6 *Angel Says: Do Not Be Alarmed; He Has Risen! See Where They Laid Him***

- The angel explains what happens to the women. God himself is explaining the resurrection.

• **16:7 *Tell His Disciples and Peter: He Has Gone Ahead to Galilee; You Will See Him There as He Said***

- Why is Peter singled out? Probably because he is a leader but also because of his denial and need to be restored.³
- Jesus told them about going ahead to Galilee in Mark 14:28.
- Matthew's Gospel (ascension to heaven) and John's Gospel (by the seashore ch. 21) end with scenes in Galilee.

• **16:8 *They Fled the Tomb; Trembling, Amazed; Said Nothing More: They Were Afraid***

- We are left with an abrupt ending with little resolution.
- It leaves us hanging in suspense, with a negative taste (they were afraid).
- Did Peter ever see Jesus alive? Would they go to Galilee? These questions are unanswered.⁴

² Strauss, 718–19.

³ Strauss, 720.

⁴ Strauss, 721.

Mark 16:9–20 & the Other Endings

The Long Ending (16:9–20)

Mark 16:9 And after rising in the early morning on the first day of the week appearing first to Mary of Magdala from whom he cast out seven demons. 10 After going she told those who with him they began to mourn and cry, 11 But after hearing that he was alive and what was seen by her they did not believe. 12 After these things he appeared to them in another form while they were walking in the countryside, 13 but after going away they reported this to the rest, and they did not believe them. 14 Afterwards they were reclining at a table and he appeared to the eleven and he rebuked their unbelief and their stubborn heart because they had not believed the ones who had seen him after he had risen. 15 Then he said to them, “Go into all the world preach the gospel to all of creation. 16 The one after believing and after being immersed will be saved, but the one who does not believe will be condemned. 17 But these signs will follow those who believe, in my name they will cast out demons, they will speak new languages, 18 they will pick up serpents [with their hands] and will drink deadly poison but they will not be harmed, they will lay hands on the sick and they will become well. 19 So then Lord Jesus after he spoke to them was taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God. 20 Then after going out they preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and the word being confirmed through the accompanying signs.

· 16:9 *Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene*

- The phrase “first day of the week” (*proteh sabbatou*/πρώτη σαββάτου) *does not appear in any other NT book*. The common NT way to say “first day of the week” is *mian sabbatōn* μίαν σαββάτων (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2)
- The word “appeared” (*ephanē*/ἐφάνη) is the only time this word is used of a resurrection appearance.
 - * Matthew uses with appearances of angels (1:20; 2:13, 19) and with “being seen” (6:5, 16, 18; 9:33; 23:27) and the final appearing of Jesus (24:27, 30).
 - * Nowhere else is it used in the NT as a reference to the resurrection appearance of Jesus.¹
 - * Usually ὁράω is used (Acts 9:17; 13:31), ὁπτανομαι (Acts 1:3; 1 Cor 15:5), or φανερώ (Heb 9:26; 1 John 2:28; 3:2, 5).
 - * Paul does use a similar word ἐπιφάνεια (*epiphaneia*).
 - * Ignatius, *Magn.* 6:1 uses ἐφάνη of Jesus; *Barn.* 14:5 φανείς; *Diogn.* 11:2–4 φανείς, φανῆ, and φανείς.

¹ John Christopher Thomas, “A Reconsideration of the Ending of Mark,” *JETS* 26 (1983): 407–19.

- Who is arising? Jesus? Mary? Unclear.
- Mary is introduced as though she hadn't been known before (about the demons).
- In Luke this mention of Mary occurs early in the story in Luke 8:2.
- **16:10 *Mary Reports to the Disciples; They Are Mourning and Weeping***
 - This is similar to John 20:18. But nowhere in any of the other gospels is there mention of weeping (although this is not far-fetched).²
 - ἐκείνη is rare in the NT. πορεύομαι (“went”) is used only once otherwise in Mark 9:30 but 3x in 16:10–15.
- **16:11 *They Hear Her But Do Not Believe She Saw Jesus***
 - In Luke 24:11, they also doubt her tale.
 - The word “see” (*theaomai*/θεάομαι) appears nowhere else in Mark. He prefers the word *horaō*/ὁράω.
- **16:12–13 *After This; Jesus Appears to Two Disciples in the Country; They Report to the Rest But No One Believes***
 - Explicitly recalls the “Road to Emmaus” story from Luke 24:13–35.
 - Their report unbelief is probably from Luke 24:33–35; 41.
 - ἄλλος (“other”) is not used in Mark who prefers ἄλλος.
- **16:14 *Jesus Appears to the Eleven Disciples at a Meal and Rebukes Them***
 - Jesus appears at a meal in Luke 24:41.
 - The rebuke is somewhat unique but echoes Luke 24:38.
- **16:15–16 *Great Commission, Baptize Them***
 - Parallels Matt 28:18–20.
 - Baptism recalls Acts 2:38, condemnation for unbelief John 3:18, 36.
- **16:17 *These Signs: Casting Out Demons, Speaking in Tongues***
 - Jesus promises signs in John 14:12.
 - Nowhere else does Jesus promise explicit signs like these. It seems to be a summary of events in Acts 2:4; 5:12; 10:46; 16:8; 19:6.
 - “new tongues” is used nowhere else in the NT.
- **16:18 *Snakes and Poison and Healing People***
 - Recalls Luke 10:19 “trample on snakes and scorpions.”
 - Snakes also recalls Acts 28:3–6.

² Strauss, 730.

- But this is not to justify the kind of modern snake handling.³
- **16:19 *Jesus Taken Up and Sits at Right Hand of God***
 - “So then” (μὲν οὖν) is not used in this format anywhere else in Mark, but does appear in the NT (Luke 3:18; John 20:30; Acts 27x).
 - Lord Jesus (*kyrios Iēsous* κύριος Ἰησοῦς) is common in Acts and Paul *but nowhere in the other gospels*. This title for Jesus is undoubtedly *later*.
 - Jesus’s ascension is described in Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:2–11.
- **16:20 *Disciples Go Out and Preach Everywhere; The Lord Helps Them***
 - Strauss calls this “a general summary of the book of Acts” (cf. Luke 9:6).⁴

Further Notes on the Long Ending

- This is the only viable ending other than Mark 16:8.
- Appears in most Bibles: KJV, NKJV.
- Appears [bracketed]: ESV, NASB, NIV.
- Appears footnoted: RSV.⁵

Freer Logion (Codex Washingtonianus 032)

14ff *And they excused themselves, saying, “This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits [or, does not allow what lies under the unclean spirits to understand the truth and power of God]. Therefore reveal your righteousness now” – thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, “The term of years of Satan’s power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was handed over to death, that they may return to the truth and sin no more, in order that they may inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of righteousness that is in heaven.”*⁶

- Reading dates to around the second or third century. It was inserted between 14 and 15 to soften the condemnation of the disciples.
- MSS is in the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C.
- Also supported by Jerome, *Pelag* 2.15.
- This ending is not original, the work of a later Christian scribe.

³ Many serious deaths have occurred as a result of snake handling in Pentecostal circles. Famous churches include Full Gospel Tabernacle in Jesus Name (Middlesboro, KY) and Tabernacle Church of God (Lafollette, TN). The Coots family of pastors is known in national media for deaths and defending the practice. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snake_handling

⁴ Strauss, 731.

⁵ Normal L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible: Revised and Expanded* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1986), 486.

⁶ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 104.

Intermediate Ending (16:8b)

But he quickly reported these commandments to those around Peter. And after these things Jesus himself also sent out through them from east to west the sacred and immortal preaching of eternal salvation. Amen.

- Not present in modern English Bibles
- Appears between the 7th–9th centuries CE.
 - L Ψ 099 0112, Old Latin k, and a number of other MSS.
 - Appears inconsistently and with different wording.

The Ending(s) of Mark's Gospel Account

Introduction

Why This Study Matters

1. Most modern Bibles now make decisions about including or excluding the passage.
2. Most modern commentaries regard 16:9–20 as not part of Mark.
3. Some use this to argue the necessity of baptism (Mark 16:16) is unbiblical. Thus, if we are unaware of this, we could be caught off guard when someone brings it up in a study.
4. This impacts the study of the inspiration of the Bible:
 - If we include 16:9–20, claiming Jesus said something he may not have actually said is a danger.
 - If we exclude 16:9–20, claiming Jesus *did not* say something he actually said is a danger.
 - McGarvey wrote, "It would be reckless to say the passage is spurious; and it would be hazardous to affirm that these verses are certainly genuine."¹

A Few Disclaimers

1. There is *nothing biblically problematic* about Mark 16:9–20.
 - Emphases on failure of discipleship, etc are consistent with the gospel.²
 - All the teachings can be placed elsewhere in the Gospels.
 - Much appears to be summary material of Luke, Acts, etc.
2. Our aim is to determine how Mark intended to end the Gospel. The intent of Mark's ending impacts how we read the Gospel as a whole.³
3. Our aim to to be familiar with the issue so we are prepared to understand it better if we read it somewhere or someone brings it up in a study.

¹ Stanley N. Helton, "Churches of Christ and Mark 16:9–20," *ResQ* 36 (1994): 33–52.

² Suzanne Watts Henderson, "Discipleship After the Resurrection: Scribal Hermeneutics in the Longer Ending of Mark," *JTS* 63 (2012): 106–24.

³ Ending at 16:8, as we will see, is different than 16:20. On this see Donald Harrisville Juel, "A Disquieting Silence," in *Ending of Mark and the Ends of God*, ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Patrick D. Miller (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 1–15.

Possible Solutions

1. Mark intended to end his Gospel account at 16:8
2. Mark wrote and ended his Gospel account with 16:9–20
3. Mark wrote something after 16:8, but 16:9–20 is NOT what he wrote
 - Whatever came after 16:8 is lost.
 - Remnants of it *may* be preserved in 16:9–20.
 - Material in 16:9–20, while not original, is authoritative.

Overview of the Endings of Mark*Short Ending (16:8)*

So they went out from the tomb and fled, for they were trembling and astonished, and they did not tell anyone what he said, for they were afraid.

- Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus are most important witnesses.
- Eusebius and Jerome about the 3rd to 4th centuries support this.

Intermediate Ending

But he quickly reported these commandments to those around Peter. And after these things Jesus himself also sent out through them from east to west the sacred and immortal preaching of eternal salvation. Amen.

- Not present in modern English Bibles
- Appears between the 7th–9th centuries CE.
 - L Ψ 099 0112, Old Latin k, and a number of other MSS.
 - Appears inconsistently and with different wording.
- No reason to consider this as part of the ending for Mark.

Freer Logion (Codex Washingtonianus 032)

Mark 16:9 And after rising in the early morning on the first day of the week appearing first to Mary of Magdala from whom he cast out seven demons. ¹⁰ After going she told those who with him they began to mourn and cry, ¹¹ But after hearing that he was alive and what was seen by her they did not believe. ¹² After these things he appeared to them in another form while they were walking in the countryside, ¹³ but after going away they reported this to the rest, and they did not believe them. ¹⁴ Afterwards they were reclining at a table and he appeared to the eleven and he rebuked their unbelief and their stubborn heart because they had not believed the ones who had seen him after he had risen. ^{14ff} And they excused themselves, saying, “This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the

*spirits [or, does not allow what lies under the unclean spirits to understand the truth and power of God]. Therefore reveal your righteousness now" – thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, "The term of years of Satan's power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was handed over to death, that they may return to the truth and sin no more, in order that they may inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of righteousness that is in heaven."*⁴ 15 Then he said to them, "Go into all the world preach the gospel to all of creation. 16 The one after believing and after being immersed will be saved, but the one who does not believe will be condemned. 17 But these signs will follow those who believe, in my name they will cast out demons, they will speak new languages, 18 they will pick up serpents [with their hands] and will drink deadly poison but they will not be harmed, they will lay hands on the sick and they will become well. 19 So then Lord Jesus after he spoke to them was taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God. 20 Then after going out they preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and the word being confirmed through the accompanying signs.

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- Also supported by Jerome, *Pelag* 2.15.
- This ending is not original, the work of a later Christian scribe.

Long Ending (16:9–20)

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- This ending, along with the ending at 16:8 are the most plausible endings to Mark's Gospel.

⁴ Metzger, *TCGNT*, 104.

⁵ Metzger, *TCGNT*, 104.

The Arguments

External Evidence

For the Longer Ending (16:9–20)

- Appears in A C D E H K X W Δ Θ P Ψ 099 0112 f¹³ 28 33.
- Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 45 (ca. 150s CE) wrote ἐξελθόντες πανταχοῦ ἐκήρυξαν (“they went out and preached everywhere”) which appears to quote 16:20 ἐξελθόντες ἐκήρυξαν πανταχοῦ.⁶
- Irenaeus in *Haer.* 3.10.5 (ca. 180s) quotes Mark 16:19 word-for-word.
- Tatian's *Diatessaron* 55.8–9 (ca. 170s) quotes Mark 16:16–18.

Against the Longer Ending (16:8)

- Our oldest Greek Uncial MSS do not contain these verses
 - Codex Sinaiticus Ⲭ (3/4th c. CE). Possibly reaches back into the early second century.⁷
 - Codex Vaticanus B (4th c. CE)
- Absent from Old Latin Bobiensis, Sinaiticus Syrian, about 100 Armenian MSS and two very old Georgian MSS (AD 897 and 913).
- Clement of Alexandria and Origen do not mention this variant. Eusebius and Jerome said most MSS they know do not contain this.
- Eusebius writing in the 4th c. CE in *ad Marinum* mentions that some people rejected Mark 16:9–20.⁸
- There is no evidence in the manuscripts of a lost page.⁹ Why would a scroll be cut off at such a convenient place?¹⁰

Internal Evidence

For the Longer Ending (16:9–20)

Ending at 16:8 (γὰρ) is Abrupt, Incomplete, and Anticlimactic

- Chief objection to the Shorter Ending (16:8) is that it does not make sense for the Gospel to end so suddenly.¹¹
- Ending is “fearful” and negative instead of uplifting and focusing on Jesus.
- First-century writers rarely leave books incomplete without conclusions.
- A gospel that begins so strongly doesn't seem to end here.

⁶ Carl B. Bridges, “The Canonical Status of the Longer Ending of Mark,” *SCJ* 9 (2006): 247–58.

⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, “Mark 16:8 as the Conclusion to the Second Gospel,” in *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark*, ed. David Alan Black (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2008), 1–39.

⁸ James A. Kelhoffer, “The Witness of Eusebius' *ad Marinum* and Other Christian Writings to Text-Critical Debates Concerning the Original Conclusion to Mark's Gospel,” *ZNW* 1-2 92 (2001): 78–112.

⁹ Thomas, “Reconsideration of the Ending of Mark,” 415.

¹⁰ Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27A (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 1091

¹¹ Philip Oakeshott, “The Wrong Conclusion: Mark 16.1–8 and Literary Theory,” *Theology* 63 (2010): 105–13

Jesus Never Appears After the Empty Tomb

- Longer ending is necessary to have the resurrection of Jesus.¹²
- Jesus's prophecy of going to Galilee is unfulfilled.
- If ends at 16:8, we have no account of the resurrection in the earliest Gospel.

Multiple Endings Demands an Ending!

- Because there are so many endings and these date to early on in the Christian era: this means there was an ending other than 16:8.
- Simply because there are issues does not mean 16:9–20 is wrong.

Style is Old and Authentic

- While the style may be different, it is still very old.¹³
- One can take sections of Mark, analyze style and vocabulary, and find similar results that are “non Markan.”

Against the Longer Ending (16:9–20)

Mark Could Have Plausibly Ended With the Word Γάρ

The ending of Mark ends with the simple phrase “for they were afraid” which comprises a verb and postpositive conjunction: ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ (*ephobounto gar*). Scholars often argue that the word γάρ (“for”) could not possibly end a Gospel. It's allegedly too abrupt

- Mark is frequently random and jarring with little explanation (14:51–52).
- Other books ended similarly.¹⁴
- Jonah, a narrative similar to a Gospel, ends abruptly and leaves the readers hanging.¹⁵

A Final Γάρ and “ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ”

- Mark 11:18 has ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ but not at the end of a sentence or paragraph.
- Gen 18:15 (LXX) ends a sentence with ἐφοβήθη γάρ (“for she was afraid”).¹⁶ Also see Gen 45:3 ἐπαράχθησαν γάρ; and Isa 29:11 ἐσφράγισται γάρ.
- So “if a sentence can end with γάρ, a book can end with such a sentence.”¹⁷
- A speech by Plato (*Protagoras* 328d) ends with the phrase νεοί γάρ (“for they are young.”). Regarding this Socrates wrote:

¹² Wallace, “Mark 16,” 14.

¹³ Thomas, “Reconsideration of the Ending of Mark,” 412.

¹⁴ Strauss, *Mark*, 722 n. 29.

¹⁵ Jonah, a narrative similar to a Gospel, ends abruptly and leaves the readers hanging. Interestingly, Josephus was dissatisfied with this ending and added to it (*Ant.* 9.208).

¹⁶ Morton S. Enslin, “ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ, Mark 16:8,” *JBL* 46 (1927): 62–68.

¹⁷ Pieter W. van der Horst, “Can a Book End With ΓΑΡ? A Note on Mark XVI.8,” *JTS* 23 (1972): 121–24

Having given a virtuoso performance in these terms and at this length, Protagoras stopped speaking. As for me, I was for a long time entranced: I still kept on looking at him, expecting that he would say something, and yearning to hear it. But when I appreciated that he really had stopped, I somehow managed to pull myself together, and looked at Hippocrates and said...¹⁸

- A set of fictional dialogues by Lucian (ca. 120–180 CE) ends with the phrase ὑπισχνεῖτο γάρ “for that is what he promises” (*Dial. meretr.*, 6.4).¹⁹
- Iverson concludes that “final γάρ constructions can and do occur in narrative genres” (like Mark), but they are sparse.²⁰

The Resurrection Did Happen

- Although the story does not have Jesus appearing to Galilee and their tests of faith, the messenger of God does affirm that Jesus rose.
- The promise of seeing Jesus in Galilee will be fulfilled.²¹

Multiple Endings Opens Doubts about Their Authenticity

- Very, very few places in the NT have this many problems textually.
 - Other exception: John 7:53–8:11 “pericope adulterae”
 - Some of Paul’s letters are augmented with comments like “Amen” or “this was written by Paul while he was in Nicopolis...” (Titus).
- It makes *more* sense why someone would try to *fix* the Short Ending by adding material than for someone to *cut off* the ending intentionally.²²
 - Scribes more often add, fix, and correct than subtract.²³
 - People add to documents more than they “delete pages.”
- Presence of the Intermediate Ending (section 21.2) shows that early Christians had concerns about the longer ending.²⁴
- Therefore, if 16:9–20 were the original, why would it need correcting later?

¹⁸ Nicholas Denyer, “Mark 16 and Plato, *Protagoras* 328d,” *TynBul* 57 (2006): 149–50.

¹⁹ Denyer, “Mark 16 and Plato, *Protagoras* 328d,” 150.

²⁰ Kelly R. Iverson, “A Further Word on the Final Γάρ (Mark 16:8),” *CBQ* 68 (2006): 79–94.

²¹ Strauss, *Mark*, 722.

²² Robert H. Stein, “The Ending of Mark,” *BBR* 18 (2008): 79–98. Read online: https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/bbr18a04_stein.pdf

²³ Rodney J. Decker, *Mark 9–16: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, ed. Martin M. Culy, BHGNT (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 282.

²⁴ Metzger, *TCGNT*, 105.

Style of 16:9–20 Is Non-Markan

Mark 16:9–20 is just *different* in Greek. There are different words, phrases, that reflect a later style.²⁵

- πρώτη σαββάτου “first (day) of the week” (v. 9) is highly unusual for Mark and the NT because on 16:1 Mark says μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων (cf. Matt 29:1; John 20:19; 1 Cor 16:2).²⁶
- ἐφάνη “he appeared” (v. 9) is only used here in reference to resurrection appearances.
- πορεύομαι “to go” (vv. 10, 12, 13) while common in Matt, Luke-Acts, John, it is not used anywhere else in Mark.²⁷
- θεάομαι “to see” (vv. 11, 14) is used nowhere in Mark.
- ἀπιστέω “unbelief” (vv. 11, 16) is used nowhere in Mark.
- μετὰ ταῦτα “after these things” (v. 12) is found in Luke and John but not Mark.
- μορφή “form” (v. 12) is found nowhere else in the Gospels.
- ὕστερον “afterwards” (v. 14) is not used in Mark (cf. Mark 12:6 and Matt 21:37).
- σημεῖα “signs” (v. 17) is *very common* in John but not how Mark chooses to refer to miracles.
- κύριος Ἰησοῦς “Lord Jesus” (v. 19) is not used in Mark as a title for Jesus.

Events in 16:9–20 Seem to Be Composed from Gospels & Acts

- 16:9 *Rising on the first day of the week* (Matt 28:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1)²⁸
- 16:9 *Appearance to Mary Magdalene* (John 20:11–18)
 - 16:9 *Mary's Healing from Demons* (Luke 8:2)
- 16:10 *Women Report to Others* (Luke 24:10; John 20:18)
- 16:11 *No One Believes the Women* (Luke 24:11)
- 16:12–13 *Summary of Road to Emmaus Story* (Luke 24:13–35)
- 16:12 *Two Disciples Report to Others* (Luke 24:33–35)
- 16:14 *Jesus appears to the Eleven* (Luke 24:36–49; John 20:19–23)²⁹
- 16:14 *Criticism for Unbelief* (cf. Luke 24:36–43)

²⁵ Also see Henderson, “Discipleship After the Resurrection,” 109. List from J. K. Elliott, “The Text and Language of the Endings to Mark's Gospel,” *TZ* 27 (1971): J. K. Elliott.

²⁶ Decker, *Mark 9–16*, 291. Also see important article: Travis B. Williams, “Bringing Method to the Madness: Examining the Style of the Longer Ending of Mark,” *BRR* 20 (2010): 397–418.

²⁷ Decker argues this is one of the more significant usages: Decker, *Mark 9–16*, 287.

²⁸ Canonically, this shows whoever composed this ending (ca. 2nd c.) was well aware of the Gospels and Acts and perhaps Hebrews as well. See Stanley E. Porter, *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Lee Martin McDonald, ASBT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 101–2.

²⁹ France, *Gospel of Mark*, 686.

- Jesus's Final Commission
 - 16:15 *Go into all the world* (Matt 28:19; Luke 24:47)
 - 16:16 *Belief, baptism, condemnation* (Matt 28:19; John 3:18, 36)
 - 16:17 *Casting out demons, speaking in tongues* (Luke 10:17–18; Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6; cf. Heb 2:4.)³⁰
 - 16:18 *Picking up serpents* (Acts 28:3–5; cf. Luke 10:19)
 - 16:18 *Laying hands on the sick* (Acts 9:17; 28:8)
- 16:19 *Jesus's Ascension* (Luke 24:50–51; Acts 1:2, 9)
- 16:19 *Seated at the Right Hand of God* (Mark 10:32–40; Matt 20:20–23; cf. Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; and Heb 8:1; 12:2³¹).
- 16:20 *Disciples Sent Out* (Luke 9:1–2; 10:1, 17; Acts Summary).³²

Events in 16:9–20 Parallel 16:1

- 16:9 “Now when he rose early on the first day of the week” actually chronologically places itself alongside 16:1–2; Matt 28:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1.³³
- So 16:9–20 is not a continuation of 16:8 but a whole other ending to the Gospel by itself.

Story is Slightly Incoherent

- Mary is introduced as a new character, even though she was already present.
 - In Luke, Mary is introduced in 8:2 regarding the “demons that went out.”
 - Luke does not make this comment about Mary after the resurrection.
- The angel predicts seeing Jesus in Galilee, but vv. 9–20 does not have the disciples in Galilee but *around Jerusalem*.³⁴
- Jesus delivers the Great Commission on a mountain in Galilee (Matt 28:16) but Mark says nothing about this so it appears Jesus is still at the table. He even seems to resurrect from the table.
- Speaking in tongues and snakes, etc is strange to Mark but common in Acts.

For the Shorter Ending (16:8)

1. Ending fits well with the mystery and awe about Jesus in Mark's Gospel.³⁵
 - “Mark is implicitly asking his readers, ‘How will *you* respond to the announcement of the resurrection.’”³⁶

³⁰ D. C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 140.

³¹ France, *Gospel of Mark*, 686–87.

³² Evans, *Mark* 8, 546.

³³ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection and the Son of God*, vol. 3 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 618.

³⁴ Edgar J. Goodspeed, “The Original Conclusion of the Gospel of Mark,” *AJT* 9 (1905): 484–90.

³⁵ Strauss, 723.

³⁶ Strauss citing Morna D. Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, ed. Henry Chadwick, BNTC (New York: Continuum, 1991), 392; and Garland, *Mark*, 616.

- Reading this aloud would provoke reflection from the audience.³⁷
- 2. Abandonment by disciples is common in Mark's Gospel.
- 3. If the reader already knows about the resurrection stories, no need to repeat them.³⁸
- 4. There are other examples where Mark makes a narrative comment, ends abruptly, and "raises as many questions as it answers" (6:45–52; 14:1–2).³⁹
- 5. Mark occasionally ends stories with the emotions of characters for dramatic effect (6:45–52; 9:30–32; 12:13–17).⁴⁰
- 6. Following a miracle, people were typically fearfully amazed (1:27; 2:12; 5:15, 42; 7:37) and they didn't always do what they were asked.⁴¹
- 7. If Mark only intended to cover Jesus's ministry, this explains why he may exclude both the birth narrative and resurrection appearances.⁴²

Is Fear a Positive or Negative Response?

- The women seem to disobey the command given to them and do not tell the disciples immediately.⁴³
 - Although initially in Mark, people were not to speak of Jesus (1:44).
 - But now is the time that the "secret can be let out."⁴⁴
- Why is it that, in Mark, they flee and remain silent?
 - Their presence at the tomb testifies to the proof of Jesus's resurrection.⁴⁵
 - "There is no doubt that Mark believed that Jesus really had been raised bodily from the dead."⁴⁶
- Disciples usually are *afraid* when miracles happen (4:40–41).
 - The woman with the hemorrhage initially is afraid but later believes (5:33–34).
 - Peter is afraid and does not understand when Jesus transfigures (9:6).
 - Fear when approaching Jerusalem (10:32).
 - Sometimes fear leads to rejection of Jesus (11:18, 32; 12:12).
 - In most cases, fear without action is a negative response to Jesus.

³⁷ This type of argument is very commonplace among the literary criticism crowd including: David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 143; Bridget Gilfillan Upton, *Hearing Mark's Endings: Listening to Ancient Popular Texts through Speech Act Theory*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Ellen van Wolde, BIS 79 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 154.

³⁸ Strauss, 723.

³⁹ Thomas E. Boomershine and Gilbert L. Bartholomew, "The Narrative Technique of Mark 16:8," *JBL* 100 (1981): 213–23.

⁴⁰ Boomershine and Bartholomew, "Narrative Technique of Mark 16," 218.

⁴¹ Joel F. Williams, "Literary Approaches to the End of Mark's Gospel," *JETS* 49 (1999): 21–35.

⁴² Matthijs J. de Jong, "Mark 16.8 as a Satisfying Ending to the Gospel," in *Jesus, Paul, and early Christianity*, ed. Rieuwerd Buitenwerf, Harm W. Hollander, and Johannes Tromp, NovTSup 130–49 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 123–.

⁴³ Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Promise and the Failure: Mark 16:7, 8," *JBL* 108 (1989): 283–300.

⁴⁴ Lincoln, "Promise and the Failure," 290.

⁴⁵ Thus, the suggestion of Jong, "Mark 16.8 as a Satisfying Ending to the Gospel," 129.

⁴⁶ Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, 620.

- What if *fear, awe, and amazement* is actually the right response to the resurrection?⁴⁷ Their silence is not, however, totally appropriate.⁴⁸
- However, “the silence of the women was overcome by Jesus’s word of promise. The word was fulfilled.”⁴⁹

Implications of the Shorter Ending

What if Mark Ends at 16:8?

1. This is how Mark finished his Gospel.
2. Mark did not intend to end it here but:⁵⁰
 - Mark died before he finished.⁵¹
 - Original ending was possibly damaged early and Christians tried to fix it later.⁵²
 - If Mark intended an ending beyond 16:8, perhaps the Roman persecutions had something to do with it: killing Mark or it was destroyed.⁵³
 - Perhaps 16:9–20 is “not too far, in outline, from what originally stood there, though in quite different language and with emphases for which Mark himself has not prepared us.”⁵⁴

Practical Implications of Ending at Mark 16:8

1. Early Christian scribes who copied the Gospel of Mark were “deeply dissatisfied with 16:8 as the final ending of Mark” and added 16:9–20 or one of the other endings to it.⁵⁵
 - They effectively tied material in the end to reflect the main body of Mark’s Gospel account.⁵⁶
 - “If the last part of the manuscript went missing, later writers filled it out. On the other hand, if Mark deliberately ended his work at 16:8, later writers who misunderstood what he was doing filled it out, and the result is the same.”⁵⁷

⁴⁷ Thomas E. Boomershine, “Mark 16:8 and the Apostolic Commission,” *JBL* 100 (1981): 225–39.

⁴⁸ Boomershine, “Mark 16,” 229.

⁴⁹ Lincoln, “Promise and the Failure,” 292.

⁵⁰ Some of those who follow this are: James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, ed. D. A. Carson, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 500–4; Evans, *Mark* 8, 538–40; France, *Gospel of Mark*, 20, 670–84; Gundry, *Mark*, 1009–21; Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 325; Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 415–18. Thanks to exhaustive list in Aída Besançon Spencer, “The Denial of the Good News and the Ending of Mark,” *BTB* 17 (2007): 269–83.

⁵¹ Wilfred Lawrence Knox, “The Ending of St. Mark’s Gospel,” *HTR* 35 (1942): 13–23.

⁵² Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins, Treating of the Manuscript Tradition, Sources, Authorship, & Dates* (London: Macmillan, 1924), 338. Goodspeed makes the, otherwise unfollowed suggestion, that because Matthew, who followed Mark closely, contains post-resurrection material that is absent from Mark — it seems possible that this material actually *did originate* from Mark before it was lost: Goodspeed, “Original Conclusion of the Gospel of Mark,” 489.

⁵³ See comments by Spencer, “Denial of the Good News and the Ending of Mark,” 269 n. 1. This is also the position of Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, 623 and J. K. Elliott, “The Last Twelve Verse of Mark: Original or Not,” in *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark*, ed. David Alan Black (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2008), 80–102.

⁵⁴ Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, 624.

⁵⁵ Stein, “Ending of Mark,” 91.

⁵⁶ Henderson, “Discipleship After the Resurrection,” 111. Also see Wallace, “Mark 16,” 26.

⁵⁷ Bridges, “Canonical Status of the Longer Ending of Mark,” 250.

- Jack Lewis said, "If Mark contained the long ending from the beginning, it is difficult to see why a scribe omitted these verses as the manuscripts show that some did. On the other hand, if the copy ended abruptly at verse 8, it is easy to see that there was felt need for supplementation."
- 2. Nothing significant is lost that is not in the other Gospels.⁵⁸
- 3. The Resurrection *still happened*⁵⁹
- 4. Perhaps the ending was left "suspenseful" on purpose.
 - Remember Mark was *read aloud*, perhaps this was a kind of invitation.
 - "There is hope [of restoration] for those who fail, but the path is never easy and the dangers are real."⁶⁰
 - Even when the disciples fail, God does not fail and all is not lost.⁶¹
 - "Only the readers are left to complete the story."⁶²
 - This is a "dramatic inconclusion."⁶³

What about Mark 16:16 and Baptism?

If we say Mark 16:9–20 *was not* originally part of Mark's Gospel, this would naturally *exclude an important passage for the defense of the necessity of baptism*.

- The matter with this issue is that, as members of a church that maintains baptism as essential to salvation, we are uncomfortable with excluding verses which traditionally have been key to our argument.
 - Helton writes, "Within the debating tradition of the twentieth-century Churches of Christ it became necessary for the debaters to "prove" the authenticity of Mark 16:9–20 in order to use verses 15 and 16 to demonstrate the essentiality of baptism."⁶⁴
 - He continues, "In this context of debate, the text-critical issues became secondary to the polemical concern to prove the essentiality of baptism. Consequently the debaters selectively sorted and misrepresented the data, even to the point of fabricating the evidence."
- In historical debates, the problem with the "CoC argument" has been that we have not focused on the whole context of the evidence but whether 16:16 was valid. This is the case in debates by N. B. Hardeman and Thomas B. Warren.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ For this reason, some maintain both endings are canonical. See Camille Focant, "La canonicité de la finale longue (Mc 16,9-20). Vers la reconnaissance d'un double texte canonique?" in *Biblical Canons*, ed. Jean-Marie Auwers and Henk Jan de Jonge, BETL 163 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 587–97.

⁵⁹ Jong, "Mark 16.8 as a Satisfying Ending to the Gospel," 135.

⁶⁰ Williams, "Literary Approaches to the End of Mark's Gospel," 35. "Fallible followers" explored some in Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Disciples/Crowds/Whoever: Markan Characters and Readers," *NovT* 28 (1986): 104–30.

⁶¹ Lincoln, "Promise and the Failure," 297.

⁶² Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 143.

⁶³ J. David Hester, "Dramatic Inconclusion: Irony and the Narrative Rhetoric of the Ending of Mark," *JSNT* 57 (1995): 61–86.

⁶⁴ Helton, "Churches of Christ and Mark 16," 40–41.

⁶⁵ Helton, "Churches of Christ and Mark 16," 42–44. Hardeman-Bogard Debate and Warren-Ballard Debate. Most public writings of this issue in the churches of Christ has largely ignored textual criticism save recent efforts of Dave Miller, "Is Mark 16:9-20 Inspired?" *Reason & Revelation* 25 (2005): 89–95 and Dr. Bruce Terry of OVU. <http://bible.ovu.edu/terry/>

What if Mark 16:16 is Not Original?

- It *does* show that the church, historically early in the second century, understood baptism as necessary to salvation.⁶⁶
 - McGarvey, “The fragment was not originally part of Mark’s Gospel but... it is an authentic piece of history appended by a [more recent] writer.”⁶⁷
- For the church, baptism and faith are closely entwined.
- The church understood the Great Commission from Matt 28 to mean this, essentially Mark 16:16 is like a commentary on Matt 28:19.
- Excluding Mark 16:16 does not undermine the necessity of baptism (Acts 2:38; Rom 6:1ff).

What About Mark 16:9–20?

1. It was a very early ending to Mark’s Gospel, possibly original or preserving the general outline of the original ending.
2. It’s not entirely clear whether this was the real ending or not.⁶⁸
3. Over time, because Christians did not see it as contradicting the other Gospels, it became accepted as Scripture.⁶⁹
4. Mark 16:9–20 shows that the church accepted multiple endings to Mark’s Gospel, but the endings do not negatively impact our acceptance of the Gospel.
5. If we use Mark 16:16, this is not heretical. We need to be aware of the issues.

⁶⁶ Contra Lars Hartman, “Mark 16.9–20,” in *‘Into the Name of the Lord Jesus’*, SNTW (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 161–62.

⁶⁷ J. W. McGarvey, “An Oft Repeated Question,” *Christian Standard* 32 (1896): 1239.

⁶⁸ The position of Jack P. Lewis, “The Ending of Mark,” in *Lifestyle of Jesus According to the Gospel of Mark* (Searcy, AR: Harding University, 1988), 597–603.

⁶⁹ Kelhoffer, “Witness of Eusebius’ *ad Marinum* and Other Christian Writings to Text-Critical Debates Concerning the Original Conclusion to Mark’s Gospel,” 81.

Mark in Retrospect and Christian Tradition

Theology of Mark

- Christology (theology of Christ) is central to Mark's purpose (cf. Mark 1:1).
- The two "rips" (heaven and the temple curtain) frame the identity of Jesus.¹
 1. God announces "my son" (1:11).
 2. Centurion confesses (15:39).
- Ultimately the question remains: "Who is Jesus?"
 - Characters throughout seek to answer this (1:27; 2:7; 4:41; 6:3)
 - Many people mistake Jesus for someone else:
 - * John the Baptist (6:16; 8:28)
 - * Elijah (8:28)
 - * A Prophet (8:29)
 - The climactic center of the Gospel is Peter's confession (8:29).

Mark's Purpose Regarding Jesus.

- Mark's purpose, then, is to show that Jesus indeed is the Messiah predicted in Scripture.
- But Jesus is not the Messiah we might come to expect: a kingly Messiah who establishes the throne of David upon Jerusalem.²
 - While Matthew and Luke affirm that Jesus is a Davidic Messiah, Mark does not focus on this theme.
 - Only occasionally is he associated with David
 - * "Son of David" by the blind beggar Bartimaeus (10:47–48).
 - * "Blessed is the coming kingdom of... David" (11:10)

¹ Strauss, 733.

² cf. Strauss, 733–34.

- * Mark's citation of Zech 9:9 "lowly king on a donkey."
- * Jesus himself asserts that he is so much more than this (cf. Mark 12:35–47).
- Jesus must die to save the people from spiritual ailments not physical deliverance from Roman oppression.
- Jesus indeed is portrayed as very human in Mark. He's relatable but he also does great things that exceed human understanding. These miracles and acts only come from God.
- Perhaps the best description of Jesus is not "Messiah" but "Son of God" which expresses an intimate relationship between Jesus and the Father.³
 - God himself calls Jesus "my beloved Son" (1:11; 9:7).
 - Jesus refers to himself in this way (12:6).
 - Demons acknowledge this as well (3:11; 5:7).

Jesus's Message and Mission

1. *Proclaiming and Inaugurating the Kingdom of God* — the central message is undoubtedly proclaiming and initiating God's kingdom (Mark 1:15) as a fulfillment of Scripture and prophecy.
 - It's not that Jesus came to set up a physical, worldly kingdom, but a spiritual "rule" or "reign" of God.⁴
 - OT writings support God's eternal, universal reign (Exod 15:18).
 - Israel *craved* the day when God would return to rule over them once more. Although this time, it's in an unexpected way.
 - To enter the kingdom one must receive it like a child (10:15). It is a hidden secret that one must approach with curiosity, innocence, and submission.
 - The "reign of God" began with Jesus conquering Satan's hold over the world (demons, 3:27) and continues through the "last days" of the church. The reign will "not yet" be completed until he returns on That Day.
 - This kingdom will restore Israel into a new spiritual kingdom.⁵
 - Israel's leaders will no longer be recognized. God replaces them with the faithful disciples of Christ.
 - Jesus does not explain everything about this kingdom, more must be revealed in the days of the early church.
2. *Suffering as a Ransom of Sins* — as soon as Peter identifies Jesus as the Christ, he explains he *must* suffer for the sins of the world.⁶
 - Jesus's role is not conquest, but to serve, suffer, and be a ransom (10:45).
 - One will suffer for the many (Isa 52:13–53:12).
 - Responding to Jesus with child-like faith will result in forgiveness of sins.⁷

³ Strauss, 736.

⁴ Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 80.

⁵ Strauss, 740.

⁶ Strauss, 741–42.

⁷ Strauss, 743.

Discipleship in Mark: Responding to Jesus's Call

- Like the Gospel of John, Mark is especially focused on depicting the matter of discipleship and faith responses to Jesus.
- Jesus immediately calls disciples after beginning his preaching.
- Following Jesus means being willing to leave possessions (1:18), family (1:20), and our occupation (2:14).⁸
- Jesus creates a *new family* of the church where all that we have and all that we are becomes a part of something larger for the benefit of others.
- God's blessing comes through persistent faith in Him, a lack of faith results in loss.⁹
- We have both positive and negative models of discipleship:

Positive Model of Discipleship

1. Disciples respond to His call and leave their jobs and families.
2. Disciples are given the secret for following and trusting in Jesus.

Negative Model of Discipleship

1. Lack of faith after miracles (4:40).
2. Hearts are hardened (6:52).
3. Ignorance (8:17–18).
4. Rebuking and Opposing Jesus (8:31ff)
5. Pride (9:30–37).
6. Abandonment at Death.

Jesus Himself is the Positive Disciple

1. Can heal others because of faith (9:14–28).
2. Submits to the Father's will (14:36).
3. Testifies for God before rulers in the face of death (14:72).
4. He denies himself and took up His cross (8:34).

⁸ Strauss, 743.

⁹ Strauss, 744.

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