

Using Mark In Evangelism

A study guide by Joshua Creel

*“And he said to them, “Go into all the world and
proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.”
(Mark 16:15, ESV)*

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Lesson 1: The Good News About Jesus (1.1-2.12)

I always appreciate when someone gets right to the point and that's exactly what Mark did at the beginning of his gospel account: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (Mark 1:1, ESV) Most of us know that the term "gospel" can be literally translated as "good news", but often we narrow the gospel down to the message about how we can be forgiven of our sins. Mark wants us to understand that while that is a part of the gospel, the good news is everything about Jesus Christ. As the New Living Translation puts it, "This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God." (Mark 1:1, NLT)

This class is about the gospel. However, the aim isn't simply to increase our knowledge of Jesus, but for us to understand the gospel so that we can share the good news with others. Significantly, Mark's gospel concludes with Jesus' call for His disciples to do this very thing: "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation." (Mark 16:15, ESV) The hope is that this class prepares you to use Mark's account of the gospel to share the good news of Jesus with someone else.

A quick note about the format of the lessons. I find the best way of sharing the gospel with someone is not with the use of handouts or prepared lessons, but to sit down with open Bibles and read the gospel. However, we must be prepared to answer any questions that come up from the text and be ready to point out important principles. The first part of each lesson will contain explanatory notes from the text. Many of these don't need to be covered during a Bible study, but they may help in answering any questions. The second part of each lesson will point out important principles you can share to help someone understand the good news about Jesus.

Your Notes

Notes from the text:

- » 1.1: note how Mark almost bookends his gospel with Jesus being declared the "Son of God" see Mark 15.39. Psalm 2 shows the significance of the title for the Lord promised that His Son would rule.
- » 1.3: the quotation from Isaiah 40.3 is significant because it is a message of hope following disaster (see Isaiah 39).
- » 1.4: Note that this was expected of Gentile converts to Judaism, but John was saying that Jews must submit to baptism as well. It would be a shocking message. Baptism prepared the people for the com-

ing of Jesus by emphasizing their NEED. They were sinners, they needed forgiveness and they needed a new Spirit.

- » 1.6: John was clothed like Elijah (see 2Kings 1.8).
- » 1.8: In the Old Testament the Lord promised that complete restoration would come when He poured out His Spirit (see Ezekiel 36.25-27; Isaiah 44.3). Only Jesus could provide the Spirit.
- » 1.10: Isaiah foretold that the chosen one of God would receive His Spirit (Isaiah 42.1). Note how John said this confirmed that Jesus is the Son of God (John 1.31-34).
- » 1.11: confirmation of vs. 1; Jesus is the Son of God.
- » 1.12: Note how the Spirit driving Jesus into the wilderness shows that this was God's will. Temptation would prepare Jesus for His role as high priest (see Hebrews 2.17-18; 4.14-16).
- » 1.15: "at hand" can also be translated as "near" (NIV). Jesus' teaching and signs showed that the Kingdom was near/close.
- » 1.17-18: while they would not have been considered wealthy, fishermen would not have been poor (note they had hired servants, vs. 20). What they left to follow Jesus was not insignificant.
- » 1.22: "Most teachers would try to expound the law (normally from their Scripture reading) by explaining the proper way to translate and apply it or by appealing to their traditions. More advanced teachers would also appeal to earlier traditions; this was especially true for those who belonged to the Pharisaic movement. Jesus' teaching went beyond this kind of exposition." (IVP Bible Background Commentary)
- » 1.27: Jewish exorcists "had two main methods of expelling demons: (1) revolting or scaring the demon out (e.g., by putting a smelly root up the possessed person's nose in the hope that the demon would not be able to stand it); (2) using magical formulas or invoking the name of a higher spirit to get rid of the lower one. The people are thus amazed that Jesus can be effective by simply ordering the demons to leave." (IVP Bible Background Commentary)
- » 1.40:
 - Note that leper requested to be cleansed, not

healed. Being unclean meant separation from the community (Leviticus 13.45-46)··· and from God (cf. Numbers 19.20)?

- Note that the leper questioned if the Lord is willing. His concern could have stemmed from the popular belief that leprosy was a punishment from God for sin. The Old Testament shows that this was sometimes the case: Miriam (Numbers 12); Gehazi (2Kings 5); Uzziah (2Chronicles 26.19-21). Also, sin offerings were required once a leper was healed (see Leviticus 14.10-13).
- » 1.44: “The priests of Israel differed from those of other religions, who purportedly knew curative secrets, in that they had no power and could offer no ritual to heal disease. Israel believed that healing was entirely in the hands of God. Priests, therefore, simply declared what was clean and unclean (13:59; 14:57). That is why Leviticus 13-14 goes into such detail describing the cases so that the priest could identify the presence or absence of particular physical signs, such as skin color change, hair color, infiltration, extension, or ulceration of the skin.” (NIV Application Commentary). The point: while Levitical priests could declare someone to be clean, Jesus could actually cleanse!
- » 2.4: “Houses often had an outside staircase, so they could reach the roof unimpeded. The roof of single-story homes was sturdy enough for walking on but was normally made of branches and rushes laid over the roof’s beams and covered with dried mud; thus one could dig through it, though it would make a mess and presumably leave the diggers liable to cover subsequent repairs.” (IVP Bible Background Commentary)
- » 2.5: remember that sickness and death were the result of sin (Genesis 3). Significantly, before Jesus heals this man He first forgave him of his sins.
- » 2.7: all sin is against God, but prophets of the Lord had the ability to proclaim that the God had forgiven sins (see 2Samuel 12.13). However, the scribes correctly noted that Jesus was claiming the authority to forgive sins (vs. 10).
- » 2.12: note that while the scribes accused Jesus of

blasphemy (vs. 7), the effect of the miracle was that God was glorified.

Using the text in evangelism:

1. The gospel of the Kingdom (1.14-15). When Jesus began proclaiming the gospel, the good news, the focus of His message was not on personal salvation and redemption. No, His message centered on the fact that “the kingdom of God is at hand”. This was not a foretelling of the church’s establishment a few years down the road, but rather the announcement that in Jesus the true rule of God was now present among mankind. This is an emphasis throughout the chapter:
 - The Son of God would rule over the nations (Psalm 2) and since God declared that Jesus is His Son (Mark 1.11), then He would rule.
 - Note how in Mark 1.21-28 the authority of Jesus takes center stage. Not only did Jesus’ teaching bear the distinct authority of God, but by His command demons were cast out. The Kingdom of God truly is good news because the King has proven Himself to be mightier than His adversaries.
 - Jesus healing the sick and curing diseases (vss. 29-34) is also significant. Recall that sickness and disease originated when man sinned (Genesis 3.16-19), but in the Kingdom the curse is reversed!
 - Finally, Jesus’ statement in vs. 38 that He wanted to preach in other towns “for that is why I came out” speaks to the reach of the Kingdom: it was meant to expand!
2. Jesus is both willing and able to forgive our sins (1.40-2.12). Given that we all sin (Romans 3.23), we all need a Savior who is not only willing to forgive us, but has the power/authority to do so. Jesus cleansing the leper and healing the paralytic shows that He is such a Savior!
 - Note that Jesus’ interaction with the paralyzed man helps us understand what truly ails us. Upon viewing a paralyzed person, most would want to restore their ability to walk. Jesus’ main concern

was for the man's soul; he needed the forgiveness of his sins (2.5).

3. Faith in Jesus is the key (2.5). The blessings provided by Jesus (both forgiveness of sins and physical healing) were preceded by faith. Their faith could be seen by their actions (vss. 2-4) a crucial point in the gospel (see Mark 16.16).

Lesson 2: Those Who Follow & Those Who Don't (2.13-3.35)



In our first lesson we saw how Jesus not only preached that “the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1.15), but proved it. His authority was seen in both His teaching (Mark 1.22) and His powerful works (Mark 1.27,32-34). Truly, He is the “Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1.1). So, why would anyone choose to not follow Him? Our focus in this lesson is to note what differentiates those who choose to follow Jesus, and those who don't.

Notes from the text:

- » 2.14: tax collectors were generally despised for two reasons. First, they were renowned for both dishonesty and extortion. Second, they were willingly in league with the Romans. Levi (Matthew, see Matthew 9.9) would have been particularly hated because his name likely means he was from the priestly tribe of Levi.
- » 2.16: “A later rabbinic tradition attributes to the wise this extreme saying, ‘Let not a man associate with sinners even to bring them near to the Torah.’” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
- » 2.18: the Law required fasting on only one day, the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16.29,31). However, individuals would sometimes choose to fast as they mourned (1Samuel 31.13), as they petitioned God (Ezra 8.21), or as part of repentance (Nehemiah 9.1-3). However, the Pharisees had turned fasting into an outward sign of piety and habitually fasted twice each week.
- » 2.19: wedding feasts would typically last 7 days and fasting would be considered highly inappropriate.
- » 2.20: “taken away” is a forcible action, an allusion to Jesus' crucifixion.
- » 2.21-22: a new wineskin could expand as the new wine fermented. An old wineskin, which had already expanded, would burst in the fermentation process. Jesus' point is that His gospel is not compatible with

Your Notes

the old ways of the Pharisees.

- » 2.24: the Pharisees had made 39 categories of work, two of which were reaping and threshing. Those were the violations they were accusing Jesus' disciples of committing.
- » 2.25-26: see 1Samuel 21.1-6. The bread was to be eaten by only the priests (Leviticus 24.5-9), but the Law did not supersede the needs of God's chosen one.
- » 2.27-28: "God did not create the Sabbath for humans to obey but for human well-being. One can never interpret the law correctly unless one refers back to God's intention behind the law. God intended the Sabbath as a gracious gift to release human beings from the necessity of endless toil. Jesus emphasizes that David 'had need' and 'was hungry' and that human need has priority over regulations. The incident reveals that something new has broken in, and Jesus rules over the rules. Disciples need not concern themselves about appearing to be irreligious when they are carrying out the greater task of doing God's will. There will be plenty of other Sabbaths to keep holy." (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
- » 3.1: some may have concluded that the man was being punished for sin (1Kings 13.4-6).
- » 3.2: the rabbis had concluded that efforts to heal were not to take place on the Sabbath unless a life was at stake. The man's life was not on the line, so they would count this as a Sabbath violation.
- » 3.6: Since the Herodians were supporters of Rome's client rulers they were not natural allies of the Pharisees.
- » 3.7-8: note that many of those who came to see Jesus came from outside the borders of Judea.
- » 3.14-15: note that Moses had been instructed to select 12 representatives of the tribes (Numbers 1.1-19,44). Note that they were continuing the same work as Jesus (Mark 1.15,27).
- » 3.21: the news of Jesus' confrontations with the Pharisees had clearly made it to Jesus' family.
- » 3.22: Beelzebul was the name of a Philistine god, a literal translation could be "the lord of the flies".

Note that Jesus equates the name with Satan (vs. 23).



- » 3.27: note the similar statement about God (Isaiah 49.24–25).
- » 3.28–29: “Blaspheming the Spirit’ here means opposing Jesus’ messiahship so firmly that one resorts to accusations of sorcery to get around the Spirit’s signs confirming his identity. Different teachers debated whether some sins were eternally unforgivable; Jesus probably means that by rejecting even the Spirit’s testimony to Jesus’ identity and mission, expressed through exorcisms, Jesus’ accusers show themselves dangerously close to being incapable of repentance.” (IVP Bible Background Commentary)
- » 3.31: recall vs. 21 where Jesus’ family went out to seize Him because they thought “He is out of His mind.”

Using the text in evangelism:

1. Why some choose to not follow Jesus. Throughout this section the Pharisees increased their opposition to Jesus, even to the point where they would

accuse Him of working by demonic powers (3.22). Why would they reach such an absurd conclusion? Because Jesus did not meet their expectation. In their mind the Messiah would be just like them: He would shun sinners (2.16) and observe their traditions (2.24; 3.1-2). Since Jesus was not like them, they determined to “destroy Him” (3.6). They had truly hardened their hearts to Jesus (3.5). And it wasn’t just the Pharisees who had mistaken notions of Jesus, remember that His own family also believed that Jesus “was out of His mind” (3.21). It’s important that we stress to those we study with that we must not hold Jesus to our preconceived notions about Him or His work. Otherwise, we will harden our hearts to Him and we won’t accept the gospel and its requirements.

2. Characteristics of those who do follow Jesus. Conversely, this section shows several truths about those who do follow Jesus. The ones who follow Jesus are the ones who recognize their need for Him (2.17), seek Him out (3.7-8) and are ready to do “the will of God” (3.35).
3. A note about the apostles. Finally, it’s important for us to establish the role of the apostles (3.13-19). Jesus, the King, is able to give authority to those He chose. Thus, the message they taught did not originate with them, but came from Jesus (see John 16.13) and should be followed by those wishing to be disciples of Jesus.

Lesson 3: *The Kingdom in Word & Deed (4.1-5.43)*



The Kingdom is central in Mark's presentation of the gospel. Recall that in the first chapter we see Jesus proclaiming, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1.15). The authority of Jesus, the King, is then exhibited in both His teaching and His deeds (see Mark 1.21-27). Chapters 4 & 5 continue this theme with Jesus not only teaching about the Kingdom (Mark 4) but showing the power of the King (Mark 5).

Note: while I combine chapters 4 & 5 for the purpose of this class, it may be better to cover them separately when used in an evangelism study. As you will see, I make sure to cover chapter 5 in one lesson, so if there has been a lot of discussion in chapter 4 I would wait and cover chapter 5 in the next session.

Notes from the text:

- » 4.2: we will see why Jesus spoke in parables in vss. 10-11,33-34. Why Jesus used parables will be discussed in the evangelism notes below.
- » 4.3: it was common in Jewish agriculture to sow seed BEFORE plowing, which explains how the sower could not know what lay under the surface.
- » 4.8: "Thirtyfold, sixtyfold and a hundredfold are tremendously good harvests from Galilean soil. The fertile Jordan Valley normally yielded between ten and (less often) a hundredfold, so a hundredfold need not be a miraculous harvest (though it is an astonishing one; Gen 26:12); but for more of Palestine, the average yield was seven and a half to tenfold (meaning that seven and a half to ten seeds were harvested for every seed sown), and all the figures Jesus reports here are very good yields." (IVP Bible Background Commentary)
- » 4.9: note Ezekiel 12.2. A common refrain in the prophets was that while God's people had eyes and ears, they refused to see or hear God's will. Jesus is urging His audience to be better than their forefathers.
- » 4.10: this verse is significant for understanding why

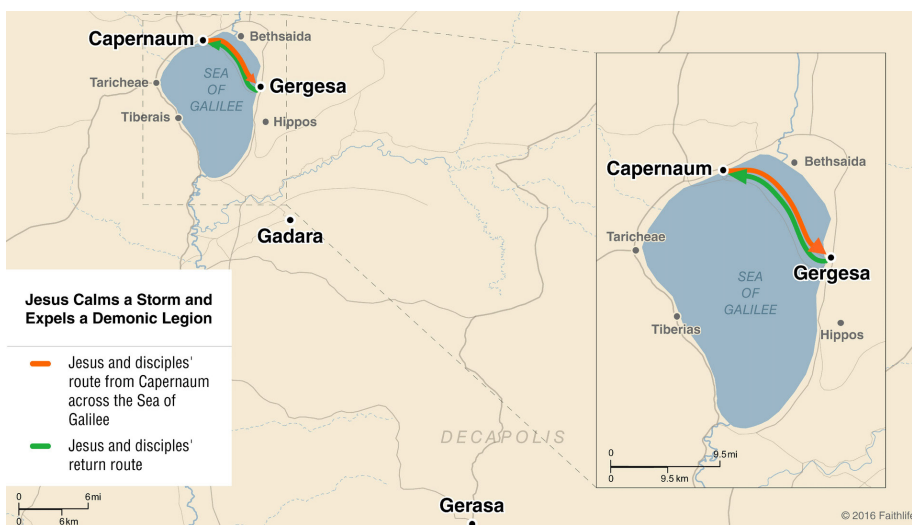
Your Notes

Jesus spoke in parables. Parables did conceal the message, but those who asked could understand the point. Asking, desiring to understand, is the key!

- » 4.12: see Isaiah 6.9-10. Significantly, Israel had become like their idols which were also described as “deaf” and “dumb” (see Psalm 115.4-8; Isaiah 42.17-20).
- » 4.15: Jesus isn’t describing non-religious people, but those who are very religious but who refuse to listen to Him (cf. Mark 3.22).
- » 4.16: “the gospel ought always to bring joy, but it needs a joy deep enough to withstand the shocks... It is for our sake that the Lord often cools our heedless enthusiasm by warning us to stop a moment and count the cost (Luke 9:57-58).” (Paul Earnhart)
- » 4.19: “The child of the kingdom of heaven is not just to look good, but to do good and to be good. The problem with the heart of the thorny soil is that it has become too crowded with competing concerns, and the seed of God cannot prosper in a divided heart... The blessings of our Father ought to be the occasion in His children for thanking Him and serving Him, but they can easily become the cause of our disaffection and uselessness.” (Paul Earnhart)
- » 4.20: Note these contrasts with the other soils:
 - The road will not let the word in, but the good soil hears and accepts.
 - The rocky ground does not persevere, but the good soil holds it fast and perseveres (see Luke 8:15).
 - The thorny ground produces no fruit, but the good soil produces in abundance.
- » 4.21-25: this passage is also crucial in our understanding of the parables. The gospel is not meant to be concealed, but to be revealed. However, the gospel depends on the hearer.
- » 4.28: Jesus’ earlier parable emphasized the role of the hearer. This parable emphasizes the power of the word. Growth and the producing of fruit occurs because of the power of the word.
- » 4.30-34: the parable of the mustard seed describes both the growth of the Kingdom as a whole, and to the growth of each individual. Small beginnings, but

huge results!

- » 4.37: the Sea of Galilee was 13 miles long and 7 miles wide. “Two extensive valleys on the western side of the lake funnel wind onto the lake. Westerly gusts can arise in the afternoon, turning the placid lake into a high sea with waves soaring up over seven feet. The lake also is 682 feet below sea level, which makes it susceptible to downdrafts when ‘cool air from the Golan Heights meets the warm air coming off the lake, and these contribute to sudden and unpredictable storms.’ Sudden storms are therefore familiar sailing hazards.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)



- » 4.38: compare Psalm 107.23-32; Jonah 1.5-6.
- » 4.40: not only had Jesus demonstrated the power of God, He had also granted power to His disciples (see 3.14-15). This will not be the last time Jesus draws attention to their lack of faith. These disciples would eventually produce much fruit (see vs. 20), but they aren't there yet.
- » 5.1: note that this is Gentile territory.
- » 5.3-4: “The man fits the four characteristics of madness found in rabbinic literature: running about at night, staying overnight in burial places, tearing apart one's clothes, and destroying what one has been given.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
- » 5.7: “In ancient magic, higher spirits would be invoked to drive out lower spirits, and the demons here appeal to the only one higher than Jesus to

keep Jesus from driving them out: “I adjure you by God” (not “Swear to God”—NIV). This language invokes a curse on Jesus if he does not comply. The attempt at magical self-protection proves powerless against Jesus.” (IVP Bible Background Commentary)

- » 5.9: A Roman legion consisted of 5,400 foot soldiers and 120 horsemen.
- » 5.10: “In Luke (Lk 8:31) the request is that they not be sent into the Abyss (Rev 20:1-3), the place of confinement before judgment.” (Expositors Bible Commentary)
- » 5.13: note that this shows the intent of demons; they are bent on destruction (see also Mark 1.26; 9.26). We may not fully understand why Jesus allowed the demons to possess the swine, but the results would have shown to all the magnitude of what Jesus accomplished.
- » 5.25: See Lev. 15:25-27 for what this meant. She has been unclean for 12 years. Her fate would have been similar to that of a leper—to live without the touch of another human!
- » 5.26: one cure offered by physicians “suggests fetching a barley grain from the dung of a white mule. When she eats it and holds it in one day, her discharge will cease for one day, if for two days, her discharge will cease for two days, if for three days, it will cease forever.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
- » 5.34: the connection with faith is an important one. The power to heal is in Jesus, but it is accessed by faith. See Mark 16.16.
- » 5.41: “By providing the translation, ‘Little girl, rise,’ Mark makes it clear that it was not some arcane, magical formula. Eating food proves that the child is really alive and not some disembodied spirit (cf. Luke 24:39-43).” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

Using the text in evangelism:

1. A lesson about hearing. The parables naturally lend themselves to evangelism; they show what is possible through the word of God. However, Jesus’ reasoning for teaching in parables is also important

to note. As we've seen, the gospel is meant to be understood (see 4.21-22), but that understanding is dependent on our willingness to hear (4.9,23). We will not understand God's word without listening to Him, asking questions and letting Him provide the answers. We can't rely on our presuppositions or on what we've been told. If we are going to bear fruit we must listen to Jesus.

2. Hope of the hopeless. As I said at the beginning of this lesson, I make sure to cover all of chapter 5 in one lesson. Jesus' interacted with three people, all of whom were in "hopeless" situations. One was "hopelessly" possessed, one was "hopelessly" impure and one was "hopelessly" dead. No efforts by man could do anything for them (see 5.3-4,26). But Jesus freed the man who was possessed, purified the impure woman and gave life to the little girl who was dead; Jesus is the hope of the hopeless. These accounts should resonate with all of us, because we are all in "hopeless" situations; our sins enslaved us, made us unclean... and killed us. Praise God, hope is restored in Jesus! However, we must remember that while Jesus has the power to free, purify and make alive, we must put our faith in Him to access that power (5.34,36). It is important to establish this point now so that the stipulation in Mark 16.16 will make sense in the light of the gospel.

Lesson 4: The Results Of Belief And Unbelief (6.1-56)



On the surface chapter 6 may seem to contain a series of unconnected stories from the life of Jesus. However, when read together I think we will find a common theme: faith. Recall that when Jesus began proclaiming the gospel, He urged the people to “repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1.15). Faith was, and is, the determining factor of whether a person will be saved or not! Already in our study we’ve noted those who did not believe in Jesus: the scribes and Pharisees (Mark 3.22) and even Jesus’ own family (Mark 3.21). However, we’ve also seen how faith in Jesus led to remarkable healings (Mark 2.5; 5.34). In chapter 6 we will see the different results that come from believing or not believing, and also see how Jesus’ closest followers continued to struggle with their faith.

Your Notes

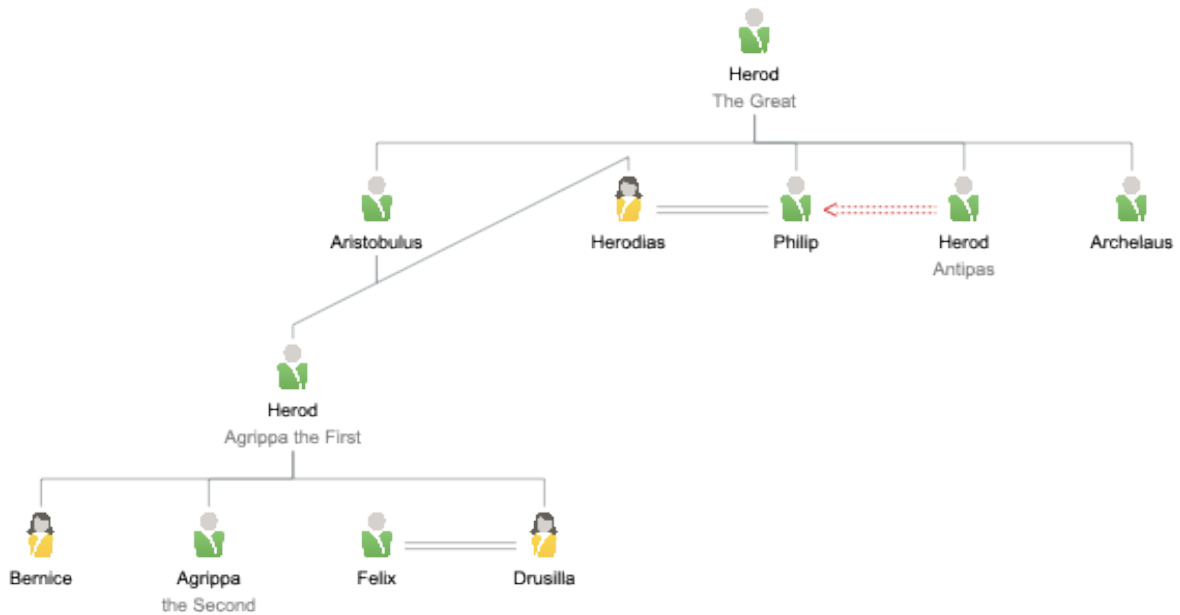
Notes from the text:

- » Vs. 1: Jesus’ hometown was Nazareth (see Matthew 2.23).
- » Vs. 2: contrast their skepticism with how the inhabitants of Capernaum were left in wonder at the teaching and miracles of Jesus (see Mark 1.21-28).
- » Vs. 3:
 - Carpenter: “In Sirach 38:24-32, the skillful artisan who works with his hands is commended, but it is assumed that his business keeps him from ever becoming wise like the scribe. The scribe has greater leisure and can devote himself to the study of the law to gain greater wisdom (Sir. 39:1-11).” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
 - Son of Mary and brother of: “The argument that these are Jesus’ cousins has been concocted to support the idea of Mary’s perpetual virginity and has no basis in the Greek. Paul refers to James, whom he met, as ‘the Lord’s brother’ (Gal. 1:19), and to ‘the Lord’s brothers’ (1 Cor. 9:5); he does not use the Greek word for “cousins” (anepsioi), which he knows and uses elsewhere (Col. 4:10).” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Com-

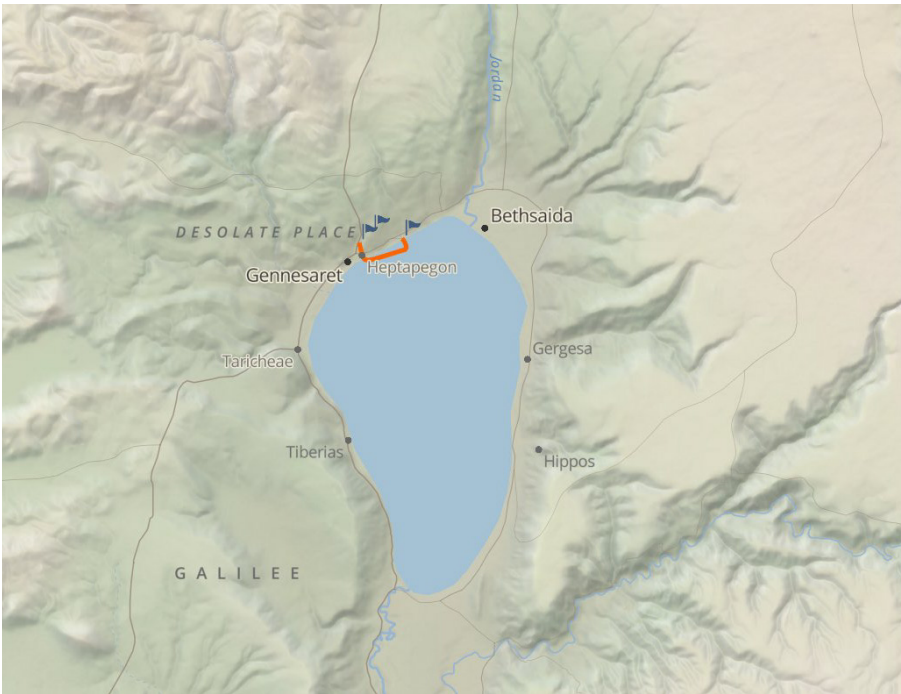
mentary)

- » Vs. 5: not that Jesus lacked the power, but rather in a climate of unbelief He chose not to exercise His power.
- » Vs. 7: Note that the promise of this authority had been made in Mark 3.13-15. The twelve are His ambassadors, carrying His authority! They were sent out in pairs so that their collaborative testimony would be seen as valid (see Deuteronomy 17.6).
- » Vss. 8-11: Jesus was imparting two lessons to His disciples: first, they needed to learn reliance on the Lord to provide. Thus the lack of provision. Second, they needed to understand that many places would reject them... even places where they thought they would be received. Even as Jesus had just been rejected at Nazareth.
- » Vs. 12: they were proclaiming the same message as Jesus (see Mark 1.15).
- » Vs. 14: Herod Antipas was the seventh son of Herod the Great. "Antipas was not technically a King, although his contemporaries may have referred to him as such. He lost his position in A.D. 39 after trying to gain complete sovereignty." (ESV Study Bible)
- » Vs. 17: "When Herod Antipas was staying with them on a visit to Rome, he fell in love with Herodias and brazenly proposed marriage. She agreed upon the condition that he divorce his current wife, the daughter of Aretas IV, king of Nabatea. The outraged Aretas began a border war that led to serious military losses for Herod Antipas." (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
- » Vs. 18: "Herod Antipas was not a Jew, yet John did not hesitate to tell him that he had violated the moral law of God (cf. Lev. 18:16). Similarly, the gospel message that people should "repent" (Mark 1:15; 6:12), which would eventually go to Gentiles as well as Jews, assumes that God holds all people in the world accountable to his moral laws as revealed in Scripture." (ESV Study Bible)
- » Vs. 22: "On any reading, Herod's vulgarity is perverse; after taking his brother's wife (cf. Lev 20:21), he lusts after his wife's daughter (cf. Lev 20:14)." (IVP Bible Background Commentary)

Herod the Great's Family Tree



- » Vs. 34: based on Matthew's account, Jesus had just heard of John's death (see Matthew 14.13). That combined with the fact that Jesus wanted to spend some time alone with His apostles (vss. 30-31) makes Jesus' compassion for the people even more remarkable; He viewed their needs as more significant than His own.
 - Note the connection between Jesus and the commission of Joshua (Numbers 27.16-18).
 - Finally, note that Jesus' compassion FIRST moved Him to teach the people. He recognized their greatest need was the word of God.
- » Vs. 37: Jesus' instruction likely refers back to His giving the twelve authority (vs. 7). He had given them power of demons, did they believe that He would give them the power to meet the needs of the people? 200 denarii (200 days' wages) would have been enough to purchase ~2400 loaves of bread.
- » Vs. 48: the fourth watch of the night was between 3 and 6am.
- » Vs. 52: note a similar reaction of the disciples in Mark 4.35-41. "Had they understood about the loaves, i.e., that the sovereign Lord of the universe was in action there, they would have been prepared



to understand walking on water and calming waves. Their problem was a christological one. Not unlike Jesus’ opponents, ‘their hearts were hardened.’” (Expositors Bible Commentary)

- » Vs. 55: contrast with Jesus’ reception at Nazareth (vss. 1-6).

Using the text in evangelism:

1. The results of belief and unbelief. The contrast between Jesus’ reception in his hometown of Nazareth (vss. 1-6) and His reception at Gennesaret (vss. 53-56) is astounding. As this chapter shows, there is no limit to what Jesus’ power can accomplish (He can feed 5000 with only 5 loaves and 2 fish). The only limiting factor is our faith! The people of Gennesaret believed Jesus could do anything, that they could be healed if they only touched the fringe of His garment. However, the people of Nazareth did not believe in Jesus, thus “He could do no mighty work there” (vs. 5). Do we want Jesus to accomplish great things in our lives? Do we want Him to truly heal us? Then we must have faith in Him (Mark 16.16).
2. Abundance is found in Jesus. I believe it is significant that the feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle of Jesus that is recorded in all 4 gospel accounts. Jesus doesn’t just feed the people with limited resources, He provides an abundance (vs. 43). The

fact that the leftovers filled 12 baskets certainly seems significant: 12 symbolizes God's people in both the Old and New Testaments, thus Jesus can provide abundantly for ALL of God's people. As Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." (John 6:35, ESV)

3. Faith has to grow. There is no doubt that the twelve had great faith in Jesus. After all, they were willing to leave everything to follow Him and they carried His message to the people (vs. 12). But as we read Mark we also see how their faith had to grow. They didn't recognize that if Jesus gave them power over evil spirits (vs. 7) that He could also give them the ability to meet the needs of the people (vs. 37). They didn't recognize that Jesus' power to feed 5000 with just a few loaves and fish meant that He has complete power over nature (vss. 51-52). However, they were not offended at Jesus (like those in Nazareth, vs. 3), and as they stayed with Jesus, their faith would grow. The lesson for us is to continue looking to Jesus. Only then will our faith grow as it should.

Lesson 5: *The Deaf & Blind* (7.1-8.38)



In these two chapters we will see Jesus restore the hearing of a deaf man (Mark 7.31-37) and restore the sight of a blind man (Mark 8.22-26). The magnitude of what Jesus accomplished is summed up by the reaction of the people: “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak” (Mark 7.37). However, there was a different form of deafness and blindness that Jesus could heal only if the people were willing... and that is the focus of this lesson.

Notes from the text:

- » 7.1: Jesus was in Galilee (6.53), so the fact that the Pharisees and scribes traveled from Jerusalem is in indication of how worried they were.
- » 7.3-4: “After being in the marketplace and coming into contact with Gentiles or even nonobservant Jews, the Pharisees would wash themselves to ensure their ritual cleanness.” (Expositor Bible Commentary)
- » 7.6-7: quoted from Isaiah 29.13.
- » 7.10: quoted from Exodus 20.12; 21.17. Note that the first quotation is from the ten commandments. As Jesus was about to expose, their traditions led them to break one of the foundational commandments of the Law.
- » 7.11: regarding the Jewish practice of Corban, “As a legal device, it only expresses an intention to give property to God and is not the actual disposal of it. The person could keep the property in his possession but say to his parents that he cannot offer them any help because he has dedicated it to God.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
- » 7.13: note Jesus’ indictment that “many such things you do”. They had not inadvertently broken the law, but treated it with contempt.
- » 7.18-21: note the emphasis on the heart in this passage. “The heart is the core of motivation, delibera-

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tion, and intention. Food does not enter the heart, and what does not enter the heart cannot make a person unclean. How one handles food is therefore morally irrelevant. Nothing from outside pollutes a person.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

- » 7.21: recall that Jesus quoted from Isaiah 29.13 where God complained that “their hearts are far from me”. Defiled hearts will always be far from the Lord.



- » 7.27: “Jesus may be reacting to a member of the oppressive upper class. Economically, Tyre took bread away from Galilee. This region was well stocked with food produced in the Galilean hinterland while Galileans went hungry (see Acts 12:20). Galileans perceived Tyre as a bloated bully and had long despised it for amassing wealth at the expense of the poor. The probing of this woman’s faith occurs in the historical context of the animosity between Jews and heathens and Galilean resentment over Tyre’s socioeconomic domination.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
- » 7.28: this is the only time in Mark that someone calls Jesus, “Lord” (Greek kurios).
- » 7.33: Jesus taking these physical steps instead of just pronouncing the man healed was likely so that the man could understand that it was Jesus who was restoring his hearing.
- » 7.37: “The statement ‘he has done everything well’ reminds us of Genesis 1:31: ‘God saw all that he made, and it was very good.’ The reminder is not

unsuitable, for in a profound sense Jesus' work is indeed 'a new creation.' And again we are reminded of the messianic significance of this miracle by words that reflect Isaiah 35:5-6." (Expositors Bible Commentary)

- » 8.1: This miraculous feeding may be differentiated from the previous (Mark 6.30-44) in that this may have occurred in Gentile territory (see Mark 7.24,31).
- » 8.2-3: Jesus' words here are reminiscent of His telling the apostles to "give them something to eat" in Mark 6.37. Sadly, their response in vs. 4 shows that their faith had not increased.
- » 8.11: "from heaven" likely means "from God". The Pharisees request betrays the fact that they did not comprehend that Jesus' teaching and work bore the stamp of Divine approval (see Mark 1.22,27).
- » 8.12: "For Mark and Paul the answer to this wrongful instance is the same. There is no legitimating sign—save the ambiguity of the humiliated and crucified Lord; and to see in his cross the power and wisdom of God is to be shut up to the exercise of faith which by definition can never rest in proofs or signs, or else its character would be lost." (Expositors Bible Commentary)
- » 8.15: both the Pharisees and Herod wanted a sign from Jesus (see Luke 23.8). "He is appealing to them to understand that the authority he possesses cannot be proved by a sign. Only by faith can they recognize him as the bringer of God's salvation." (Expositors Bible Commentary)
- » 8.17-18: compare with Mark 7.14, "Hear me, all of you, and understand." The disciples had been with Jesus, but they had not been truly watching Him or listening to Him; they did not yet perceive the truth about Jesus. Their faith needed to grow.
- » 8.25: "Jesus' first attempt to heal the man meets with only partial success. This detail communicates two things. First, his blindness is stubborn and hard to cure but Jesus has power to heal even the most difficult cases. Second, on a literary level, curing the stubborn spiritual blindness of the disciples will also take a second touch." (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

- » 8.27: “Peter’s confession occurs in the area where Herod the Great built a grand marble temple to honor the emperor¹⁹⁵ and where his heir enlarged the city and renamed it to honor Caesar.” (Zonder- van Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
- » 8.29: Christ literally means “anointed one” and most Jews looked forward to the coming of this promised king (see Psalm 2.2,7). Peter made the correct confession (Mark 1.1), but as we will see he did not fully comprehend Jesus’ role as the Messiah.
- » 8.32: note that Jesus spoke “plainly” about this, rather than in parables (see Mark 4.33).
- » 8:33: the proper place of a disciple is to “follow” (see Mark 1.17). Peter had fallen to a trap of Satan in presuming that he knew better than His master. He needed to “get behind” where he belonged.

Using the text in evangelism:

1. Spiritual blindness and deafness. As noted at the beginning of this lesson, Jesus was able to cure a deaf man (Mark 7.31-37) and a blind man (Mark 8.22-26). However, there was a different type of deafness and blindness that can only be cured by us. The Pharisees were spiritually deaf in that they had heard God’s law to “Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20.12) but they had not let it’s truth sink into their hearts. So, they had developed traditions that made “void the word of God” (Mark 7.13). But it wasn’t just the enemies of Jesus who were suffering from spiritual sensory deprivation. The disciples of Jesus demonstrated spiritual blindness! They had seen Jesus feed 5000 on one occasion and 4000 on another, yet they were worried about bread (Mark 8.16)! They had seen Jesus’ wondrous works with their eyes, but they had not internalized the meaning: so long as Jesus was with them, they had all they needed. If we are not careful, the same will be true of us: we can hear Jesus’ words and see His works, but not be transformed by them. “Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?” (Mark 8.18) Thankfully, if we will stay with Jesus we can begin to see clearly (see Mark 8.22-26).

2. What's more important: our traditions or God's will?
The Pharisees were guilty of leaving "the commandment of God" to "hold to the tradition of men" (Mark 7.8). This is a point we need to help our friends see... and that we need to take to heart as well. "How we've always done it" or "my church teaches" don't matter if they aren't what we find in God's word. His will is more important than our traditions.
3. Jesus is concerned with real purity. The Pharisees were concerned with outward defilement (Mark 7.1-4), but their hearts were the problem (Mark 7.6-7; Isaiah 29.13). Jesus fixes His attention on the real problem: "What comes out of a person is what defiles him" (Mark 7.20). Observance of a few commandments and worshiping on Sundays don't make us pure; only when we allow Jesus to point out our heart issues can we hope to be pure.
4. Discipleship means we follow Jesus wherever He leads. Peter had made the right confession about Jesus (Mark 8.29), but didn't understand the implications of Jesus being the Christ (Mark 8.31-33). For us to be disciples of Jesus one must "deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (Mark 8.34). Only then can we have eternal life (Mark 8.35-38).

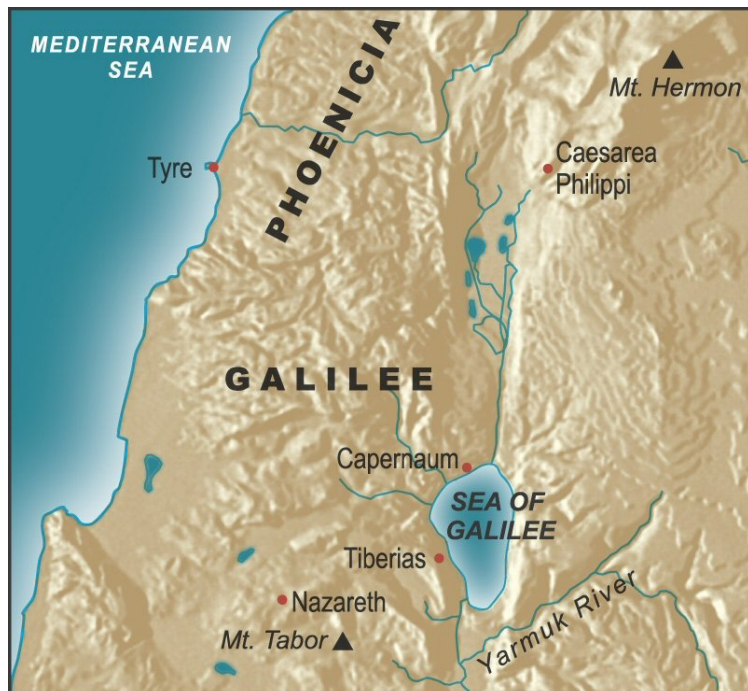
Lesson 6: I Believe, Help My Unbelief (9.1-50)

We have noted throughout our study that while the disciples believed in Jesus, they still struggled with their faith. So, while Peter accurately confessed that Jesus is the Christ (Mark 8.29), he failed to accept Jesus' mission of the cross (Mark 8.31-33). This lesson is significant because all disciples will have numerous moments where our faith needs to grow. Furthermore, those we wish to teach may believe in Jesus, but they need to learn what real faith in Him entails. All of us need to live by the words of the father in this lesson: "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9.24).

Your Notes

Notes from the text:

- » 9.1: this verse should be included with Jesus' discourse in Mark 8.34-38. However, it marks a transition to the events of the transfiguration recorded in vss. 2-8. The point is that even though Jesus was going to the cross, and so must His disciples, that does not deter the coming of the Kingdom (see Mark 1.14-15). No, it would come with power as evidenced by the transfiguration.
 - Jesus' point that "some standing here" would not taste death is an important one for anyone thinking that the Kingdom is in the future. More on this later.
- » 9.2:
 - Mount Hermon is the likely site. The peak is some 9,000 feet and was in close proximity to Caesarea Philippi (see Mark 8.27).
 - The word translated as "transfigured" is metamorphoō, i.e. "changing into another form". Jesus didn't simply look different, He was completely changed!
- » 9.4: "Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven (2 Kings 2:11). Later rabbinic interpretations combined the reference to Moses' death, 'no one knows ... his grave' (Deut. 34:6), with the passage 'and [he] was there with the LORD' (Ex. 34:28) to conclude that Moses was taken to heaven without death, like



Enoch and Elijah.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary) Of course there is significance that Moses was the Law giver and Elijah was the most notable of the prophets. Together, they represented “the Law and the Prophets”.

- » 9.5: note that the word “tent” is the same as “tabernacle”. Jesus’ transfiguration may have brought to Peter’s mind how the Lord’s glory filled the original tabernacle (see Exodus 40.35). “Peter thought that another such tent, or even three such tents, was appropriate now. Peter did not realize that the shekinah—glory, the manifestation of God’s presence, was already ‘living in a tent’ on earth, in the body of Christ (John 1:14).” (Tyndale Bible Commentary)
- » 9.7:
 - In the Old Testament God’s presence was often in the clouds (Exod 16:10; 19:9; 24:15f.; 33:9; Lev 16:2; Num 11:25).
 - God’s words made clear that Jesus was His Son, not Moses or Elijah. They must listen to Him, His words supersede the Law and the Prophets.
- » 9.9: “until the Son of Man had risen from the dead” is the likely fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in vs. 1. The Kingdom would truly come with power when Jesus was victorious over death; they would see the Kingdom come with power.
- » 9.11: see Malachi 4.5-6. “Restoring all things in-

involved, among other things, leading the people to repentance. Now if Elijah comes first and does his preparatory work, how is it that when the Son of Man comes he finds people so unprepared for him that they completely reject him and, indeed, kill him? If this represents a correct reconstruction of the thinking of the disciples, behind their question lay the stumbling block of a suffering Messiah. They were still perplexed by this.” (Expositors Bible Commentary)

- » 9.13: Israel’s leaders, Ahab and Jezebel, had persecuted Elijah (1Kings 19.1-2). This was a precursor to Herod’s killing of John the Baptist (see Mark 6.14-29).
- » 9.18: note that the disciples had been given authority over demons (Mark 3.15) and demonstrated the ability to cast them out (Mark 6.13). While no explanation is given, it may be the severity of the boys condition had produced doubt in the disciples. However, their doubt wasn’t in themselves, but in their Master.
- » 9.20: more evidence that demons are bent on destruction (see Mark 5.12-13).
- » 9.24: the key verse! It wasn’t that the father didn’t believe in Jesus, rather the Lord had accurately pointed out deficiency in his faith. The same was true for the disciples, and remains true for us.
- » 9.29: prayer is a recognition that we are dependent on God. They could only do the Lord’s work if they had true faith in Him.
- » 9.33-34: note the contrast between Jesus foretelling His death in vs. 31 (on our behalf, no less) and their selfish desire for greatness.
- » 9.35-37: not only must they be humble and seek to serve, they should cease looking at each other as threats. They should see other disciples as children who are just as dependent on the Lord as they are.
- » 9.38: Jesus had commissioned other disciples besides the twelve (see Luke 10.17). John’s words that “he was not following us” are significant. His complaint wasn’t that the man wasn’t following Jesus, but wasn’t following them. John saw the man as a threat to him and his status.

- » 9.40: “The whole theology of the Spirit was at stake here: the scribes had seen the work of the Spirit, yet deliberately misinterpreted and opposed it, putting it down to Beelzebub (3:22). But here were his own disciples, seeing and admitting a work of the Spirit, done in the name of Jesus, and still forbidding it, on theological grounds. What is the difference between disciples and scribes, if both alike oppose the Spirit’s working, although for very different reasons?” (Tyn-dale Bible Commentary)
- » 9.42:
- The warning here is due to John’s treatment of the nameless disciple. His callous treatment of the Lord’s follower could have presented a great stumbling block.
 - “Millstones were extremely heavy; one would certainly drown with a millstone tied around one’s neck. Further, this term refers to the heavier kind of millstone turned by a donkey, rather than the lighter kind a woman would use. Jewish people regarded this punishment as the awful sort that pagans might execute; thus the image is all the more dreadful. Death without burial (including death at sea) was regarded as the worst kind of death; pagans even believed that the spirit of the deceased hovered eternally over the waters where the person had died.” (IVP Bible Background Commentary)
- » 9.43-47: Jesus’ point is clear, sacrifice whatever you must in order to obtain heaven. What we must not lose sight of is that while Jesus speaks of cutting off a hand, foot or eye, what must be sacrificed in this case was pride and attitudes toward others.
- » 9.48: see Isaiah 66.24.
- » 9.49: Old Testament sacrifices were accompanied by fire (see Leviticus 2.13). “The previous verses relate to the dedication of the various members of the body (hand, foot, eye) to God. These must be sacrificed, if need be, to enter into the kingdom of God. Here in v. 49 the total self is in mind. Every true disciple is to be a total sacrifice to God (cf. Rom 12:1); and as salt always accompanied the temple sacrifices, so fire—i.e., persecution, trials, and suffer-



- ing—will accompany the true disciple’s sacrifices (cf. 1 Peter 1:7; 4:12).” (Expositors Bible Commentary)
- » 9.50: salt could be adulterated with other minerals, and thus become worthless. If Jesus’ disciples are not at peace with each other, how can they possibly spread peace to others?

Using the text in evangelism:

1. The Kingdom has come with power! Remember that Jesus came proclaiming that “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1.15). While Jesus’ transfiguration offered assurance that the Kingdom would come, His resurrection from the dead (vs. 10) is the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise that His Kingdom would come with power (vs. 1). The Kingdom has come, so we should “repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1.15).
2. Only Jesus is the Son of God, so we must listen to Him. We can only imagine how in awe the disciples must have been at seeing a transfigured Jesus along with Moses and Elijah. However, as great as Moses and Elijah were, they did not deserve the same reverence as Jesus. Only Jesus is the Son of God; we must listen to Him. This is helpful when teaching someone who bases their practices in the Law (whether Sabbath observance, separate priesthood or instrumental music). Disciples of Christ listen to Him and are thus guided by Him. Furthermore, there are many teachers who gain prominence by their oratory and persuasive arguments. Yet, while much of what they say is rooted in Jesus’ words, they may also lead away from the plain teaching of the Lord. Who will we listen to? Only Jesus is the Son of God!
3. I believe, help my unbelief! As we’ve already noted, it wasn’t just the father’s faith that needed to grow, but of the disciples. They had the power to cast out demons (Mark 3.15), but they couldn’t do the work of their Master unless they realized their dependence on Him (Mark 9.29). This is a powerful lesson for us as we continue to grow in our discipleship, but also a needed lesson for those we seek to teach. They have faith, they believe in Jesus. But, their faith needs to grow; they need to overcome their unbelief. For some, that will mean having enough faith to repent of a sin, for others putting enough trust in Jesus to realize that by being baptized they can be forgiven of their sins.

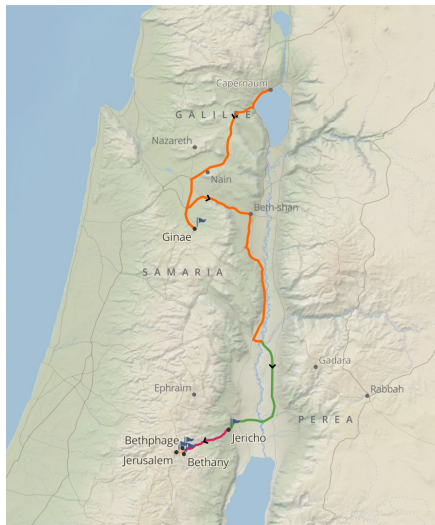
Lesson 7: To Such Belongs The Kingdom Of God (10.1-52)



As we've noted numerous times in our study, at the beginning of His public ministry Jesus proclaimed, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1.15). But who would be in the Kingdom? Mark chapter 10 helps to answer that question.

Notes from the text:

- » 10.1: Jesus had left Galilee, making His final trip to Jerusalem. On the way He crossed the Jordan into Perea.
- » 10.2: the question is somewhat different from Matthew 19.3 where they asked what cause would allow divorce. However, they had reason to question whether Jesus permitted divorce based on His teaching (see Matthew 5.31-32).
- » 10.3-5: note that Jesus asked what Moses commanded, but they replied with what Moses allowed. This is significant because if one reads Deuteronomy 24.1-4 you see that the command was that a man who divorced his spouse was not permitted to remarry her once she had married someone else. Moses did not command divorce, he gave commands to mitigate the damage of divorce. As Jesus correctly points out in vs. 5, this command was given because of their "hardness of heart".
- » 10.6-9: Jesus returns to God's original will regarding marriage quoting Genesis 1.27; 2.24. Note that "hold fast" is a passive verb (NKJV: be joined). The point being that the joining is done by God. And since God



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joined them, man isn't supposed to separate them (vs. 9).

- » 10.10-12: “Since the original one-flesh union between a husband and his wife is permanent in the eyes of God, a divorce does not cancel this union. Entering a second union and having marital relations within that relationship is as much adultery as if the husband of a wife had intercourse with a woman married to another man. The divorce and the subsequent remarriage, which in first-century society would have been a common expectation, is just as much an offence against God and his purpose for marriage as it is an offence against the (first) wife who is wronged.” (Tyndale)
- » 10.13: the children were likely brought to Jesus because at this time infant mortality rates were over 50%. However, note how the disciples failed to heed Jesus' instructions in Mark 9.37.
- » 10.14: “The statement the kingdom of God belongs to such as these is not a pronouncement about children but about people who are like children, who share a child's status. In antiquity, the dominant features linked with children were their vulnerability, their dependence on their parents and their social marginality before they reached adulthood. Jesus commands the disciples to allow the children to come to him because they represent the kind of people to whom the kingdom of God belongs—those who come in utter dependence upon God” (Tyndale)
- » 10.15: “The word receive reflects the passive stance of little children: they need their parents to take care of them; they receive their parents' care and provision as a matter of course. People who refuse to be 'like children' will never enter the kingdom of God.” (Tyndale)
- » 10.17:
 - That this encounter follows Jesus' statement that one must “receive the kingdom of God like a child” is significant. The rich, young ruler looked like a likely candidate to be in the Kingdom, but he failed in showing utter reliance on God.
 - “eternal life” is synonymous with the kingdom

(vs. 23) and salvation (vs. 26).

- » 10.18: Jesus is challenging the young man to consider his words. God is good, so if Jesus is good then His words must be treated as God's words.
- » 10.19-20: Jesus directed the man to part of the ten commandments dealing with treatment of others. The young man may have kept them since his youth, but remember that Jesus pointed people to the real fulfillment of the Law, not simply obedience to surface level commands (see Matthew 5.17ff).
- » 10.21:
 - That the young man was sincere is shown by Jesus' love for the young man.
 - On one level, Jesus was calling for the young man to fulfill the true purpose of the Law. To fulfill the Law required more than abstaining from stealing, but taking care of those in need (see Leviticus 19.18).
 - On another level, Jesus was calling for the young man to follow Him, to be His disciple. Doing such required full dependence on God (receiving the Kingdom as a child).
- » 10.22: "The sincere, law-abiding man had expected an answer that would allow him to continue his life essentially unchanged. He had immense respect for Jesus as a teacher, but he was not willing to commit his life to him at the expense of his wealth. His wealth and the status quo had more power than Jesus' words and the power of the kingdom of God.
- » 10.27: while not lessening Jesus' comments regarding those with wealth, His point is that no man can save himself; such is impossible. But not for God! God can bring anyone into the Kingdom... if they will receive it like a child (see vss. 14-15).
- » 10.28: note that Peter still owned a boat (see Mark 4.1,36; John 21.3), yet they had left all of that behind in order to follow Jesus.
- » 10.29-30: there are immediate benefits for being in the Kingdom (see Acts 2.44-45; 4.32-37), but also persecution. But whatever we leave behind is worth it since eternal life is the reward to come!
- » 10.31: "Most Jewish people understood that the day of judgment would turn things upside down (cf.,

e.g., Is 2:11-12, 17); those who appear great in this world will be nothing in the next, and those who were nothing in this world will be great in the next. Jewish people applied this principle especially to the exaltation of Israel over the other nations, the oppressed righteous over their wicked oppressors, but Jesus applies it also to individual rank and status.” (IVP Bible Background Commentary)

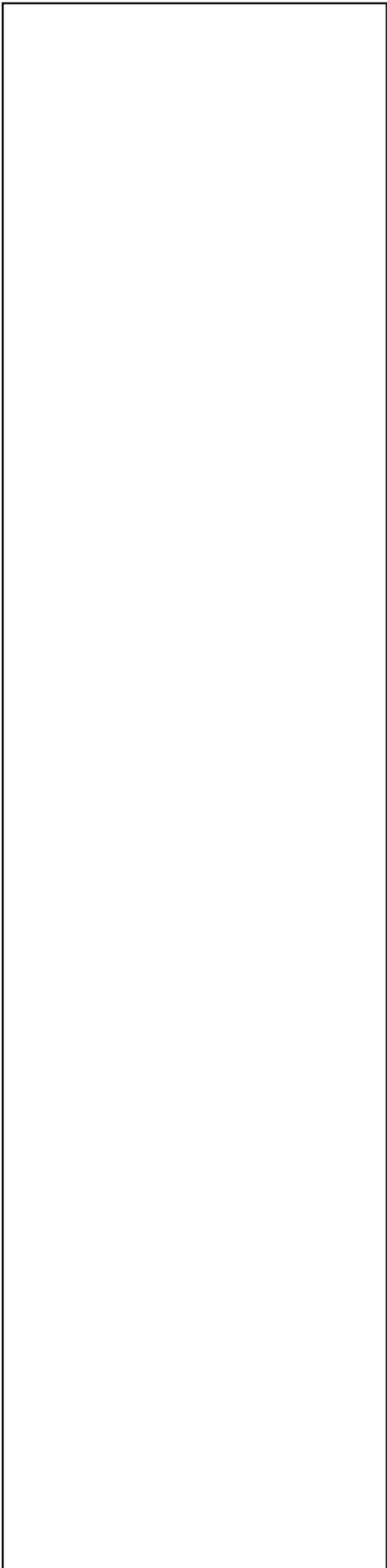
- » 10.32-34: this is the third time Jesus foretold His impending death and resurrection (see Mark 8.31-32; 9.31).
- » 10.35: the disciples continued their pattern of failing to understand Jesus’ mission (compare Mark 8.32; 9.32). Jesus foretold His anguish and death; James and John sought personal glory.
- » 10.38: the cup and baptism/immersion are both OT figures for God’s wrath (Cup: Psalm 75.8; Isaiah 51.17,22. Immersion: Psalm 42.7; 69.1-2).
- » 10.39: James was the first apostle to be martyred (see Acts 12.1-2) and while John may have been the last living apostle, he also experienced great persecution (see Revelation 1.9).
- » 10.40: one possible interpretation is that Jesus came into the Kingdom by being crucified. On that occasion, two thieves were on His right and left hands (see Mark 15.27).
- » 10.44: “The years have dulled the shocking nature of this statement. Plato has Callicles ask: ‘How can anyone be happy when he is the slave of anyone else at all?’ The slave experienced ‘civil death’ with no legal or human rights. Seneca characterizes a slave as one who ‘does not have the right to refuse.’ The slave’s entire life was at the disposal of the master.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
- » 10.45: a likely allusion to the suffering Servant in Isaiah 53.
- » 10.47: Isaiah foretold that one would come who would give sight to the blind (Isaiah 35.5-6). The blind man evidently believed that Jesus, the Son of David, was the one foretold.
- » 10.48: “The disciples want to get on with the business of setting up the kingdom (10:37; 11:9-10),

not understanding that stopping for a blind beggar is the sort of thing Jesus' kingdom is all about (cf. 10:13-14)." (IVP Bible Background Commentary)

- » 10.50: the cloak may very well have been all the man possessed. If so, he "left all" to go to Jesus.
- » 10.52: once again we see the connection between faith and healing/salvation (see Mark 5.34).

Using the text in evangelism:

1. Our practices must be rooted in God's word. While divorce and remarriage is the central issue in vs. 1-12, there is a deeper issue that is important for everyone regardless of their marriage situation. The Pharisees knew God's will for marriage, for it was plain from the beginning (Genesis 1.27; 2.24), but they tried to use other passages to justify their practices. Jesus correctly told them that Moses' legislation in Deuteronomy 24.1-4 was not permission to divorce, but a result of their hardness of heart. If they wanted to please God they needed to heed God's will on the matter: "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (vs. 9). God has spoken plainly on any number of issues (baptism, loving others, forgiving enemies, etc.) and we don't need to try using other passages to justify our practices that don't respect what God has clearly spoken.
2. "to such belongs the kingdom of God". The rich, young ruler is exactly the kind of person that most people thought would be in the Messianic Kingdom. The disciples' exclamation, "then who can be saved?" (vs. 26) would have been asked by most people in first century Palestine. The rich, young ruler was both observant of the Law and clearly blessed by God... how could he not be in the Kingdom? Because he lacked the most essential quality of a Kingdom citizen: "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (vs. 15). The Kingdom is for those who recognize their absolute dependence on God. Such will "receive" the Kingdom AND with absolute trust "enter it". The rich young ruler was unwilling to sell his possessions and follow Jesus (the only way to enter).



By contrast, blind Bartimaeus had nothing to lose and thus put his complete trust in Jesus, the Son of David who could have mercy on him. His childlike faith saved him! The Kingdom belongs to us if we 1) receive it like a child, with full trust and dependence on God and 2) do what He says to enter it. Refusal to do what He says demonstrates that we are not receiving the Kingdom like a child.

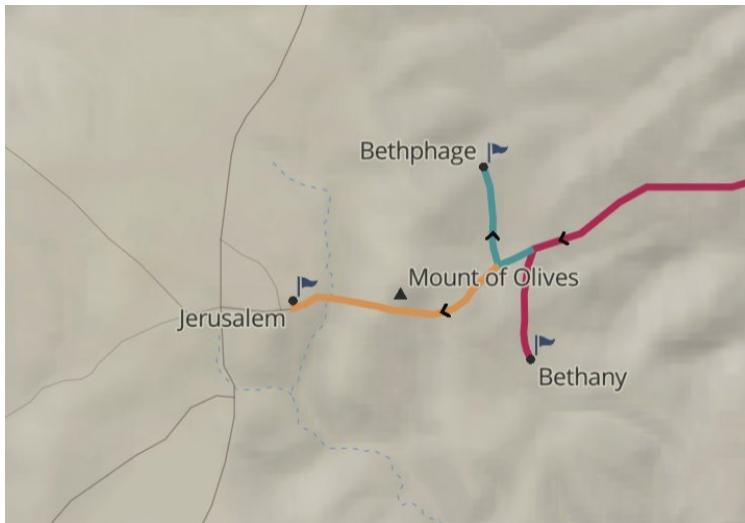
3. “For all things are possible with God.” The disciples may have wondered who could be saved if not the wealthy, but Jesus pointed them to an important truth: “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God” (vs. 27). This is why we should have childlike faith; we cannot save ourselves, but He can! Jesus willingly went to the cross (vss. 32-34) and came “not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (vs. 45). Because of what Jesus accomplished, salvation is possible for all of us. The only question is how much we trust Him? Enough to leave all and follow Him?

Lesson 8: Coming of the King (11.1-12.12)



From the very first verse of his account of Jesus' life, Mark emphasized Jesus' status as the promised king. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" is not merely an introductory sentence, but a declaration that Jesus is the fulfillment of Psalm 2.7-8: "I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession'." The Kingship of Jesus takes center stage in this lesson as Jesus first enters Jerusalem and then demonstrates His authority.

Notes from the text:



- » 11.2:
 - See Zechariah 9.9.
 - Jesus purposefully adopts the manner of a king, even impressing the animal into His service with the only explanation being "The Lord has need of it" (vs. 3). However, the choice of a donkey's colt rather than a war horse would also show that this King was not what most would expect.
- » 11.8: a similar act was taken when Jehu was proclaimed king (see 2Kings 9.13).
- » 11.9: a literal translation of "Hosanna" would be "save, please!" Thus, the peoples' cries were based

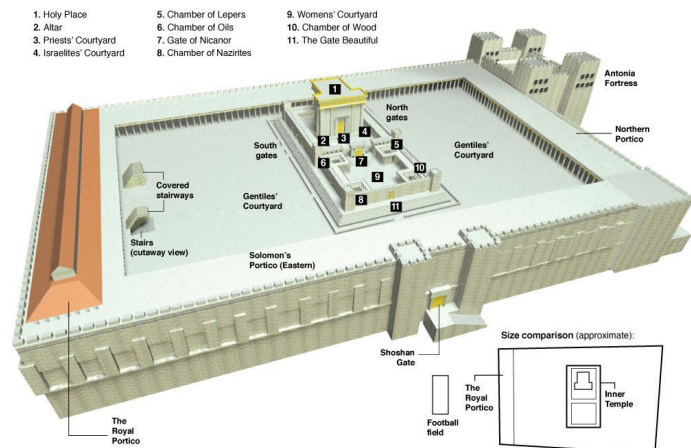
Your Notes

on Psalm 118.25-26.

- » 11.10: what blind Bartimaeus declared in Mark 10.47-48 is now publicly proclaimed by the multitude. The multitude believed that Jesus is the promised King!
- » 11.12-14
 - As we will see, the cursing of the fig tree is an enacted parable showing the punishment that awaited Jerusalem. Significant in this is that Jesus uses His power not to bless, but to curse. Jesus, as King, has both the ability to bless AND to punish.
 - “At this time of year, edible figs were still about six weeks away, but the bland fruit had recently appeared on the tree in late March; they would become ripe by late May. These were the early figs that preceded the main crop of late figs, which were ripe for harvest from mid-August into October. If only leaves appeared, without the early figs, that tree would bear no figs that year—early or late.” (IVP Bible Background Commentary)

Herod's Temple on the Temple Mount

Herod the Great began renovations on the Temple around 20 BC. The expansion of the Temple and the Temple Mount was completed around AD 62-64, only to be destroyed by the Romans in AD 70.



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- » 11.15-16
 - Note Malachi 3.1-3.
 - “For the convenience of pilgrims, the cattlemen and the moneychangers had set up businesses in the Court of the Gentiles. The animals were

sold for sacrifices. It was far easier for a pilgrim in Jerusalem to purchase one that was guaranteed kosher than to have to bring an animal with him and have it inspected for meeting the kosher requirements. The Roman money the pilgrims brought to Jerusalem had to be changed into the Tyrian currency (the closest thing to the old Hebrew shekel), since the annual temple tax had to be paid in that currency.” (Expositors Bible Commentary)

- » 11.17: quotation from Isaiah 56.7. The Temple was to be where the nations could worship the Lord, but by selling animals and exchanging money in the court of the Gentiles the Temple leadership had robbed the nations of the opportunity to worship.
- » 11.23: “Some Jewish texts speak of ‘removing mountains’ as an infinitely long or virtually impossible task, accomplished only by the most pious (the rabbis applied it to mastering studies that appeared humanly impossible to master). Thus Jesus is saying that nothing will be too hard for the person of faith.” (IVP Bible Background Commentary)
- » 11.28: The question of authority is significant. Jesus may have been heralded as king by the multitude (vss. 8-10) but the Jewish leadership did not recognize His authority, even though it had been clearly demonstrated (see Mark 1.22,27).
- » 11.30: Jesus’ question is a significant one for all to consider. Authority must either come from God or man… and we must consider the source of authority for our beliefs and practices.
- » 11.33: “The root of the trouble lay not in their intellect, but in their stubborn wills: they stood self-condemned. The question of Jesus to them was not a trap; it was yet another opportunity for them to realize and confess their blindness, and to ask for sight. Theirs was the unforgivable sin, that constant wilful opposition and blindness that is the sin against the Holy Spirit (3:29).” (Tyndale Commentary)
- » 12.1: see Isaiah 5.1-2.
- » 12.2: the Lord’s prophets were termed His servants in the Old Testament (see Jeremiah 7.25; Amos 3.7;

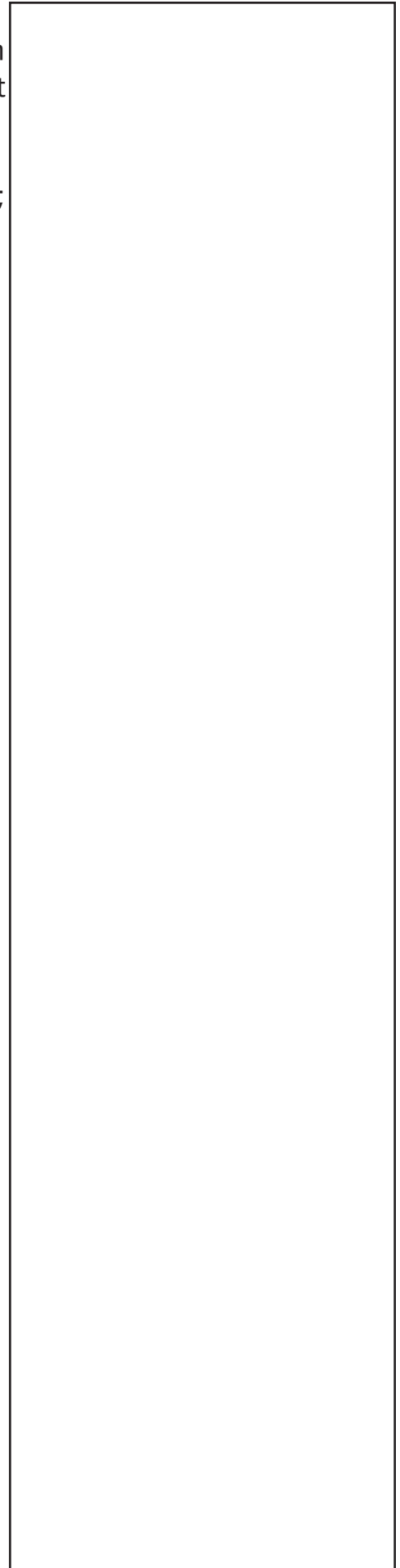
Zechariah 1.6).

- » 12.6: “beloved” may be better translated as “only”.
- » 12.10-11: the quotation is from Psalm 118.22-23, the same Psalm the crowd used in praising Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem (Mark 11.9; see Psalm 118.25-26).

Using the text in evangelism:

1. It’s not enough to proclaim Jesus as King (Mark 11.9-10). The crowds excitedly heralded the arrival of Jesus to Jerusalem, but in one week’s time those same crowds would call for His crucifixion (see Mark 15.8-14). What happened? They rejected God’s cornerstone (Mark 12.10-11); they rejected Jesus because He did not meet their expectations. Rather than deliver them from the Romans, He pointed out their sinful practices (Mark 11.15-16) and foretold judgment because they had not given God the fruit He deserved (Mark 12.9; see 11.12-14). The point for us is that if we are going to proclaim Jesus as King, then we must accept Him for the King that He is. He became King to redeem us from our sins and protect us from the evil one; He did not become King so that we can live however we wish or follow our own futile thinking. If we are going to proclaim Him as King, we need to respect His authority.
2. The importance of authority (Mark 11.28-30). The fact that the Jewish leadership questioned Jesus about His source of authority was not necessarily wrong. Their mistake was not recognizing that Jesus clearly had authority as the Son of God (Mark 1.1). The fact is, authority is derived either from heaven or from man. The chief priests and elders may have refused to acknowledge that John’s authority came from God, but we must recognize that 1) Jesus has been given all authority and 2) we need to abide by His authority (cf. Matthew 28.18-20).
3. The power of faith (Mark 11.23-24). Jesus’ statement about faith has been misconstrued by some to mean that God will give us anything we want, if we just believe. Our requests must still be made according to His will (1John 5.14). However, we must not miss Jesus’ point in this passage: faith in God will have

amazing results. Recall that Jesus had earlier pointed out that the disciples' failure to cast out a demon was due to their lack of faith (Mark 9.19,29) and that Jesus' statement on this occasion was preceded by Peter's amazement that the fig tree had withered (Mark 11.20-21). Of course the fig tree had withered; did they not believe it would? Throughout His ministry Jesus was encouraging the disciples to have greater faith because faith is the key to receiving God's promises... including the promise of salvation (Mark 16.16).



Lesson 9: The Cost Of Rejecting The King (12.13-13.37)



Mark 12 began with Jesus giving the parable of the vineyard. Significantly, in the parable once the tenants of the vineyard killed the master's son Jesus declared that the master would "come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others" (vs. 9). In both this parable and in the cursing of the fig tree (Mark 11.12-14), Jesus was foretelling the judgment that was coming on Jerusalem for rejecting God and His Son. This lesson will show the magnitude of God's judgment on Jerusalem, all because they had rejected the King.

Your Notes

Notes from the text:

- » 12.13: note Mark 3.6. These two groups who normally were opposed on all things, were united in their desire to trap and destroy Jesus.
- » 12.14: "Since the time of Archelaus's banishment in A.D. 6, Jews had been required by the Romans to pay tribute money into the fiscus, the emperor's treasury. Some Jews (e.g., the Zealots) flatly refused to pay it, because it was for them an admission of the Roman right to rule. The Pharisees disliked paying it but did not actively oppose it, whereas the Herodians had no objections to it. The intent of this question was to force Jesus to a direct answer (v. 15a), identifying himself either with the Zealots or with the Herodians." (Expositors Bible Commentary)
- » 12.15:



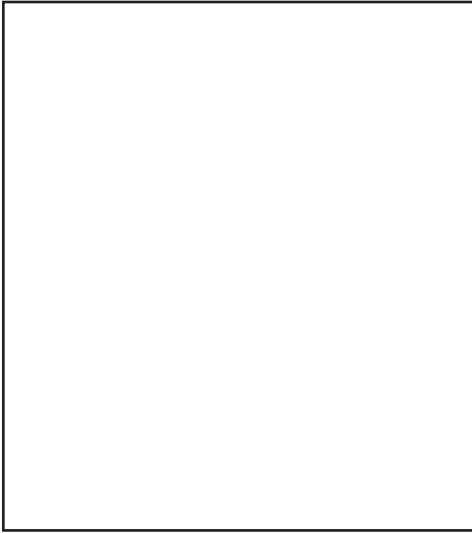
- » 12.17: the new testament consistently teaches that disciples of Christ are to respect and honor government (see Romans 13.1-7; 1Timothy 2.1-6; 1Peter 2.13-17).
- » 12.18: “The Sadducees considered the Mosaic directives alone as binding and rejected what they perceived to be theological innovations. Consequently, they did not believe in a resurrection since it does not appear in the Pentateuch.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
- » 12.19: see Deuteronomy 25.5-6.
- » 12.24: note that Jesus attributed their being wrong belief to not knowing either the Scriptures of God’s power.
- » 12.25: note that the Sadducees didn’t believe in angels either (see Acts 23.8).
- » 12.26: Jesus quoted from Exodus 3.6, from the only section of the Old Testament the Sadducees believed was inspired.
- » 12.28: “The rabbis counted 613 individual statutes in the law, 365 which were negative and 248 positive. Attempts were made to differentiate between the ‘heavy,’ or ‘great,’ and the ‘light,’ or ‘little,’ commandments.” (Expositors Bible Commentary)
- » 12.29-30: Deuteronomy 6.4-5. “God is to be loved completely and totally (Mk 12:30) because he, and he alone, is God and because he has made a covenant of love with his people. In the covenant God gives himself totally in love to his people; therefore he expects his people to give themselves totally (‘soul,’ ‘mind,’ and ‘strength’) in love to him.” (Expositors Bible Commentary)
- » 12.31: Leviticus 19.18. The Jews had a very narrow interpretation of who qualified as a “neighbor”. Jesus declared that we are to be a neighbor to everyone (see Luke 10.30-37).
- » 12.34: note that while this man was testing Jesus, Jesus was appraising the man. We do not know if the scribe ever truly believed and entered the Kingdom (see Mark 1.15).
- » 12.35: see Mark 11.10; Isaiah 9.2-7; 11.1-9.
- » 12.36: see Psalm 110.1.
- » 12.41: “The setting is the court of the women, into

which both men and women were allowed to come, and where the temple treasury was located.” (Expositors Bible Commentary)

- » Chapter 13 will prompt lots of questions because many will assume Jesus is describing final judgment and the end of the world. However, the context of Mark 13 shows that the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 is of primary concern:
 - Jesus’ disciples inquired about the destruction of the Temple (vss. 1-4).
 - Jesus said that generation would not pass away until all had taken place (Mark 13.30).
 - The destruction of Jerusalem fits the larger context; God’s judgment was coming on Jerusalem and Judaism (see Mark 11.12-14; 12.9-11)
- » 13.1-4: context of Jesus’ teaching
 - 13.1: “The temple complex consisted of many buildings and was one of the largest, most magnificent structures in the ancient world; it was twice the size of Solomon’s temple. Construction had begun under Herod the Great before Jesus’ birth and was still continuing at this time.” (IVP Bible Background Commentary)
 - 13.2: this literally occurred when the Roman general Titus destroyed the Temple complex on AD 70. The “wailing wall” that remains in Jerusalem was part of a retaining wall for the Temple.
 - 13.3: an interesting parallel with Ezekiel 11.23 when the glory of the Lord left Jerusalem and stood on the Mount of Olives (east of the city).
- » 13.5-8: Jesus cautions His disciples from being misled.
 - See Acts 5.36-37; 21.38
 - “Josephus claimed that what incited the nation to war against Rome more than anything else was ‘an ambiguous oracle’ found ‘in their sacred scriptures, to the effect that one from their country would become ruler of the world’.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
- » 13.9-13: Jesus exhorts His disciples to be on their guard because persecution was coming.
 - 13.10: while the gospel may not have made it

throughout the inhabited world by AD 70, Paul could say that the gospel had made it through the whole world, perhaps speaking of the known Roman Empire (see Colossians 1.6,23).

- » 13.14-23: Jesus foretells the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - 13.14: note Daniel 9.27; 11.31; 12.11 where the image is used for the desecration of the Temple by Antiochus IV. “most often identify the “abomination” with either the Roman army (cf. Luke 21:20), and in particular the military standards that the Jews considered idolatrous and an abomination, or with the Zealots, or more specifically Phannias, whom they farcically made high priest (cf. Jos. War IV, 147-57 [iii.6-8]).” (Expositors Bible Commentary)
 - 13.15-18: these verses cannot apply to Jesus’ Second Coming from which there will be no escape or hiding.
 - 13.19: “His description of the terrible inferno that engulfed the city can be verified archaeologically. The Roman soldiers set fire to the temple and the city and plundered and slaughtered the remaining inhabitants so that ‘the ground was nowhere visible through the corpses; but the soldiers had to clamber over heaps of bodies in pursuit of the fugitives’.” (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
 - 13.20: “the elect, for whose sake the siege was shortened, are probably the faithful members of the Church of Jerusalem … whose intercession or whose presence secured this privilege, though it did not avail to save the city” (Expositors Bible Commentary)
- » 13.24-27: Judaism judged.
 - Some see this passage as applying to the End, but I believe vs. 30 argues against that interpretation. Judgment was coming against Israel, but God’s true people would be protected (vs. 27).
 - 13.24-25: the prophets used this kind of language to describe God’s judgment on the nations (see Isaiah 13.10 regarding Babylon).
 - 13.26-27: see Daniel 7.13-14. The point seems to



- be that while Judaism is judged, Jesus receives His Kingdom and gathers His people to Himself.
- » 13.28-37: Jesus exhorts His disciples to keep alert.
 - 13.28: “In Palestine most trees are evergreen, but the fig tree is an exception. In the fall it loses its leaves; and when in the spring the sap rises in its branches and the tree begins to leaf out, summer cannot be far off.” (Expositors Bible Commentary)
 - 13.32: there would be signs of Jerusalem’s fall, but Jesus did not know the day (see vs. 18, Jesus didn’t know if it would be in winter)

Using the text in evangelism:

While Mark 13 isn’t about final judgment and Jesus’ second coming, there’s still a powerful lesson for us: we need to “keep awake” (vss. 33,34,35,37). Jesus will return at a time when we are not expecting; there will be no signs. All we can do is be ready (see 1Thessalonians 5.1-6; 2Peter 3.10-13). There is an urgency to responding to the gospel, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” (2Corinthians 5.10)

Lesson 10: Betrayal & Arrest (14.1-72)

Mark 14 begins the best known section of the gospel. We will rapidly study how Jesus was betrayed, arrested, put on trial, crucified and then resurrected in triumph. While many may know some of the details in these passages, they remain extremely important when used in evangelism. Two points will deserve particular emphasis: First, Jesus' willingly went to the cross and second the faith of the disciples utterly failed.

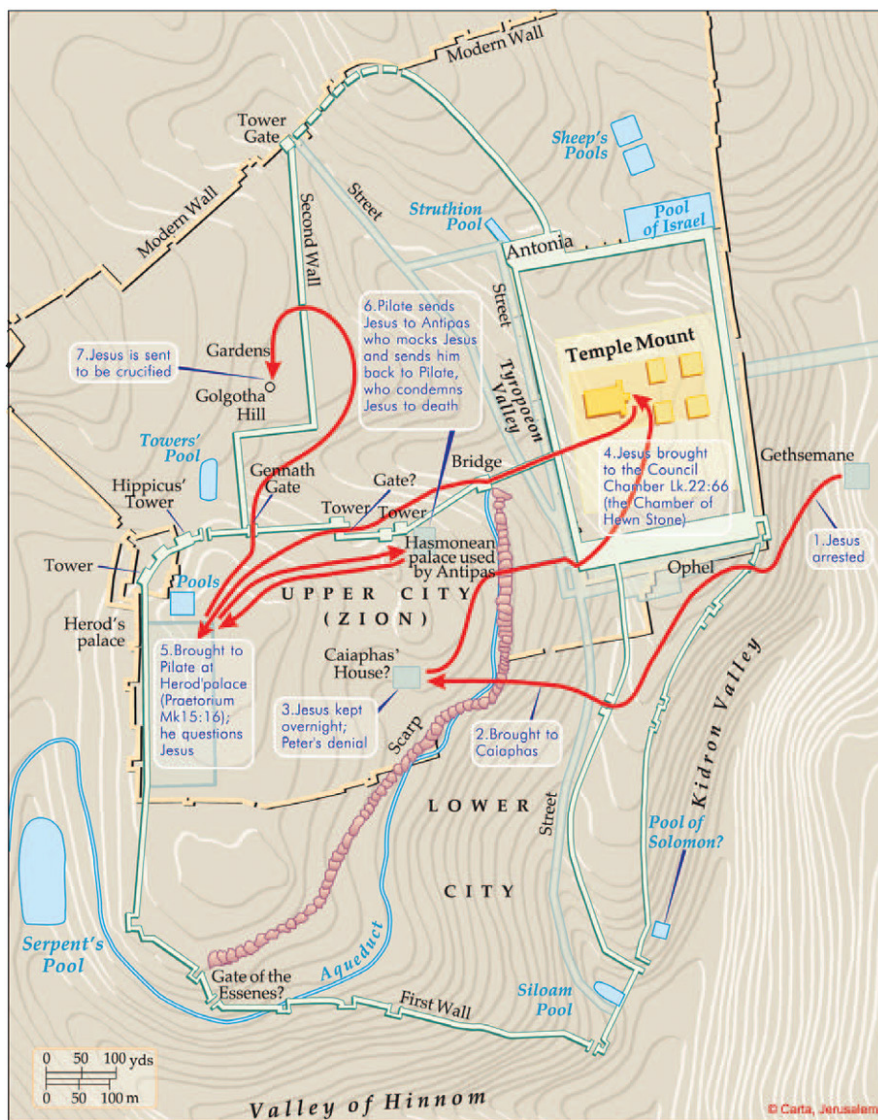
Notes from the text:

- » 14.1-2: "Since Passover (like Tabernacles and Pentecost) was one of the pilgrim feasts, great throngs of people invaded the Holy City to celebrate it. It is said that the population doubled (from twenty-five thousand to fifty thousand) during the week. The chief priests and teachers of the law (the two main bodies that made up the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court) realized that it would be too risky to move in on Jesus With such a highly excitable crowd present." (Expositors)
- » 14.3:
 - John's gospel places this event before Jesus' triumphal entrance (see John 12.1). Mark's placement may be more thematic, showing a contrast between Mary's actions and those of the chief priests and scribes (vss. 1-2) and the betrayal of Judas (vss. 10-11).
 - "Alabaster jars were made from translucent calcite stone and stood five to nine inches high. A narrow neck restricted the flow of oil or perfume. Breaking the whole jar indicates that its entire contents were used. Nard was a highly valued plant from India. Its value is pegged here at three hundred denarii, which represented almost a year's wage for a day laborer. According to Mark 6:37, two hundred denarii was sufficient to provide a meal for five thousand people." (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)

Your Notes

- » 14.4: specifically Judas (see John 12.4-6).
- » 14.8-9: recall that the twelve refused to believe Jesus' revelation that He would be rejected and crucified (see Mark 8.31-32; 9.30-32; 10.32-34). Mary, by contrast, demonstrated at least some faith that what Jesus foretold would come to pass. Thus she acted in faith and why her act is a part of the gospel message.
- » 14.10-11: Judas' betrayal seems to be primarily related to finding a convenient place and time for the authorities to seize Jesus. Remember that they were "seeking how to arrest him by stealth" (vs. 1).
- » 14.13: "Jewish custom required that if a person had a room available, he must give it to any pilgrim who asked to stay in it, in order that he might have a place to celebrate the Passover." (Expositors Bible Commentary).
- » 14.18-20: see Psalm 41.9. Note vss. 10-11 where even though the Psalmist is betrayed, the Lord vindicates him.
- » 14.21: the crucifixion was not an accident, but according to the God's plan (see Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; etc.). However, the fact that the crucifixion was according to God's plan, Judas was still responsible for betraying the Christ. "The fact that God turns the wrath of man to his praise does not excuse the wrath of man" (Cranfield quoted in Expositors Bible Commentary).
- » 14.22: "At every meal, the head of the family took the bread, lifted it up, and said, 'Praise be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who causes bread to come forth from the earth.' After the "Amen" response, the bread was broken and distributed, mediating the blessing to each one who ate. Jesus gives the traditional blessing of the bread a new twist by saying that it is his body." (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary)
- » 14.24: see Exodus 24.8. Jesus' crucifixion at the time of the Passover is significant in that His blood was shed for the forgiveness of our sins. But here Jesus also revealed that His blood was the means by which we are brought into covenant with God, the covenant God had promised (Jeremiah 31.31-33).

- » 14.25: while Jesus' words would have been ominous to the disciples (His blood being poured out for many), He ends on a note of triumph. His death would not prevent the establishment of the Kingdom, but would usher it in. What Jesus had proclaimed (Mark 1.15) was being fulfilled.
- » 14.26: Psalm 115-118 was traditionally sung at the conclusion of the Passover meal. Note the triumph proclaimed in Psalm 118.14-17.
- » 14.27: see Zechariah 13.7.
- » 14.31: note that it wasn't just Peter who protested that he would never deny the Lord, but all of the apostles. Jesus had said they would all fall away (vs. 27) and they would.
- » 14.32:



- » 14.33-34: note that Jesus shared His anguish with His disciples. He may have willingly gone to the

cross (see Mark 8.31; 9.30-31; 10.33-34) but it was at a tremendous cost.

- » 14.35: note that Jesus approached the Father in the same way that others approached Him (see Mark 5.22; 7.25).
- » 14.36: Jesus had previously referred to the cup (see Mark 10.38-39), it was the cup of God's wrath. Jesus, the true Servant of the Lord (see Isaiah 53) will do the Father and not His own.
- » 14.37: note that the Passover was to be a night of watching (see Exodus 12.42). A greater event than the Passover was occurring, but the disciples failed at keeping watch.
- » 14.38: Jesus had already told them that they would all fall away (vs. 27), but they could still seek aid in avoiding the temptation.
- » 14.41: the Father's answer to Jesus' prayer that the "hour might pass" (vs. 35) was no.
- » 14.43: Judas' betrayal was providing the opportunity for the chief priests and scribes to do what they could not when Jesus was surrounded by the crowds (see vss. 1-2).
- » 14.47: this was Peter according to John 18.10.
- » 14.48-49: Jesus understood the motives and fears of the Jewish leadership (see vss. 1-2).
- » 14.50: fulfilling what Jesus foretold (vs. 27).
- » 14.51-52: "The 'young man' is not identified, but the consensus is that he is Mark. Why else would he insert such a trivial detail in so solemn a story? Was this Mark's way of saying, 'I was there'? Why he was there is not explained... Perhaps the main point of the story—and the reason Mark included it—was to show that the forsakenness of Jesus was total. Even this youth forsook him." (Expositors Bible Commentary)
- » 14.53: "The trial of Jesus took place in two stages: a religious trial followed by a civil one. Each had three episodes. The religious trial included (1) the preliminary hearing before Annas (reported only in John 18:12-14, 19-23); (2) the trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:53-65); and (3) the trial before the same group just after daybreak (Mark 15:1). The three episodes of the civil trial were (1) the

trial before Pilate; (2) the trial before Herod Antipas (recorded only in Luke 23:6-12); and (3) the trial before Pilate continued and concluded. In Mark, since there is no account of Jesus being sent to Herod Antipas, the trial before Pilate is a continuous and unbroken narrative (Mk 15:2-15).” (Expositors Bible Commentary)

- » 14.56: the Law required two witnesses AND that those witnesses agree (Numbers 35.30; Deuteronomy 17.6; 19.15).
- » 14.58: see John 2.19.
- » 14.61: see Isaiah 53.7.
- » 14.62: note Daniel 7.13; Psalm 110.1. Jesus words are significant for two reasons. First, by affirming that He is the Son of God, He answered the one question that would insure His death for they would use His words as grounds for a charge of blasphemy (vs. 64). Second, they may have been seated in judgment against Him, but He would judge them!
- » 14.67: referring to Jesus as “the Nazarene” was likely a sign of contempt (see John 1.46). Peter may have some demonstrated courage in following Jesus, but he was in enemy territory. Thus, he would deny His Lord.
- » 14.68: Peter moving toward the gateway was an attempt to avoid further questioning.
- » 14.71: “The importance and relevance of Peter’s denial for the church to which Mark writes is obvious. To a church under severe pressure of persecution it provided a warning. If denial of Jesus Christ was possible for an apostle, and one of the leaders of the apostles at that, then they must be constantly on guard lest they too deny Jesus. The story also provided assurance that if anyone did fail Jesus under the duress of persecution, there was always a way open for repentance, forgiveness, and restoration (cf. 16:7).” (Expositors Bible Commentary)
- » 14.72: see vs. 30.

Using the text in evangelism:

1. Jesus is a willing savior. It can be easy to get lost in all of the details in chapter 14 and miss the point that Jesus willingly died for us. Yes, He prayed that the cup could be removed from Him (vs. 36), but He willingly submitted to the Father’s

will fulfilling the Servant prophecy of Isaiah 53. He could have taken steps to save Himself by staying in crowded areas or leaving Jerusalem or even refusing to answer Caiaphas' question (vss. 61-64), but Jesus did what was necessary for His blood to be poured out for many (vs. 24).

2. The disciples lost faith. Jesus had tried to prepare His disciples for His arrest and death (Mark 8.31; 9.31; 10.33-34), but they refused to believe Him. As a result, they forsook and denied Him (Mark 14.50, 66-72). It is important to note how the disciples forsook Jesus because these same men would go on to proclaim the gospel to the world (Mark 16.15). Their journey from denying Jesus to proclaiming Him is one of the great faith building lessons in Scripture.

Lesson 11: Crucifixion (15.1-47)

While Jesus was hanging on the cross, His detractors mocked Him by saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself” (Mark 15.31). But they failed to comprehend that Jesus’ refusal to save Himself was how He saved others (Mark 10.45). This lesson covers Mark’s account of the crucifixion, the self-sacrifice of Jesus that is at the center of the gospel message.

Notes from the text:

- » 15.1:
 - the morning “trial” was likely conducted to formulate charges acceptable to the Roman authorities. The Romans would not care about the charge of blasphemy (see Mark 14.64), but the claim of being King (Mark 15.2) would be taken very seriously.
 - Pilate was governor of Judea from AD 26 - AD 37. His rule was marked by cruelty (see Luke 13.1) and antagonism of the Jews.
- » 15.2: once again, Jesus answered the only question likely to result in his death. To proclaim Himself as king of the Jews would put Him into opposition to Caesar. Pilate, the dispenser of Roman justice, would be expected to brutally put down any challenge to Caesar.
- » 15.3-5: see Isaiah 53.7.
- » 15.6: “An example of a Roman official releasing a prisoner on the demands of the people occurs in the Papyrus Florentinus 61.59ff. There the Roman governor of Egypt, G. Septimus Vegetus, says to Phibion, the accused: ‘Thou hast been worthy of scourging, but I will give thee to the people’ (cited in Taylor, p. 580).” (Expositors Bible Commentary)
- » 15.7: see Luke 23.19.
- » 15.8: it would seem at this point that the crowd came for the purpose of requesting the release of Barabbas and they were unaware of Jesus’ arrest.

Your Notes

- » 15.11: Barabbas credentials as a patriot were established; he had participated in an insurrection and was imprisoned by the Romans. It is likely that the chief priests were able to use this as a reason for the crowd to choose Barabbas over Jesus. After all, Jesus had shown His disapproval for how Temple business was being conducted and foretold the destruction of the city.
- » 15.12-14: Pilate was walking a political tight-rope. He knew Jesus was innocent (Matthew 27.19) and while normally antagonistic to the Jewish leadership, he could not afford for the people to riot. The chief priests had convinced the crowd that Jesus was a blasphemer and deserving of death. That fact effectively tied the hands of Pilate.
- » 15.15: “Since flogging did not necessarily precede crucifixion, Pilate was still hoping he could dissuade the crowd from their demand for Jesus’ crucifixion (cf. John 19:1-7, where after the flogging Pilate tried to persuade them against crucifixion) by administering a severe flogging instead. In any case, flogging was no light punishment. The Romans first stripped the victim and tied his hands to a post above his head. The whip (flagellum) was made of several pieces of leather with pieces of bone and lead embedded near the ends. Two men, one on each side of the victim, usually did the flogging. The Jews mercifully limited flogging to a maximum of forty stripes; the Romans had no such limitation.” (Expositors Bible Commentary)
- » 15.16: a battalion (cohort) usually consisted of 600 men. The Roman soldiers would have relished the opportunity to humiliate a Jewish “king”.
- » 15.19: “The attentive reader/auditor of Mark will recall that earlier the Gerasene demoniac had run up to Jesus and done homage to him, addressing Jesus as ‘Son of the Most High God’ (5:6-7). Roman soldiers now bow before Jesus, much as they would to Caesar, who for them was the ‘son of God’.” (Word Biblical Commentary)
- » 15.20: “At last, tiring of their sadism, the soldiers tore the robe from Jesus’ back. The fabric had probably stuck to the clots of blood and serum in the

wounds. Thus when it was callously ripped off him, it caused excruciating pain, just as when a bandage is carelessly removed. Jesus' own clothes were now put back on him. The custom was for men condemned to death by crucifixion to be led naked to the place of execution and to be flogged on the way (Jos. Antiq. XIX, 269 [iv. 5]). Jesus, however, had already been scourged and was too weak to have survived an additional brutal beating." (Expositors Bible Commentary)

» 15.21:

- Note Mark 8.34. To be a disciple of Christ requires us to follow Him.
- Rufus is likely the Christian mentioned in Romans 16.13.

» 15.23: note Proverbs 31.6. Jesus refused a drink meant to give comfort to those afflicted.

» 15.24:

- Mark was incredibly restrained with his wording, "and they crucified him". "Simon is ordered to place the patibulum on the ground and Jesus is quickly thrown backwards with His shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square, wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly but to allow some flexion and movement. The patibulum is then lifted in place at the top of the stipes [the vertical beam].... The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The Victim is now crucified As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain—the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through

the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet. At this point, another phenomenon occurs. As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. . . . Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one small breath. Finally carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically He is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen. . . . Hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber: Then another agony begins. A deep crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart. . . . It is now almost over—the loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level—the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues—the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. . . . The body of Jesus is now in extremis and He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. . . . His mission of atonement has been completed. Finally he can allow His body to die.” (Expositors Bible Commentary)

- Note the fulfillment of Psalm 22.18.

- » 15.26: note John 18.36.

- » 15.27: “Perhaps the most plausible speculation is that these men were associates of Barabbas, who was himself involved in an insurrection in which murder was committed (cf. 15:7). These two violent men, who had probably been involved in the same insurrection, were only naturally associated with Jesus, who had himself been condemned for apparently claiming to be Israel’s anointed king. In Pilate’s view it was only fitting for the three of them to be executed together.” (Word Biblical Commentary)

- » 15.29–32: note the irony in these verses:

- For Jesus to rebuild the Temple, He could not come down from the cross (John 2.19; Mark 14.58).
 - For Jesus to save others, He must not save Himself (Mark 10.45).
 - Jesus staying on the cross would be essential for people to “see and believe” (John 3.14-15).
- » 15.33: the crucifixion began at the 3rd hour, or 9am (vs. 25). This darkness would have taken place from noon to 3pm.
 - » 15.34: Psalm 22.1. It should be noted that the Psalm concludes with the assurance that God hears and delivers (see Psalm 22.19ff).
 - » 15.35: “The ignorant and heartless bystanders mistook the first words of Jesus’ cry “Eloi, Eloi” (“My God, my God”) to be a cry for Elijah. (Or, instead of mistaking “Eloi” for “Elijah,” were they indulging in a cruel joke?) Elijah was regarded as the forerunner and helper of the Messiah and was also regarded as a deliverer of those in trouble. So tauntingly! they said, ‘Listen, he’s calling Elijah’.” (Expositors Bible Commentary)
 - » 15.36: the reason for this action seems to be that the crowd could sense that the end was near for Jesus. To prolong His agony, they gave Him the sour wine to drink.
 - » 15.38: this information may have been reported by some of the priests who did become disciples of Jesus (Acts 6.7). Jesus had foretold the destruction of the temple (Mark 13.1-4) and His death showed the certainty of it’s downfall. The Jerusalem temple was no longer needed because Jesus entered the true Temple on behalf of His people (Hebrews 6.19-20).
 - » 15.39: this Roman soldier confessed the truth about Jesus (see Mark 1.1).
 - » 15.41: note Luke 8.1-3.
 - » 15.42: the Jews reckoned the Sabbath beginning at 6PM on Friday.
 - » 15.43: Joseph’s act was one of courage because it would have identified him as a follower of Christ.
 - » 15.44: Pilate’s surprise was because many victims of crucifixion lingered for days before their death. The privations of Jesus’ life and the abuse He endured before His death explain why He died so quickly.

- » 15.45: see John 19.33-34.
- » 15.46-47: the details provided establish that 1) Jesus really died and 2) His disciples knew where the body was buried. This sets the stage for chapter 16.

Using the text in evangelism:

The events of Jesus' crucifixion make for compelling reading, but become even more meaningful when we consider that He endured the cross for us (John 3.16; Romans 5.8). Such a sacrifice compels us to "repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1.15), to take up our cross and follow Him (Mark 8.34) and to serve others as He served us (Mark 10.43-45). The crucifixion is the motivation to be a disciple of Christ.

Lesson 12: Resurrection (16.1-20)



“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1.1). Mark’s gospel began with the declaration that Jesus is the Son of God and as we noted in our last lesson, the Roman Centurion made the same declaration at the cross (Mark 15.39). But how can we know that these declarations are true? Because Jesus “was declared to be the Son of God in power… by His resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1.4). Mark 16 is an essential chapter for evangelism for it not only offers proof that Jesus is the Christ, but shows us how we should submit to God’s Son.

Notes from the text:

- » 16.1: the same women who were present at the crucifixion (see Mark 15.40).
- » 16.3: “Of the sealing of the tomb or the posting of the Roman guard, they knew nothing (cf. Matt 27:62-66). Their concern with moving the stone was a real one because, no matter what kind of stone it was, it would have been difficult to move. A circular stone, though relatively easy to put in place since usually it was set in a sloped track, once established in place was very difficult to remove. It would either have to be rolled back up the incline or lifted out of the groove and then removed. Any other kind of stone placed in front of the tomb’s entrance would be as difficult or even more difficult to remove.” (Expositors Bible Commentary)
- » 16.5-6: skeptics have offered different explanations for the empty tomb, but none of them hold up to close examination. The best explanation is what the angel declared: “He has risen; He is not here.”
 - Disciples could not have stolen the body with the Roman guard (see Matthew 27.62-66). Furthermore, they would not have since they had lost faith at His arrest (Mark 14.50).
 - The women did not go to the wrong tomb, they saw where Joseph laid the body (Mark 15.47).
 - Jesus did not simply faint on the cross, and then

Your Notes

escape from the tomb. First, the Romans made sure that He was dead (John 19.31-34). Second, even if Jesus had succeeded in fooling the Roman soldiers, He would have been so weak that He could not have removed the stone either (cf. Mark 16.3).

- Finally, the Jewish leaders would not have removed the body. If they had, they would have produced the body as soon as the apostles began declaring that Jesus rose from the dead.

- » 16.7: Peter may be singled out because of his denial of Jesus (Mark 14.66-72). Jesus had earlier declared that He would go before them to Galilee (Mark 14.28).
- » 16.8: it is important to establish that none of Jesus' disciples comprehended the resurrection at first. Jesus had predicted His resurrection on at least three occasions (Mark 8.31; 9.31-32; 10.33-34), but His disciples would not believe until presented with definitive proof. Note that the women would go and tell what they saw (Matthew 28.8; Luke 24.9).
- » 16.9: see John 20.11-18.
- » 16.10-11: note how the apostles were mourning and weeping. It was the third day, but they did not expect for Jesus to rise; they were without faith and hope.
- » 16.12: see Luke 24.13-35.
- » 16.13: the testimony of a single woman might not have carried any weight with the disciples, but the collaborative testimony of two men should have been sufficient proof (cf. Deuteronomy 19.15). The apostles remained steadfast in their unbelief.
- » 16.14: John 20.19 adds the detail that the apostles were in a locked room because they feared the Jews. Every detail further demonstrates the complete lack of faith of the apostles. We have noted their lack of faith before (see Mark 8.17-21; 9.19; etc.) and now we see that their unbelief persisted... until they saw Jesus resurrected! (See John 20.19ff).
- » 16.15: The resurrection is the only explanation for how a group of men went from weeping and in fear, disbelieving the resurrection accounts, to going out and telling the world of Jesus' resurrection. These

apostles had refused to believe the testimonies of others, but now they must give testimony so that others could believe (see John 20.30-31)!

- » 16.16: while on earth, Jesus proclaimed that people should “repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1.15). Now, He tells His disciples that people must believe and be baptized in order to be saved. Both repentance and baptism are tied with faith because only when one believes that Jesus is in fact God’s Son will they submit to His requirements. Thus, those do “not believe will be condemned.” Scripture never treats Jesus’ commands for repentance and baptism as optional, but as the true fulfillment of faith in Him. To refuse them is to manifest unbelief.
- » 16.17: faith is always based on evidence. The apostles believed because they saw the irrefutable evidence of Jesus’ resurrection. Others would believe because of the power given to the apostles. Note Acts 5.16; 8.7; 2.4 to see how Jesus’ promise was fulfilled.
- » 16.18: we don’t read of the apostles going out of their way to pick up snakes (it wasn’t a test of faith). However, we do see how Paul was bitten by a viper and no harm came to him (Acts 28.3-5).
- » 16.19: the final picture of Jesus is not of His crucifixion or even His resurrection. It’s of His exaltation and His installment as King (see Psalm 110.1; Daniel 7.13-14; Matthew 28.18). He is not only our Savior who loves us, but our King whom we are to obey.
- » 16.20: miracles were not simply for show, but to confirm that the message of the apostles was in fact from God. Thus, their words, and not the words of men, must be the basis of our faith and practice.

Using the text in evangelism:

The gospel message asks us to put our faith in Jesus (Mark 1.15; 16.16; John 3.16; Ephesians 2.8-9). But what is meant by faith? Is it simply believing something to be true, or is it more? Mark’s gospel helps us to see what is involved in saving faith.

1. Faith is convinced that Jesus is God’s Son. The proposition that Jesus is the Son of God was made in Mark 1.1. Jesus’ teaching and works should have

provided sufficient proof (Mark 8.29), but His arrest and crucifixion were too much for even Jesus' closest followers. The resurrection is the greatest proof that Jesus is God's Son (Romans 1.4) because that is the ONLY explanation for how the unbelieving disciples (Mark 16.14) would go on to proclaim the gospel to all creation (Mark 16.15). The resurrection had proven to them that Jesus is the Son of God, and it continues to offer compelling proof today.

2. Faith trusts that Jesus will do what He promised. Faith is to be placed in the Son of God (John 3.16), meaning we must trust in Him for our salvation. His works proved that He was both willing (Mark 1.40-41) and able (Mark 2.10-11) to save. His willingness to endure crucifixion for us (Mark 10.45) shows that He is worthy of our trust. If He has promised salvation, we can be assured that He will keep His word!
3. Faith compels obedience. This is the crucial point. Almost all would agree that faith is believing that Jesus is the Son of God and that we must trust in Him for our salvation. However, many would claim that obedience to His commands is somehow not faith. Yet Jesus tied faith to obedience! He rebuked His disciple for failing to cast out a demon by saying they lacked faith (Mark 9.14-19) and promised that if they believed they would accomplish great things (Mark 11.22-23). And Jesus tied faith to obedience in His commission to the apostles (Mark 16.16). Baptism is tied to salvation not because the work merits it, but because it is done in faith (being immersed in water will forgive my sins???). We can't say we trust in Jesus for our salvation and then say that baptism is unnecessary because He's the one who said if we are baptized we will be saved. Rejecting baptism, or of any command of Jesus, is to demonstrate unbelief... which will be condemned (Mark 16.16).