

Lesson 1: Introduction/ Inauguration of Jesus' Ministry (Mk 1:1-13)

Introductory Notes:

1. Authorship

There is no internal mention of the author. Early tradition asserts that the author was John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (see NT references: Ac 12:12, 25; 15:37, 39; Col 4:10-11; 2 Tim 4:11; Phile 24; 1 Pet 5:13). The outstanding feature of this disciple's life is his recovery from early failure and the restoration of Paul's confidence in him.

2. Overall Structure

A. Mark's gospel can be broadly divided into three sections:

- 1:1-8:21 – The Galilean ministry of Jesus
- 8:22-10:52 – The withdrawal of Jesus from Galilee and Perea ministry
- 11:1-16:20 – Concluding events of Jesus' life (trial, death, resurrection)

B. Mark does not include a birth narrative. He omits details of Jesus' early Judean ministry (recorded by John) and later Judean ministry (recorded by Luke/John). Over one-third of Mark is devoted to the last week of Jesus' life and resurrection.

3. Specific Features

A. Mark's gospel is fairly accurate chronologically.

B. Mark focuses on Jesus' *actions* more than His *teaching*. (Contrast John's gospel).

C. Mark apparently writes for an audience unfamiliar with Jewish practices/language:

- He translates Aramaic terms: boanerges, talitha cumi, corban, ephphatha, Abba.
- He explains Jewish customs: Mk 7:3-4; 14:12; 15:42.

D. Though much of Mark's material is paralleled in Matthew and Luke (chart below), Mark includes many specific items of interest omitted elsewhere. Examples:

- Jesus was among "wild beasts" when in the wilderness – 1:13.
- Jesus looked upon the Pharisees "with anger" before healing the blind man – 3:5.
- Jesus slept "on a pillow" as the sea raged – 4:38.
- Jesus invites the disciples to "rest a while" – 6:31.
- Jesus "loved" the rich young ruler – 10:21.
- Barabbas was a murderer – 15:7.

e) Note content comparisons (source: William Hendriksen, *Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 6-7):

Inauguration of Jesus' Ministry (Mk 1:1-13)

1. Harmony Notes (We will note additional information from other gospel accounts when it helps to clarify Mark's narrative):

- A. The gospels of Mark and John are similar in that they begin with Jesus in adulthood and the baptism of John.
- B. Luke notes that John began his work in the fifteenth year of Tiberius (Lk 3:1-3), whose reign commenced in the fall of AD 14. Luke also notes that Jesus began His ministry at about 30 years old (Lk 3:23).

Question:

1. Where do the gospels of Matthew and Luke begin relative to Jesus' life?

2. The Inauguration of Jesus' Ministry

A. *John's prophetic ministry* – Mk 1:1-8.

1. There was controversy among the Jews as to the identity of the "Elijah" who is to come (cf. Mt 17:10-13). John, himself, was questioned about his own identity (Jn 1:19-23).
2. Mark emphatically states that John fulfilled the prophecies of Malachi and Isaiah of a coming messenger or herald.
3. Two features of John's preaching are mentioned by Mark: 1) the superiority of the One to come (1:7), and 2) the respective baptisms of the two (1:8).

Questions:

2. According to passages like Mt 3:7-10 and Luke 3:10-14, what was John urging the Jewish people to do? Why was this so important to the coming of Jesus?
 3. What was the general response to John's preaching and baptizing?
 4. Do you think there is significance in John's presence in the "wilderness" and his dress as described in Mk 1:6? If so, what?
 5. How do we learn the fuller significance of John's statement about Jesus' baptism "with the Holy Spirit" (Mk 1:8)? Hint: Did prophets themselves always understand the complete meaning of their utterances?
- B. *The baptism of Jesus* – Mk 1:9-11. Mark notes that John came "preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mk 1:4) and then tells that Jesus, "the Son of

God” (Mk 1:1), “*came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan*” (Mk 1:9). Surely the gospel writers would not want to promote the mistaken conclusion that Jesus had a moral and spiritual need to be cleansed of sin.

Questions:

6. How does John respond to Jesus’ request for baptism (Mt 3:14)?
7. What reason does Jesus give for submitting to John’s baptism (Mt 3:15)? What do you think this means?

C. *The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness* – Mk 1:12-13. While this event is full of significance, Mark bypasses the details (cf. Mt 4:1-11). But note the main characters: Jesus, the Spirit, Satan and angels. This is a crucial moment in the history of mankind and in the purpose of God: if Satan can undermine Jesus now, then God’s plans to redeem man will fail.

Questions:

8. Does Heb 2:17-18; 4:14-16 have any bearing upon this period of Jesus’ life? If so, what? Until when did Satan depart from Jesus (Lk 4:13)?
9. In this opening section of Mark, what two “voices” speak on Jesus’ behalf? What does the second voice say?

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Lesson 2: Early Popularity and Opposition (Mk 1:14-3:6)

1. Harmony Notes

A. Between Mark 1:13 and 1:14 comes:

1. The first chapter of John's gospel where Jesus first meets several future apostles.
2. John 2-4, often known as "The Early Judean Ministry." At this time Jesus:
 - a. "Cleanses" the temple for the first time (Jn 2:13-22).
 - b. Works signs during Passover (Jn 2:23-25).
 - c. Discusses the kingdom with Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-21).
 - d. Baptizes many in Judea (Jn 3:22ff).
 - e. Converses with the woman at Jacob's well and tarries in Sychar (Jn 4:1-42).

B. *All of this occurs **before** the disciples are called to follow Jesus on a "full-time" basis.*

Questions:

1. How is Andrew described in Jn 1:35, 37, 40? How did he come to have such confidence in Jesus at this early stage?
2. How did many in Jerusalem respond to the miracles of Jesus (Jn 2:23)?

2. Jesus' Early Popularity – Mk 1:14-45

- A. Mk 1:14 marks the beginning of Jesus' Galilean Ministry. Jesus spent the greater portion of His time on earth traversing the Galilean district "*preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.*"
- B. The call of Peter, Andrew, James and John – Mk 1:16-20. Further research in the gospels sheds much light on this call. It is not the result of being mesmerized by a total stranger but the invitation of One whom these fishermen already knew well. They have already been introduced to Him by John, heard His teaching, seen His miracles, baptized other of His disciples in Judea. Though they were attending to the family fishing business, they were "sitting on ready," waiting for Jesus' call.
- C. Even so, note the further details of this occasion given by Luke (5:1-11).

Questions:

3. What confidence does Peter show in Jesus (Lk 5:5)? Where did it come from?
4. How does the great power of Jesus make Peter feel on this occasion (Lk 5:8)?
5. What greater purpose does Jesus have for them (Lk 5:10)?

D. Healing of the diseased and demon-possessed throughout Galilee – Mk 1:21-45.

Special Note on Demon Possession: The phenomenon of demon possession is not fully explained in the Scriptures. Apparently, it was a dispensational occurrence and served to visibly demonstrate the superiority of heaven’s messenger (Jesus) over hell’s agents. The NT shows that the Jews tried to deal with this affliction on their own (see Lk 11:19), but there is no evidence for successful exorcism apart from miraculous endowments from God (Mt 10:1; Mk 16:17; Ac 19:13-17).

1. Capernaum becomes Jesus’ “home base” while in Galilee. Jesus casts a demon out of a man in the synagogue and heals Peter’s mother-in-law. As news of this great power spread, “*the whole city was gathered together at the door*” (1:33).
2. Jesus heals a leper, giving Him a strict warning not to tell about the miracle. Unfortunately, the man cannot contain himself and the crowds besiege Jesus, hindering His freedom of movement (Mk 1:45).

Questions:

6. What astonished the people in addition to the miracles of Jesus (Mk 1:22, 27)?
7. In spite of this initial euphoria, how does Capernaum ultimately react (Mt 11:23)?

3. Storm Clouds of Opposition Move In – Mk 2:1-3:6

A. The great excitement surrounding Jesus is tempered by growing criticism from Jewish leaders. Note the increasing severity of the attacks:

1. The healing of the paralytic – Mk 2:1-12. *The criticism is only thought.* Jesus first offers forgiveness to the ill man prompting thoughts of blasphemy. But to verify His spiritual authority, Jesus demonstrates control over nature.
2. Jesus’ association with Matthew – Mk 2:13-17. *The criticism is voiced to Jesus’ disciples.* The scribes and Pharisees were bothered that Jesus associated with those whom they considered morally inferior. Beginning with the assumption that such people were unfit for association, they condemned Jesus for giving them His time. Their arrogance blinded them from the true purpose of Jesus (Mk 2:17).

Special Note on Scribes and Pharisees: Much reference is made to these groups in the gospels, particularly as the enemies of Jesus. **Scribes** were Jewish scholars who specialized in the study and teaching of the Law of Moses. Unfortunately, their overly

zealous scrupulousness robbed the Law of its deeper spiritual significance, and obedience degenerated into mere formal observance. The **Pharisees** were a political party fiercely devoted to defending Judaism from the corrupting influence of Greek culture. "In their zeal for the Law they almost deified it and their attitude became merely external, formal, and mechanical. They laid stress, not upon the righteousness of an action, but upon its formal correctness. Consequently their opposition to Christ was inevitable; His manner of life and teaching was essentially a condemnation of theirs ..." (W.E. Vine, *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 470).

3. Questions on fasting – Mk 2:18-22. *The criticism is of Jesus' disciples.* When Jesus' disciples don't "toe the line" of Pharisaic tradition, Jesus is approached concerning this breach of protocol. His illustrations of the friends of the bridegroom and the new piece of fabric and new wineskin suggest that fasting is out of place with the events currently transpiring. The preaching of the kingdom is *good news*, a time of rejoicing – disease and demons are being overcome; the Son of God is among men; the Law is fulfilled and giving way to the ultimate expression of faith and grace. But neither the disciples who have continued to cling to John nor the Pharisees can "*discern the signs of the times*" (Mt 16:3).

4. Accusations of violating the Sabbath – Mk 2:23-3:6. *First, the criticism is of Jesus' disciples. Then it is of Jesus, but it is not voiced. Nevertheless, it has crystallized into murderous resentment.* Jesus' infringement upon Sabbath traditions becomes the greatest bone of contention between Him and the Pharisees. There are six different episodes of controversy over this issue. Mark records here the plucking of grain and the healing of a withered hand, both of which become occasions of accusation against Jesus. They cannot see past their prejudices and traditions and appreciate that the very Lord of the Sabbath is among them. He, not them, knows the correct application of the Sabbath regulation.

B. The Pharisees and Herodians, mortal political enemies, now unite in their desire to be rid of Jesus. How skewed their value system is! They have the Son of God, the "bridegroom" in their midst, and can think of nothing else but destroying Him!

Questions:

8. Why did Jesus associate with tax collectors and sinners? How might some misuse this incident to justify engaging in unwise associations or sinful practices?

9. When does Jesus say fasting will come? To what does He refer?

10. What verse(s) indicate the intense scrutiny under which Jesus is now living?

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Lesson 3: Jesus' Popularity Builds (Mk 3:7-35)

1. Jesus' Growing Fame – Mk 3:7-12

- A. Even as the political elite are plotting His murder, the common people are swarming to Him. In a day where medical arts were dubious and unreliable (as we shall see later), news of One who could heal “common” diseases as well as horrific possession by demons traveled fast.
- B. As Jesus casts the demons out of their pathetic victims, they acknowledge, “*You are the Son of God*” (3:11). Why does Jesus rebuke them for speaking the truth about Him? Some possibilities:
1. Any acknowledgment by demons might be construed as alliance by enemies of Jesus.
 2. The words of demons, even if true, might be rejected by those who heard.
 3. It is not productive to have wicked persons/beings vouch for one who is holy.
 4. Jesus wished to *demonstrate* His Messiahship before having it *proclaimed* – by Him or anyone else.
 5. Jesus does not need further publicity by anyone, and word that even demons were honoring Him would add to the fervor and fanaticism.

Question:

1. What does Mark note about the multitudes in Mk 1:45? In 2:2? In 3:9? In 3:20?

2. The Selection of the Apostles – Mk 3:13-19

- A. Note how a distinction has been made among those surrounding Jesus. Some who are more devoted disciples of Jesus are distinguished from the great multitudes who seek personal benefits (cf. Mk 2:18, 23; 3:7). From Luke's account, it is also clear that Jesus had other “disciples” who were not those who became apostles, for “*He called His disciples to Him; and from them He chose twelve ...*” (Lk 6:13).
- B. From these adherents Jesus now selects twelve men who will receive special training and a commission that, if they had presently known of it, would likely have paralyzed them with fear. Their training will be gradual and commensurate with their growing faith.

Questions:

2. What does Luke say Jesus did before selecting the apostles? What did Mark previously note concerning this activity of Jesus?

3. How is Judas described from his very first mention in the Scriptures?

3. Demonic Accusations Against Jesus – Mk 3:20-27

Harmony Note: As previously noted of Mark's Gospel, he emphasizes Jesus' actions – His travels, miraculous works, etc. – rather than His discourses. It appears that Jesus at this time delivers His “Sermon on the Mount” (cf. Mt 5-7). Various other activities are also bypassed by Mark.

- A. Comparing all three accounts of this event (cf. Mt 12:22-37; Lk 11:14-23) sheds further light upon the proceedings. The occasion was the healing of blind and mute victim of demon possession. When Jesus heals the man, the crowd marvels: “*Could this be the Son of David?*” (Mt 12:23).

- B. Alarmed by the obvious fact of miraculous power, and troubled by the growing Messianic conception among the multitudes, the scribes and Pharisees attribute Jesus' power to Satan rather than God.

Questions:

4. Where were these critics of Jesus from? What does this suggest about Jesus' fame?

5. In answer to these accusations, what does Jesus say about ...
 - a. Satan's destruction of his own kingdom (see Mk 3:23-26; Mt 12:25-26; Lk 11:17-18)?

 - b. The exorcisms performed (supposedly) by their own colleagues (see Mt 12:27; Lk 11:19)?

 - c. Evidence that the kingdom of God has come (Mt 12:28-29; Lk 11:20)?

 - d. The strong man who cannot defend his own house (Mk 3:27; Mt 12:29; Lk 11:21-22)?

4. The “Unpardonable Sin” – Mk 3:28-30

- A. Many a penitent, conscientious Christian has needlessly worried about committing “the unpardonable sin.” In fact, the very conscience which produces such anxiety is contrary to the stubborn hearts concerning which Jesus made this statement.
- B. Mark’s account helps clarify the issue: Jesus responded “*because they said, ‘He has an unclean spirit’*” (Mk 3:30). Thus the commission of this sin shares the nature of the circumstance which gave rise to it: both are temporary. As demon possession no longer occurs, and the remedy for it – miraculous power from the Holy Spirit – no longer exists, *there is no present occasion to blaspheme the Spirit in this way.*
- C. However, the NT does speak of a resistant disposition that may become chronic or persistent, thus neutralizing the appeal of God for one to repent.
1. Heb 6:4-6 and 10:26-29 warn of a rebellious spirit which can take root in the heart and from which one will not turn.
 2. Such callousness and stubborn resistance is strongly indisposed to change. When Stephen boldly rebuked the Sanhedrin for displaying such obstinacy, he said: “*You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you*” (Ac 7:51). Such a spirit led to the murder of the prophets (Ac 7:52), and it led to the murder of Jesus. There is no hope for people of such a disposition.
 3. At any rate, the fear that one has committed some affront to God or has committed a crime so heinous that God won’t restore him is groundless.

Question:

6. What evidence would you cite from the NT that suggests that *all sins* confessed by a heart of faithful obedience will be forgiven?

5. The Spiritual Family of Jesus – Mk 3:31-35

- A. Mark has already hinted of a breach between Jesus and His family. Witnessing the euphoria over Jesus, combined with their own unbelief (cf. Jn 7:3-5), they concluded, “*He is out of His mind*” (Mk 3:21).
- B. Now, as His mother and brothers try to approach but are prevented by the crowds, Jesus contrasts His family’s skepticism with those who believe in Him.

Question:

7. How does Jesus describe those with whom He feels the closest kinship? Can you relate to His feelings in your own life?

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Lesson 4: Jesus Teaches in Parables (Mk 4:1-34)

1. Harmony Notes

- A. Comparing the synoptic accounts indicates that several events occur on a single day in and around Capernaum: the accusation that Jesus is acting by the power of Satan; the attempt of His family to speak with Him; Jesus' scathing rebuke of the Pharisees and lawyers (Lk 11:37-54); teaching via the parables and the calming of the storm on the sea of Galilee.
- B. We also learn that some of the parables are spoken by Jesus from a boat to the multitudes onshore. Others are given and explained to the disciples in a house.
- C. Setting the events in order helps us understand the growing climate of hostility and why Jesus resorted to parables. We will focus only upon the parables in Mark.

2. The Purpose of Parables and the Climate of the Times – Mk 4:10-12

- A. Even though the multitudes are still flocking to Jesus and the crowds are so thick that He must teach from a boat (Mk 4:1), the nature of His teaching takes a decidedly different turn.
 - 1. There is a superficial carnality in the multitudes that causes them to seek Jesus on self-indulgent grounds. Jesus will eventually drive the multitudes away with deliberately difficult teaching (cf. Jn 6).
 - 2. The opposition of the scribes and Pharisees is increasing, now issuing forth from Jerusalem itself. Jesus has worked miracles, only to have His power attributed to Satan or be accused of violating the Sabbath.
 - 3. Such response causes Jesus to reflect upon previous generations of the Jews who had likewise resisted God's servants. He quotes from the call of God to Isaiah (6:9-10) where Jehovah acknowledges the spiritual deafness and blindness of His people.
- B. In the parables Jesus begins to cull those who truly have spiritual interests.
 - 1. The parables are obscure; they contain truth but it is hidden from the spiritually dull or disinterested. As with the apostles, the parables challenge the hearers to inquire, to search more deeply to find the meaning.
 - 2. On the other hand, those who are merely concerned with finding fault with Jesus or misconstruing His doctrine will have a hard time doing so. As an example, Jesus' figurative reference to His resurrection was corrupted at His trial into a threat to destroy the temple (cf. Mt 26:61-62). Part of the judgment of God against determined unbelief is to withhold the truth (cf. 2 Th 2:10-12)

3. Jesus praises His disciples for their genuine interest: “*Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear*” (Mt 13:16).

Questions:

1. From whom will God take away knowledge and enlightenment (Mt 13:12-13)?
2. Who had wished to see and hear what the apostles were receiving (Mt 13:17)?
3. What does God desire to do for such blind and stubborn people (Mk 4:12)?

3. The Parables of the Kingdom

A. *The Sower* – Mk 4:1-9, 13-20. Jesus uses common agricultural images to teach several lessons about the nature and effect of His teaching – and by extension all teaching that is done to advance the kingdom.

Questions:

4. How does the sower sow? What does he sow? What are the possible implications of this? How might we fail this ideal?
5. Into what kind of hearts does the seed fall?
6. What forces are antagonistic to the seed’s growth and development?
7. How do plants differ in bearing fruit? What does this mean? Are there other NT passages which teach similar truths?

B. *The Light Under the Basket* – Mk 4:21-23. Jesus now turns to a common household illustration of teaching and influence in the kingdom.

Questions:

8. What do you think the shining of the lamp represents?
9. How has Jesus previously applied this figure (see Mt 5:14-16)?
10. What warning does Jesus give concerning “hearing” (Mk 4:24-25)? What had He

earlier said about failure to hear properly (Mk 4:12)?

C. *The Mode of Growth* – Mk 4:26-29. Again appealing to agriculture, Jesus indicates a truth about the growth of the kingdom. From day to day the growth process can be observed via minute changes that are imperceptible. Even with our advanced scientific understanding, it is amazing to think of the change from decomposing seed to fruit-bearing stalk. So it is with the kingdom.

Questions:

11. What does Jesus mean when He says, “*the earth yields crops by itself*”? Does the farmer do nothing in this process? Who gives the increase in the kingdom (1 Cor 3:6)?

12. How does the growth of the individual and the entire kingdom resemble the seed?

D. *The Extent of the Kingdom’s Growth* – Mk 4:30-32. Jesus appeals to the mustard plant to illustrate the expansive growth of His kingdom. The tiny mustard seed is gradually transformed into a large plant that offers shade to the birds.

Questions:

13. How did the kingdom have a “small” beginning? Think of the roles of John, Jesus, the apostles and other cultural factors.

14. Can you find two verses in the NT that describe the significant growth of the kingdom in the first century?

15. How might this lesson help our thinking about the growth of the kingdom today?

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Lesson 5: Four Great Miracles (Mk 4:35-5:43)

1. The Calming of the Storm – Mk 4:35-41

A. A contrast of states:

1. Jesus – Exhausted and sleeping, perhaps not oblivious to the threatening weather that has burst upon them but not troubled by it.
2. Disciples – Anxious, fearful for their lives.
3. Mark’s record indicates that the disciples approach Jesus with a rebuke: “*Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?*” (Mk 4:38). In their fear they misinterpret the nature of His sleep.

Storms on Galilee: The position of the lake in the Jordan rift below sea level with the high mountains to the E and W creates a natural condition for storms. The cool air masses from the mountain heights rush down the steep slopes with great force causing violent eruptions of the lake. Such tempests are not infrequent and are extremely dangerous to small craft.

(Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 2, p. 646)

B. Jesus rebukes the storm and brings immediate calm to the winds and waves. He then turns to the disciples and their agitated state of mind: “*Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?*” (Mk 4:40).

C. The disciples had seen Jesus do much in the way of miracles thus far, but control of the weather is something that still eludes modern man. If the storm wasn’t frightening enough, they now look upon Jesus in a new way: “*They feared exceedingly, and said to one another, ‘Who can this be ...?’*” (Mk 4:41).

Question:

1. How might we wrongly conclude today that God is indifferent or neglectful of us?

2. The Demon-Possessed Man Across the Sea – Mk 5:1-20

A. Describe the man (two men, according to Matthew) possessed by these demons. What was his life like? What does this say about the dominion of Satan?

B. The conversation with the demon(s) – Mk 5:7-13. Our curiosity may remain unsatisfied regarding this exchange, and we must be content with some general observations:

1. The demons properly recognize and identify Jesus and acknowledge His superiority over them (Mk 5:7).

2. The demons realize that there is a definite time of retribution coming upon them (cf. Mt 8:29). They beg Jesus not to torment them, and they do not want to be prematurely cast into the abyss (Lk 8:31).
3. The demons apparently cannot exist in this world in a disembodied state; thus, they request being sent into the swine (Mk 5:12). However, they seem ignorant of the effect this would have upon the pigs. The pigs react to the demons' presence with the same kind of self-destructive chaos as did the men who were possessed.

Question:

2. What light may 2 Pet 2:4 and Jude 6 shed on this exchange?

C. Describe the demon possessed man after coming under the influence of Jesus.

D. How do the residents of the region react to having been rid of such a nuisance as the demon possessed man? What is motivating them to act this way?

3. The Woman with Chronic Bleeding – Mk 5:25-34

- A. This miracle is different from others in that the impetus for healing comes from the patient instead of the “Great Physician.” The woman is so desperate for a cure that she wishes simply to grasp Jesus’ garment through the crowd (Mk 5:27-28).
- B. Considering the insight that Jesus has displayed toward the motives and thoughts of man, it is inconceivable that He does not know who in the crowd touched Him. It seems that He wishes to elicit testimony from the woman, perhaps to fully convince her that He and her faith in Him was the source of the healing rather than mere happenstance. Luke records that *“she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately”* (8:47).

Question:

3. What does this woman have in common with the disciples in the storm on the sea and the residents of the eastern shore who asked Jesus to depart?

4. Raising Jairus’ Daughter – Mk 5:21-24, 35-43

Note on synagogues: An important feature of Dispersion culture was the synagogue. The term “synagogue” means “a bringing together” or an assembly of people (Jas 2:2 - “assembly” = “*sunagoge*”). By metonymy the term then applied to the building in which the Jews assembled for worship. “Severed from the Temple by distance, many of (the Dispersion) had given their primary allegiance to the local synagogue which provided a center of worship, instruction in the Law, and a social atmosphere enabling them to maintain their distinctive identity” (*New Testament Times*, Merrill Tenney, p. 90). Synagogues were found in many cities throughout the Roman Empire.

- A. Perhaps no one in this life is more despondent and desperate than a parent whose child is critically ill. Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue (probably in Capernaum), has appealed to Jesus for help. He seems confident that, even at this late hour, Jesus can restore his daughter.
- B. After being informed of the death of Jairus’ daughter, Jesus still proceeds to the house.
1. Peter, James and John are separated from the rest and allowed to witness the resurrection. The reason for this is not expressly stated, but there will be several other events in which these three will uniquely participate.
 2. Jesus creates a commotion among the mourners when He declares that the girl is merely sleeping. For all their other faults and limitations, these people know death when they see it. So far as natural observation goes, the girl is deceased, not merely comatose or unresponsive.
 3. As with the other miraculous works of Jesus, the effects are instantaneous. They do not naturally and gradually occur, thus allowing for the interpretation that they occurred through normal means.
- C. **Harmony Note:** This is the second resurrection performed by Jesus (cf. Lk 7:11-17). There are three resurrections recorded: the widow of Nain’s son; Jairus’ daughter and Lazarus.

Questions:

4. Find one other example in which Peter, James and John are singled out from the other apostles.
5. What does Jairus have in common with all principal characters in this lesson?
6. Contrast the people of the region of Capernaum/Galilee with those in Decapolis.

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Lesson 6: Tribulation, Tragedy and Triumph (Mark 6:1-56)

1. Rejection in Nazareth – Mk 6:1-6

- A. **Harmony Note:** While Luke inserts this story toward the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, Matthew and Mark place it toward the end of the Galilean ministry. It appears that Matthew and Mark are more chronologically correct while Luke uses the story to set the tone of Jesus' eventual rejection.
- B. Luke reveals that Jesus had selected a Messianic passage from Isaiah and proclaimed, "*Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing*" (Lk 4:17-21). This should have caused the people to rejoice not only that the Messiah had come but that He had been reared in their town. Unfortunately, their reaction was quite different.
1. They struggled with their local knowledge of Jesus' background. They had known Him as a child reared in Joseph's home. This familiarity hindered them from acknowledging the true nature of His works and accepting His rebuke.
 2. Luke records that the townsfolk of Nazareth turned into a frenzied mob and tried to throw Jesus over a cliff (Lk 4:28-29). Jesus, however, escapes.
- C. Perhaps this obstinacy of the Nazarenes is part of the reason other Jews held them in such contempt (Jn 1:46). Jesus "*marveled because of their unbelief*" (Mk 6:6).

Questions:

1. What did Jesus say that so incensed the Nazarenes (cf. Lk 4:25-27)?
2. What does Mk 6:4 suggest about human nature?

2. The "Limited Commission" – Mk 6:7-13

- A. Matthew has a much more extensive account of this in 10:5-42. Jesus begins to expand the preaching of the kingdom to others besides Himself. This is in preparation for the time when *all* of this work will be done by His appointed agents.
- B. Note the following about the limited tour of the twelve:
1. Jesus has already done extensive preaching in the cities and towns of Galilee (cf. Mk 1:35-39; Lk 8:1). Jesus was already a "cult hero" among the masses, not only from Galilee but regions far beyond. This, in part, explains how Jesus could send them out without provisions and expect them to be cared for.
 2. They were sent "*to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Mt 10:6). Thus they were not being sent to heathen cities where there was no common basis of re-

ligious understanding. By contrast, when Paul later traveled among the Gentiles to preach the kingdom, he went with provisions or provided for himself. In fact, he was very careful not to create the impression that he was dependent upon them. Circumstances often change elements of expediency.

3. At this early date in the development of the disciples, Jesus endows them with miraculous power. They will not yet receive the full complement of apostolic powers, but they are able in this euphoric time to heal the sick and exorcise demons. This must have been a time of great excitement and optimism. But Jesus also tries to keep the apostles grounded by issuing grave warnings of storm clouds on the horizon (cf. Mt 10:16-26).

Question:

3. What was fundamental to preaching that the kingdom was at hand (Mk 6:12)?

3. Herod's Paranoia over the Execution of John – Mk 6:14-29

- A. What a shame it is that so vile and wretched a man as Herod Antipas is the instrument of John's execution. But such is the oft-puzzling providence of God. John demonstrated the spirit that the apostles must emulate: he stood up to an immoral, ungodly ruler and didn't compromise or keep silent. Surely this was a sad event for Jesus. His forerunner had been killed for the truth he brought. His own death would not be far behind.

Special Note on the Herods: The family name "Herod," meaning "heroic," is a misnomer. "The entire family history is one of incessant brawls, suspicion, intrigue and shocking immorality" (*ISBE* [Orr], p. 1378). "The fortunes of the Herodian family are inseparably connected with the last flickerings of the flame of Judaism, as a national power, before it was forever extinguished in the great Jewish war of rebellion, 70 A.D." (*ibid*).

Upon the division of the kingdom of Herod the Great in 4 B.C., Antipas had been made tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and Philip was made tetrarch of Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanea and Paneas. The dynastic title "Herod" was bestowed upon Antipas by Tiberius. Antipas figures most prominently in the NT because of his rule over the territories where the prophet John and Jesus exercised their ministries. Antipas' character is sketched by his clash with John over his marriage (Mk 6:14-29). Herodias was Antipas' own niece as well as sister-in-law; he had stolen her affections from his brother Philip. Antipas' own lusts allowed him to be maneuvered by Herodias against his will into executing John. It is Antipas before whom Jesus stands trial (Lk 23:6-12). Antipas was banished by the Emperor Caligula in A.D. 39.

- B. Describe the contrast of John's courage with Herod's cowardice.

4. The Feeding of the 5000 – Mk 6:30-44

This is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels. The disciples return from their mission in need of rest and sail with Jesus to a quiet place across Galilee. The

clamoring crowds, however, will not allow it and swarm like ants around the sea gathering again to Jesus. This presents an occasion for Jesus to work a miracle, not for the benefit of one or two, but *thousands*.

Questions:

4. In spite of the fact that Jesus' rest was interrupted, how did He view the multitudes that followed Him and the disciples around the Sea of Galilee?
5. Describe the moral fabric of Jesus' miracles. What practical effects do His miracles have among those who are touched by them?

5. Jesus Walks on the Sea – Mk 6:45-56

- A. During their return across the sea the disciples cross more than water; they cross a new horizon of faith which allows them to see Jesus in a different light.
 1. Mark tells us that even after the feeding of the multitude the disciples "*had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened*" (Mk 6:52). But after Jesus walks to them across the wind-blown waters and the gales subside, the twelve "*worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God'*" (Mt 14:33).
 2. Though the disciples had seen Jesus do some amazing things, including the stilling of a storm, there was something about this miracle that crystallized their convictions about Jesus' divine nature. "*They were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled*" (Mk 6:51).
- B. Mark bypasses a significant event noted by Matthew: Peter, for a short time, also walked on the water (cf. Mt 14:28-31). As incredible as this is, we should also note that, by this time, Peter himself has worked miracles. While some commend Peter for having the courage to get out of the boat, Jesus mildly rebukes him for sinking in the waves: "*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*" (Mt 14:31).

Questions:

6. Why did Jesus not accompany the disciples initially? What does this say about Him?
7. When did Peter begin to sink in the waves? What can we learn from this?

The Gospel of Mark

Lesson 7: Opposition Strengthens (Mk 7:1-8:21)

1. Controversy on Defilement – Mark 7:1-23

According to Matthew and Mark, this is the last confrontation before Jesus brings His Galilean ministry to a close.

A. The criticism – Mk 7:1-5. Mark explains that the disciples again offend the scribes and Pharisees by violating their customs. Men are sometimes more flexible than the Scriptures would allow (a liberal mindset), and at other times they are more strict (a conservative mindset). The danger in the latter mindset is self-righteousness and the tendency to be overly critical of others who violate self-imposed standards.

Harmony Note: Though omitted by Mark, a major turning point in the ministry of Jesus occurs after the feeding of the 5,000. John reports (Jn 6) that Jesus deliberately challenges those who are following Him merely for food. To the literal mind, His teaching on eating His flesh and drinking His blood sounded like the ravings of a lunatic. Lacking spiritual inquisitiveness, the people disperse. From this point forward the crowds gradually thin out and opposition from the scribes and Pharisees increases.

Jewish traditions: The catastrophes that occurred in connection with the Exile, the infiltration of a foreign culture during the Hellenistic period, and the coercive attempts by Antiochus IV Epiphanes and later the Romans to hellenize the Jewish community increased the Jews' conviction that the tradition inherited from their venerated fathers must be preserved and defended. Now, more strongly than ever before, the Jews felt a loyalty to the covenant and to their cultural heritage that their fathers handed down in its entirety. Institutions, behavior patterns, and holy words had to be maintained as a consciously enforced, living program for life. (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, p. 884).

B. Jesus' response to the critics – Mk 7:6-13. In spite of the fact that the Jews felt they were preserving Judaism by meticulously maintaining traditions, Jesus condemns them for doing the opposite: destroying the foundation of Judaism by neutralizing the Law. He accuses them of:

1. Hypocrisy – Mk 7:6-7. In actuality, their main goal is not to defend the Law but discover evidence against Jesus. They are merely going through religious motions, not devoting their hearts to God.
2. Rebellion – Mk 7:8-9. They “*reject the commandment of God.*” How easy it is for men to rationalize disobedience unto God's word!
3. Heartlessness – Mk 7:10-12. Needy parents are neglected by children who, with the encouragement and approval of the corrupt leadership, dedicate their funds to religious/civil powers. Political corruption is an ancient malady.

C. Jesus' teaching to the people and the disciples – Mk 7:14-23. Jesus restores the

true principle of godliness and purity. Defilement does not come from handling something a Gentile had touched but allowing ungodly thoughts to take root in the heart.

Questions:

1. Where were these Pharisees and scribes from? What does this say about opposition to Jesus?
2. Did Jesus engage Himself in these customary washings (see Lk 11:38)?
3. How might we take care not to repeat these same mistakes of the Pharisees?

2. The Syro-Phoenician Woman – Mk 7:24-30

- A. Having done all He came to do in Galilee and knowing that His time of departure was drawing nearer, Jesus withdraws from the circus-like atmosphere in Galilee and travels with His disciples. This phase of His life is commonly called “The Withdrawal to the North.”
- B. They first head northwest to the region of Tyre and Sidon, but even there His fame will not allow Him any respite. Jesus is again approached for a healing favor, but the difference in this episode is how Jesus answers the request.

Questions:

4. How does Jesus first respond to the request (see Mt 15:23)?
5. What does He say next (Mt 15:24)? How does the woman react to this?
- C. Jesus then rebuffs her with a common slur of the day: “*It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the **little dogs**.*” Even this does not deter the desperate woman; rather, she humbly turns the slur into a request.

Question:

6. What purpose(s) do you think could come out of Jesus’ “unusual” behavior?

3. The Healing of the Deaf Stutterer – Mk 7:31-37

Jesus departs Phoenicia and, avoiding Galilee, skirts the Sea of Galilee into Decapolis. Decapolis was a region east and south of the Sea of Galilee and originally composed of ten Greek cities: Scythopolis, Pella, Dion, Gerasa, Philadelphia, Gadara, Raphana, Kanatha, Hippos and Damascus (Pliny, *New Bible Dictionary*, p. 276). Jesus’ earlier visit to this region was disappointing, but now He heals a man of his hearing and speech impediments.

4. The Feeding of the 4000 – Mk 8:1-10

As news of Jesus' presence in the region spreads the multitudes come for healing. Jesus responds as He always does – with tender compassion for people who are afflicted by physical and mental ills. The people have made an audience with Jesus their top priority, even above eating. Again, although He knows that many in the crowd are interested in Him only for what they can gain, Jesus feeds the hungry.

5. Confrontation with the Pharisees – Mk 8:11-12

The minute Jesus steps foot back in Galilee, which He does in the city of Magdala on the western shore of the sea, the Pharisees and Sadducees together accost Him seeking a sign from heaven (see Mt 16:1-4 for a fuller account of this confrontation). This is the first time these two rival groups are mentioned together, indicating that their opposition to Jesus has become more deliberate and organized. Their harassment illustrates clearly why Jesus was now avoiding Galilee. Jesus is clearly distressed by their persistent unbelief: *“He sighed deeply in His spirit”* (Mk 8:12).

Question:

7. What application does Jesus draw from the weather concerning their blindness?

6. Warning Against the Pharisees – Mk 8:13-21

A. On the voyage back across the sea, Jesus takes the opportunity to again warn His disciples about coming persecution. He spoke to them of the “leaven” of these hypocritical, malicious men, but the apostles failed to catch His drift. They were thinking in literal terms and wondered if He was criticizing them for failing to provide food for the journey. Jesus seems completely exasperated with His disciples.

B. There is both comfort and exhortation in this episode. First, we learn Jesus' patience with those who are slow to learn. These men had been with Jesus for a long time now listening to His speech and gaining a deeper insight into His teaching. Yet they still cannot recognize a figurative word when they hear it. The fault of misunderstanding does not always lie with the teacher; sometimes it is the student's dullness of spirit that fogs communication. Fortunately, the Lord is patient and willing to repeat lessons over and over again until we get the point.

C. Secondly, this sets the example for us as teachers. While a point may be perfectly clear to us, it may be fuzzy to others. If we remember our own slowness to grasp a point, it will help us be patient with those who struggle repeatedly to understand.



The Gospel of Mark

Lesson 8: Focus on Jesus' Nearing Death (Mk 8:22-9:32)

1. Jesus Heals a Blind Man – Mk 8:22-26

- A. It is now obvious that Jesus cannot remain in Galilee without opposition from the Jewish authorities. Upon His arrival in Bethsaida, Jesus heals a man of blindness.
- B. Note that Jesus used a variety of “techniques” in His healing – sometimes merely a verbal command, other times a touch or a prayer, and on this occasion saliva. Why the differences? Possibly to demonstrate that He was not relying on psychological devices such as repetitive motion, a melodious voice or other tricks which prey upon the mind.

2. Jesus' Discussion with the Disciples at Caesarea Philippi – Mk 8:27-9:1

- A. In the region of Caesarea Philippi Jesus begins to reveal more to His disciples of His deeper nature and the future that awaits Him – Mk 8:27-30.
 - 1. Jesus' first question and the disciples' answer reveals the general controversy surrounding His identity. But Peter's reply to His second question indicates a growing conviction within the apostles that Jesus is none other than God's own Son and the prophesied Messiah.
 - 2. Lest they misunderstand His intentions in sending the multitudes away, criticizing the Jewish rulers and remaining outside Judea and Galilee, Jesus affirms that a) He will build His church, b) no force, including death, would defeat His purpose, and c) Peter will have a significant role in establishing the kingdom of heaven upon the earth (see the fuller account in Mt 16:17-19).
- B. Jesus' coming death – “*And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things ...*” (Mk 8:31ff). His death and its attendant factors now becomes a regular topic of discussion and Peter's initial reluctance to accept it demonstrates the need for patient teaching. Before Peter can use the promised keys of the kingdom, he must reconcile the establishment of that kingdom with his Master's death. Further, Peter will have to come to terms with his own death for the sake of the kingdom. Therefore, Jesus teaches the importance of self-denial and loyalty to Him at all costs.

Questions:

- 1. What did Jesus say Peter was thinking about? Why would it have been easy for him to think in this way? How might we be susceptible to the same error?
- 2. What does Jesus demand of those who would desire to come after Him?
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____

3. How does Jesus stress the priority of the soul and its welfare?
4. How does Jesus characterize His present generation? How does He contrast this with the future? What should be our attitude toward these two things?

3. The Transfiguration – Mk 9:2-13

- A. Peter, James and John are again privileged to witness something apart from the others. Accompanying Him to a high mountain, they see Him “transfigured” or altered in appearance and engaged in a conversation with Moses and Elijah.
- B. In his state of emotional excitement, Peter blurts out a suggestion which is swiftly rebuked by the voice of the Father from heaven. On the way down from the mountain, Jesus teaches regarding the prophecy of a coming Elijah. Jesus says it had happened already in the person of John the Baptist, but the Jewish leaders had missed it.

Questions:

5. What rebuke does God give Peter? How do the apostles react to this (Mt 17:6-7)?
6. What was the subject of Jesus’ discussion with Moses and Elijah (Lk 9:31)?
7. What do the disciples not yet grasp (Mk 9:10)?

4. Healing of the Demonic Boy – Mk 9:14-29

- A. Jesus descends the mountain of great encouragement into the valley of failure and controversy. The other disciples had been approached in Jesus’ absence to help a man with his demon-possessed son. Apparently there were varying degrees of this phenomenon, and this was a particularly difficult case.
- B. Perhaps lacking confidence because the Lord was not with them, the apostles fail and the scribes are duly attacking them. As Jesus surveys the scene – the scribal vultures, the self-serving multitudes (who have again tracked Jesus down), the weak father, and His own unstable disciples – He utters His growing frustration: “*O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?*” Even God becomes exasperated with men and women who resist the opportunities given to them to develop spiritually.
- C. Jesus heals the boy with a simple word, but there is no evidence that such power brought the people to true belief.

Question:

8. How does the father react to Jesus' question of his belief?

5. Jesus Reinforces the Message of His Approaching Death – Mk 9:30-32

- A. Jesus returns to Galilee desiring to avoid bitter persecution or unbridled euphoria or both. Jesus continues His teaching on His rapidly approaching death but the disciples remain dull of hearing.
- B. Perhaps they sought some figurative meaning in His words; after all, Jesus had used figurative speech on many occasions and they had failed to catch His meaning. It must have been difficult for these men who had seen Jesus flawlessly answer His critics, raise dead people, calm storms – demonstrate nothing but emotional, physical, intellectual and moral strength – to believe that He would actually, literally die.
- C. And perhaps they could not imagine life without Him; therefore, they simply hardened their hearts to what they were hearing. Everyone does that sometime. But ignoring the truth won't change it. Jesus is going to suffer an untimely death – soon – and the disciples must find the courage to face up to it.

Question:

9. What does Mark indicate that the disciples are afraid of? How does their action differ from other times in the past when they did not understand Jesus?

The Gospel of Mark

Lesson 9: Elements of True Discipleship (Mk 9:33-10:52)

In this section Mark focuses on several incidents which reveal wayward attitudes among the apostles. These must be corrected before the apostles can serve as the ambassadors of Jesus. Jesus teaches on the priorities and perspectives of the true disciple.

1. Proper Self-Assessment – Mk 9:33-50

A. Vying for supremacy – Mk 9:33-37. On the way from Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum, an argument broke out among the apostles as to which of them would be appointed to the highest ranks in the kingdom. This was probably fueled by the witnessing of the transfiguration by the three and the dismal failure by the nine in their absence. At any rate, such a discussion reveals a lack of understanding about the nature of the kingdom which is “at hand.” Jesus seeks to correct this by using a child as an object lesson in humility.

B. Sectarian division – Mk 9:38-41. Perhaps in an effort to turn the criticism of Jesus into praise, or possibly to inquire of the correctness of their action, John tells of a man who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus.

1. John says, “*We forbade him because he does not follow us.*” Whatever the intent in mentioning the episode, it earns further correction from Jesus. They didn’t question the man’s power; they challenged him simply upon the basis that he was not in their inner circle. The disciples did not consider the possibility that Jesus, unbeknownst to them, may have empowered someone else for a special purpose. Pride, the same fault that led to the apostles’ power dispute, also lies behind their sectarianism.

2. In teaching against sectarianism, Jesus does not advocate different practices and doctrines being advanced in His name. Rather, He forbids men to make judgments against others because they are not in the “right group.”

3. Their attitude resembles that of the scribes and Pharisees who have rejected Jesus on the same basis.

C. Offending “little ones” – Mk 9:42-50. Jesus tries to turn the attention of the disciples from themselves to others. Amid their self-centered posturing and unjustified attacks against others, they are laying roadblocks of discouragement before others. Jesus gives them – and us – a severe warning against doing harm to others.

Special Note on “Hell”: *geenna* represents the Hebrew Ge-Hinnom (the valley of Tophet) and a corresponding Aramaic word; it is found twelve times in the NT, eleven of which are in the Synoptists, in every instance as uttered by the Lord Himself. (W.E. Vine, *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 300)

Questions:

1. What principle is Jesus teaching about service and abilities in Mk 9:41?
2. What is the significance of “cutting off” one’s hand or foot or plucking out the eye?

Harmony Note: Mark omits a number of events that have a direct bearing upon increasing persecution against Jesus including: controversy with Jewish leaders at two feasts in Jerusalem; the incident of the woman caught in adultery; the healing of the blind man and the resurrection of Lazarus. Luke and John are the primary sources of information for this period, usually called the “Later Judean Ministry.”

2. Question on Divorce – Mk 10:1-12

- A. Without addressing all the permutations and controversies surrounding the issue of divorce and remarriage today, note that Jesus continues to stress the superior character expected from those in His kingdom. The Mosaic allowance of divorce, itself a product of God’s longsuffering with hard-hearted men, became a tool of treachery. Jesus says this must change.
- B. Jesus emphatically says, “*Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate*” (Mk 10:9). Without immediately running to Mt 19:9 to insert the exception clause, we would do well to ponder the divine ideal for marriage: *it is for life!* The damage done to marital partners, their children and society in general by casual, uncommitted views of divorce places a premium on the sacrifice and selflessness that is required to honor such a lifelong commitment. This is primarily what Jesus wishes to stress to these unscrupulous Pharisees.

Question:

3. How do the disciples react to Jesus’ teaching on divorce (cf. Mt 19:10)?

3. Another Lesson on Humility – Mk 10:13-16

Yet again the disciples take a “hard line” approach only to be rebuked by Jesus. They undoubtedly think they are doing Jesus a favor by running interference for him, but He rebukes them for prohibiting parents from bringing their children to Him.

4. Proper Perspective upon Riches – Mk 10:17-31

- A. The rich young ruler – Mk 10:17-22. Jesus often challenged the faith of men and women by exposing their weaknesses. Under such heat the faith of some blossomed. In others it wilted. The young man now kneeling before Jesus wilts under His demands. Whatever one thinks of the “fairness” of Jesus’ demand, the promise is clear: “*you will have treasure in heaven*” (10:21). The bottom line: the heavenly treasure was not worth the sacrifice to this young man.
- B. Again, note the disciples’ reaction to the demands of Jesus: “*And they were astonished beyond measure, saying among themselves, ‘Who then can be saved?’*” (10:26). The apostles had bought into the conventional wisdom of the Pharisees that the rich were blessed by God and the poor were under His curse. Jesus turns this teaching on its head, as He does with other misguided Jewish traditions.
- C. Jesus takes this opportunity to reassure the disciples that their efforts and sacrifices on His behalf will not go unrewarded – Mk 10:28-31.

Questions:

- 4. What was Jesus’ attitude toward the young ruler?
- 5. Why was the young man unacceptable even though he only lacked “one thing”?

5. A Third Prediction of Jesus’ Death – Mk 10:32-34

Given the growing controversy and attempts already made on Jesus’ life, the disciples are mortified that He is heading yet again for Jerusalem. Jesus warns again of the danger that lies ahead, but He also includes a ray of hope: the resurrection.

6. The Appeal for Promotion – Mk 10:35-45

- A. A charitable interpretation of this event is that James and John, “sons of thunder” (cf. Lk 9:54-56), are troubled by His teaching and wish to be at the head of His security detail. That is, they wish for such positions of power in order to defend Him.
- B. But Jesus again reinforces the idea that greatness in the kingdom is achieved through serving. Unbridled ambition, the treacherous and selfish wielding of power are the root causes of so much that is wrong in this world. The disciples must learn this lesson if they are to wield properly the power of the kingdom.

7. The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus – Mk 10:46-52

Jesus, passing through Jericho for the last time on His way to Jerusalem, heals Bartimaeus and his friend. Jesus is not so self-absorbed in His fate that He turns a deaf ear to those yet in need.

The Gospel of Mark

Lesson 10: Days of Confrontation (Mark 11:1-12:44)

Harmony Notes: I will suggest a possible chronology of the events of Jesus' last week. It is truly a challenge to harmonize all the gospel accounts day by day. Passed over by Mark are the events of:

Friday, six days before Passover: Jesus returns to Bethany before sundown; i.e., the commencement of the Sabbath (cf. Jn 11:55-12:1).

Saturday, the Sabbath: Jesus eats in the home of Simon the leper (Jn 12:2-11).

1. Sunday, the Triumphal Entry – Mk 11:1-11

On the day after the meal at Simon's Jesus enters Jerusalem among great rejoicing and celebration by the multitudes. Jesus has been trying to prepare His disciples for this moment so that the euphoria might not deceive them; Jesus **will** soon die in spite of the grand reception now given to Him. Mark notes that "*the hour was already late*" as Jesus enters the temple; therefore, He retires for the evening to Bethany.

Questions:

1. What had Jesus done that so excited the crowds (see Jn 12:17-18)?
2. Why did the Pharisees call for Jesus to rebuke His disciples (Lk 19:39)?

2. Monday, the Second Cleansing of the Temple – Mk 11:12-19

- A. The next morning Jesus sets out for Jerusalem. On the way, He sees a fig tree that has blossomed early, raising His hopes of finding unseasonable fruit. Finding none He curses the tree and continues to the temple.
- B. There Jesus finds the same corrupt state of affairs as at His first cleansing some three-plus years earlier (cf. Jn 2:13-17). Jesus again whirls through like a tornado overturning tables, scattering coins and barring entry to those intending to sell. He then spends the day in the temple teaching and healing, thus honoring its purpose.
- C. The reaction of the Pharisees to this commotion is predictable: fearful of His popularity they conspire to murder Him. Jesus again leaves Jerusalem for the night. The warnings of Jesus of what would happen to Him in Jerusalem are swiftly materializing.

Question:

3. Why did the leaders not apprehend Jesus immediately (cf. Lk 19:47-48)?
- #### **3. Tuesday, a Day of Great Controversy – Mk 11:20-12:37**

- A. Returning to Jerusalem the next morning, the disciples notice that the fig tree, green and leafy the day before, is now *“dried up from the roots”* (Mk 11:20-26).
1. Jesus turns this into another lesson on faith and prayer. This is a common theme during the last months of Jesus’ ministry as He tries to prepare the disciples for what lies ahead.
 2. The disciples must proceed through upcoming tribulations with utmost confidence in God’s power to accomplish His will. There will be many times when it seems that their fragile human efforts will be overpowered by forces of evil. They will be discouraged and tempted to draw inward, avoid confrontations or quit altogether. Jesus constantly reinforces the need for strength, perseverance, assurance and reliance upon higher powers: *“Have faith in God”* He urges them.

Question:

4. What weakness ruins effective prayer? Where else in the NT is this taught?

- B. Jesus’ authority questioned – Mk 11:27-33. Jesus is interrupted while teaching and challenged by the Pharisees concerning His authority, but He turns the tables on them with a counter question about John’s authority. Their equivocation exposes their dishonesty.
- C. Parables of condemnation – Mk 12:1-12. Next, Jesus tells three parables (cf. Matthew 21:28-22:14; Mark only includes one) which are stinging rebukes of the Pharisees’ self-righteous rejection of God’s messengers. In these thinly veiled stories the Jewish rulers *“knew He had spoken the parable against them,”* and their rage against Him continues to mount.

Question:

5. Of what Scripture does Jesus ask *“Have you not read?”*

- D. Questions of entrapment – Mk 12:13-34. Now thoroughly humiliated and incensed, the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians launch an all-out attack against Jesus’ credibility.
1. First, Jesus is questioned by Pharisees and Herodians, *“spies who pretended to be righteous”* (Lk 20:20), on the subject of Roman taxation (Mk 12:13-17). The question is designed to incriminate Jesus no matter how He answers. If He advocates paying taxes, He alienates the Jewish zealots who resent Roman rule. If He counsels non-payment, He will be accused of rebellion. Jesus’ answer provides a valuable lesson in controversy: When we are confronted by an opponent with only two choices, the true answer often lies outside of those choices.
 2. Then the Sadducees pose a hypothetical question of resurrection (Mk 12:18-27), but they, too, meet their match. Their question is based upon an assumption in a realm they know nothing about (nor do they believe in; hence, the hypocrisy behind the question). But they are talking to the One *who came from that realm!*

He knows the nature of relationships in heaven, and earthly marriage will not be part of it. *“After that they dared not question Him anymore”* (Lk 20:40).

3. Seeing the utter failure of the Sadducees, the Pharisees try to stir controversy over His view of the greatest commandment (Mk 12:28-34). But rather than diving in to some hair-splitting controversy that would ignite debate, Jesus goes to the heart of all obedience. Their lawyer is forced into to humble agreement with His wise and balanced answer.

Question:

6. What does the lawyer’s answer indicate about him?

E. Jesus turns the tables – Mk 12:35-37. Now it is Jesus’ turn to quiz the Pharisees. He wants to know from these supposed experts in the Law how it is that David calls his own descendant “Lord.” His question illuminates the divine nature of the Messiah which the Pharisees refused to admit. Not only did His enemies fail to make Jesus incriminate Himself, they were shamed into silence by His return questions: *“And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore”* (Mt 22:46). These dishonest, conniving, hateful rebels are through with Jesus, but He is not yet through with them.

F. Jesus now utters His last **public** discourse; its heat melts the Pharisees like wax, sealing His fate. Mark only gives a synopsis of the graphic condemnation, but Matthew has a fuller account (Mk 12:38-40; Mt 23:1-39). In righteous indignation Jesus pronounces “woes” upon these *“scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.”* He publicly and forcefully denounces their pride, estrangement from the kingdom, fraud, empty zeal, false oaths, neglect of the Law’s great principles, inward corruption, murderous rebellion, culminating in this outburst: *“Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?”*

Questions:

7. Read Mt 23:1-36 and list the different things that Jesus calls the scribes and Pharisees. Are there any warnings in this for us today? What factors might make us tend to replicate the mistakes of the Pharisees?

G. Though His fate is now assured and death is near, Jesus does not overlook the generosity of the poor widow (Mk 12:41-44).

The Gospel of Mark

Lesson 11: The Fateful Night of Passover (Mk 13:1-14:52)

Harmony Note: If this proposed chronology is correct, the last events of Tuesday are the lengthy discourse of Jesus on the coming tribulation and the arrangements of Judas to betray Jesus. Note the chronological reference in Mk 14:1 – “*After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread ...*”. This would be Tuesday afternoon, for on Thursday evening the Sabbath/Passover would commence.

1. Warnings of Coming Tribulation – Mk 13:1-37

A. This chapter and its parallel in Mt 24 have generated much debate through the centuries. The major issue is: Does Jesus speak only of the coming destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, or does He also allude to the final judgment?

B. Jesus clearly indicates that a definite event will transpire when “*not one stone (of the temple) shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down*” (Mk 13:2). Signs to watch for: claims of false messiahs (Mk 13:5-6, 21-23); political and military unrest (Mk 13:7-8a); increase of natural catastrophe (Mk 13:8b); increased persecution (Mk 13:9, 11-13); the “abomination of desolation” (Mk 13:14).

C. Instructions on how to respond to the signs of impending danger: (List each)

1. Those in Judea should _____.

2. Those on the housetops should not _____.

3. Those in the field should not _____.

4. Woe to _____.

5. Pray that _____.

D. Jesus seems to restrict His reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by noting: “*Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place*” (Mk 13:30). This is a “bookend” observation along with Jesus’ earlier vow that “*all these things will come upon this generation*” (Mt 23:36).

E. Jesus “switches gears” in Mk 13:32-37 and speaks of events of uncertain timing, that no warning signs accompany. Though the transition is subtle, Jesus now seems to be answering the apostles’ first question: “*And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?*” (Mt 24:3). His initial warning about the fall of Jerusalem is a “first things first” observation. He says, in essence, “Before you worry about the end of the age, you had better pay attention to the annihilation of Jerusalem. If you are not prepared for it, you may lose your life or your faith, or both.”

Questions:

1. How will God moderate these events?
2. What OT prophet does Jesus quote?
3. What do you think about the language in Mk 13:24-27? Compare with Jesus' words in Mt 26:64. See also OT references such as Is 34:1-4 and Ezk 32:7-8.

2. Arrangements for Jesus' Arrest – Mk 14:1-11

- A. Presumably, as Jesus is on the Mount of Olives gazing upon the temple across the Kidron Valley and telling His disciples of its coming demise, the Jewish leaders are feverishly plotting the event that will bring the temple down – the murder of God's Son. At first, however, they balk because of His popular appeal – Mk 14:1-2.
- B. The motive for Judas' betrayal – Mk 14:3-9. **Harmony Note:** John's account places this meal in the house of Simon the leper on the previous Saturday. Both Matthew and Mark insert the story at this point, possibly in order to explain the motive leading to Judas' actions. John identifies Judas as the principal one who criticizes Mary for her "wastefulness" (Jn 12:4-5).
- C. Pure greed, perhaps combined with humiliation and bitterness at Christ's rebuke of him and praise for Mary, lies behind Judas' betrayal – Mk 14:10-11. Judas' role in the plot is clear: inform the Jewish leaders of when and where Jesus can be covertly apprehended so as to avoid a riot.

Questions:

4. What does the criticism of Mary's good works say about human nature?
5. How are we fulfilling prophecy by studying of this event?

3. The Passover and Institution of the Lord's Supper – Mk 14:12-31

- A. **Thursday:** (If our sequence is correct, **Wednesday's** activities are skipped in the gospels, possibly being a day spent quietly with the disciples out of the public arena.) Preparation for the meal is made by Peter and John. This day is called "*the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb*" (Mk 14:12). Thus Jesus did not eat the Passover early in anticipation of His death as some propose. The meal was eaten after sunset on Thursday (early Friday by Jewish reckoning) and Jesus died on Friday afternoon.
- B. **Friday:** It is now about twelve hours before Jesus' crucifixion.
 1. During the meal another flare-up over supremacy prompts Jesus to wash His disciples' feet as an object lesson in humility (Jn 13:1-20).
 2. Jesus then foretells Judas' betrayal (Mk 14:18-21). Judas is identified in several

ways: “*He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish*” (Mt); “*the hand of My betrayer is with Me on the table*” (Lk); “*he to whom I shall give a piece of bread*” (Jn). The disciples, however, do not understand the significance of Jesus’ words.

3. The specific order of events is a bit unclear, but Luke’s account along with 1 Cor 11:23-26 indicates that Jesus gave the bread as a memorial during supper and the cup after the meal. In so doing Jesus institutes a living memorial, an active proclamation of His death by His believers until His return.

C. Peter’s denial is then predicted (Mk 14:27-31). Safe in the comforting presence of Jesus, Peter can neither envision His death nor can he imagine a situation wherein he would disavow knowing the Lord. Yet both events are just hours away.

Questions:

6. What demonstrates that Jesus is aware and in control of the unfolding events?

7. What does Judas ask during the meal (Mt 26:25)?

4. The Arrest in Gethsemane – Mk 14:32-50

Harmony Note: Jesus’ discourse about the coming of the Holy Spirit, John 14-16, is omitted by Mark.

A. Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane – Mk 14:32-42. Gethsemane means “oil press,” a fitting name for a garden on the Mount of Olives. And it is Jesus who is now being pressed by sorrow and dread. Jesus, accompanied by His favorite three friends, spends His final moments before His arrest in fervent prayer, both stating His deepest requests to God and expressing submission to the Father’s will.

B. (All the gospels must be read for a complete account of what transpires). Mark says that Judas wanted Jesus led away safely (14:44), but Jesus confronts him with the true nature of his act: “*Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?*” (Lk 22:48). A brief skirmish erupts as the disciples attempt to prevent Jesus’ arrest, but Jesus quells it and secures the release of His companions. The first phase of the plot is successful: Jesus is apprehended under the cover of darkness while His adoring crowds sleep in their beds.

Question:

8. Describe Jesus’ emotional state as the time of His arrest draws near. How does He moderate His intense feelings to avoid death?

The Gospel of Mark

Lesson 12: The Trials and Crucifixion (Mk 14:53-15:47)

Harmony Note: It is necessary to closely compare all four gospels to get a complete and accurate picture of this process. We will focus on Mark's account and make harmony notes where appropriate.

Friday (continued):

1. The Jewish Trial: Stages 1, 2 & 3 – Mk 14:53-15:1

Harmony Note: Stage 1: John records that Jesus is first brought before Annas, who had served as high priest from AD 7-15 (Jn 18:12-14, 19-23). While Annas still retains the honorary title, his son-in-law, Caiaphas, holds the office from AD 18-36 (see Lk 3:2). Jesus receives His first physical abuse while standing bound before this Jewish magistrate, merely the beginning of the mockery of justice to unfold over the next few hours.

A. **Stage 2:** In this stage (Mk 14:53-65), a parade of false witnesses fails to make a sensible charge against Him (Mk 14:55-60). Jesus remains silent but is finally asked the question He can neither ignore or deny: "*Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?*" His affirmative answer opens the floodgate of blasphemy and abuse.

B. Peter's denial – Mk 14:66-72.

1. Peter had fled with the others at Jesus' arrest but managed to gain entry to the court of the high priest. But his courage in following so closely is bolstered by anonymity.
2. As this is gradually stripped away, Peter then hides behind denial. As the pressure mounts, Peter's denials become more vehement until, finally, he affirms his claim with cursing and swearing.
3. It is Luke who records these chilling words: "*And the Lord turned and looked at Peter*" (Lk 22:61). Surely Peter would not have survived such failure if the Lord had not told him of it beforehand and had not prayed for him: "*Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail*" (Lk 22:31-32).

C. **Stage 3:** The Jewish court reconvenes after daylight on Friday morning to formalize the decision already made and draw up charges to present to Pilate (Mk 15:1).

Harmony Note: When it finally becomes clear that Jesus is to die, Judas is overcome by grief and takes his own life (Mt 27:3-10; cf. Ac 1:18-19).

Questions:

1. What could the false witnesses not do (Mk 14:59)?

2. What is fundamentally wrong with the conclusion of the council in Mk 14:63-64?

2. The Roman Trial: Stages 1, 2 & 3 – Mk 15:2-15

A. **Stage 1:** The Jews present Jesus to Pilate with an array of flimsy accusations including sedition among the Jews, tax-evasion and rebellion to Rome. Mark focuses on the silence of Jesus and His refusal to respond to patently illegitimate proceedings. This leads to an exchange between Pilate and Jesus on the nature of His kingdom (Jn 18:36-38). Jesus confesses Himself for the third time but explains to Pilate that His kingdom is not a threat to Roman authority.

Harmony Note: Stage 2: When Pilate balks at judgment against Jesus, the Jews note that He is a Galilean (Lk 23:5). This appears to be an attempt to incite Pilate against Jesus in view of his recent slaughter of some Galileans in the temple (Lk 13:1). This backfires, however, when Pilate uses the Galilean reference to transfer the case to Herod Antipas (Lk 23:6-12).

B. **Stage 3:** Pilate is now desperate to extricate himself from the situation.

1. He is troubled by his wife's dreams concerning Jesus (Mt 27:19), his own sense of Jesus' innocence, and the ulterior motives with which Jesus has been delivered to him by the Jewish leaders.
2. Pilate tries to use the customary release of a prisoner (a gesture of good will by the hated Roman occupiers) as an end-run around the obstinate Jewish leaders. Appealing directly to the crowd, Pilate asks if they wish Jesus to be released. But the chief priests infiltrate the crowd and persuade them to ask for the release of Barabbas (Mk 14:6-15).
3. However, Pilate is a moral coward enslaved to power. He is willing to sacrifice an innocent man to maintain his position in the Roman hierarchy. Outmaneuvered at every turn by the Jews, Pilate finally capitulates and delivers Jesus unto crucifixion.

Questions:

3. What interest does Herod show in Jesus (cf. Lk 23:8)?

4. What strongly attracted the crowd to Barabbas (besides the priests' urging)?

5. What symbolic act does Pilate engage in at the end of the trial (cf. Mt 27:24)?

3. The Crucifixion and Burial – Mk 15:16-47

A. After callous humiliation and a brutal beating, Jesus is crucified at 9:00 a.m.

1. His garments are divided among the soldiers, and a sign is affixed to the cross

identifying Him as “King of the Jews.” Jesus endures a barrage of ridicule and blasphemy from passersby, the chief priests, the soldiers and the criminals hanging beside Him. Jesus, however, continues to look to the needs of others.

Harmony Note: Mark stays with his theme of the *events* of Jesus’ life as opposed to His *words*. But harmonizing the gospel stories we find that Jesus utters seven different phrases prior to His death:

What was the first saying of Jesus from the cross (Lk 23:34)?

What was the second saying of Jesus from the cross (Lk 23:43)?

What was the third saying of Jesus from the cross (Jn 19:26-27)?

What was the fourth saying of Jesus from the cross (Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34)?

What was the fifth saying of Jesus from the cross (Jn 19:28)?

What was the sixth saying of Jesus from the cross (Jn 19:30)?

What was the seventh saying of Jesus from the cross (Lk 23:46)?

B. Symbolic of the terrible events which are being played out upon the earth, darkness covers the land from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Finally, Jesus expires.

Harmony Notes: Upon His death the veil in the temple is torn from top to bottom, the earth quakes, a number of godly people are raised from their tombs (Mt 27:51-53). On beholding these physical phenomena and considering His claims and character, the Roman executioners acknowledge Jesus to be both righteous (Lk 23:47) and the Son of God (Mt 27:54). In response to a request from the Jews, the executioners confirm the death of Jesus (Jn 19:31-37).

C. Joseph of Arimathea, one of the Sanhedrin Council members, petitions Pilate for the body of Jesus. The request is granted and Jesus is buried in a new tomb.

Questions:

6. What change has come over Joseph of Arimathea (Jn 19:38)?

7. What was done to insure that the tomb would not be disturbed (Mt 27:62-66)?

The Gospel of Mark

Lesson 13: The Resurrection and Commission of Jesus (Mk 16)

Harmony Note: Again, Mark is very brief in his account, but we must take note that this series of events represents the very crux of Christianity. Many men die daily, and two died beside Jesus, *but resurrection sets the death of Jesus apart from all others*. Consider the following possible historical sequence of resurrection appearances:

[Interestingly, *the* pivotal event in all of human history is not described in the Scriptures. Testimony of the resurrection of Jesus is given by angels (Mt 28:6; Mk 16:6; Lk 24:6), and the *opening of the tomb* is described (Mt 28:2-4), but the actual raising of Jesus and its accompanying phenomena is not recorded.]

1. Sunday, the first day of the week:

Appearance #1: Mary Magdalene, who has followed Peter and John back to the tomb, is the first to see Jesus (Mk 16:9-11; Jn 20:11-18). Overcome by grief and confusion, Mary does not recognize Jesus at first; only when He calls her name does the reality sink in. She reports to the disciples what she has seen but, as Mark notes, she is not believed.

Appearance #2: Jesus then appears to the rest of the women who had come to the tomb (Mt 28:9-10). Jesus repeats the message of the angels spoken earlier to them: *“tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”*

Appearance #3: Mk 16:12-13; Lk 24:13-35. In the afternoon on Sunday, two of the disciples are traveling to Emmaus, a town seven miles to the west of Jerusalem. As they discuss the recent events Jesus joins them on their walk, *“but their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.”* When they are allowed to recognize His true identity, they immediately return to Jerusalem with their good news though it was *“toward evening”* and the day was *“far spent.”*

Appearance #4: At some point during the day Jesus appears to Peter (Lk 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5). Mark notes that the disciples from Emmaus were not believed (Mk 16:13) but Luke says Peter had seen Jesus. Is this contradictory? No, for doubts and disbelief will continue even while stories of Jesus’ appearances continue to accumulate. Thomas, for instance, disbelieves until he sees Jesus with his own eyes.

Appearance #5: Then, late on the first day of the week, Jesus presents Himself to the ten (Lk 24:36-43; Jn 20:19-25). Their reaction: terrified, frightened, troubled, doubting, glad, unbelieving, hard-hearted, still did not believe for joy, marveled. The disciples are riding an emotional roller-coaster; their emotions are interfering with their rational conclusions of what they are seeing and hearing.

2. One week after the resurrection:

Appearance #6: Thomas had not been present when Jesus appeared a week earlier to the other ten apostles (Jn 20:24-25). Note that eight days after the resurrection the disciples still have not departed for Galilee. Granting that they may have stayed in Jerusalem until the feast

was over, it appears that the disciples are reluctant to act. It takes this sixth appearance to get them moving north where Jesus can spend a few days with them out of the public eye.

Appearance #7: After their return to Galilee the apostles are still unsure of what they should be doing, so Peter does what comes naturally to him: he goes fishing (Jn 21:1-14). Jesus appears to them and prepares a breakfast for them on the shore. After the meal, Jesus questions Peter “... *do you love me more than these?*” (Jn 21:15-17). Not very long before Peter had boasted, “*Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be*” (Mk 14: 29). Shortly thereafter, he denied three times even knowing Jesus. Now Jesus gives him three opportunities to affirm his love. Peter’s declarations seem subdued and humble.

Appearance #8: The eleven gather to Jesus on an unspecified mountain in Galilee, and even at this late date some were not entirely sure of what was taking place before their eyes. Nevertheless, Jesus commissions them to “*go and make disciples of all the nations.*” All of Jesus’ teaching, all of His works, all of His preparation of these few humble, unso-phisticated and relatively uneducated men is now put to the test. It is time for them to put the boats and nets aside once and for all and fish in the sea of humanity.

Various other appearances: The gospel accounts are supplemented by Paul’s mention of resurrection appearances in 1 Cor 15:6-7. Some twenty years after the fact, Paul states that Jesus was seen by over five hundred brethren at one time. When and where this took place is not specified though many commentators without warrant try to connect it with the appearance on the mountain just mentioned. The other special appearance was to James. While James was the first apostle to die a martyr, there is no indication that this was the reason for Jesus’ appearance to him.

The ascension: Mk 16:19; Lk 24:44-53; Ac 1:4-12. Jesus now completes His forty days of post-resurrection teaching and appearances and with it His earthly ministry. The foundation is now laid upon which the apostles and others will build. This appearance is near Bethany on the east side of the Mount of Olives, the same hill where Jesus had been taken from them by force just over a month previously. He will now leave them again, not to ascend a cross but into heaven itself at the right hand of God. The disciples are instructed to remain in the city until “*the Promise of the Father*” comes upon them; i.e., “*you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now*” (Ac 1:4-5). With great joy and wonder the apostles watch their Lord rise and disappear into the clouds. Truly these men were privileged to see and hear such wonders. But the privilege only prepares them for the staggering task which lies ahead.

3. The Great Commission – Mk 16:15-18

- A. Whether the statement of intent in Mk 16:15-16 is parallel to the one in Mt 28:19-20 is uncertain. They seem to be spoken in different venues.
 1. Whatever the case, note how central being immersed is to the commission being given. No one who has a balanced view of the Scriptures would argue that *all one has to do* to be saved is believe and be baptized. Repentance from sin, verbal confession of the person of Jesus and consistent compliance with His will are additional conditions. However, one would be hard-pressed to say, as many today do, that baptism is *non-essential* or merely *optional*, something someone *should* do but doesn’t *have* to do.

2. The two parts of Jesus' statement stand alone as true:

He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.
He who does not believe shall be condemned.

3. The second statement does not negate the first; i.e., that baptism is necessary for salvation. Jesus simply notes that those who do not believe – *regardless of what else they may or may not do* – will not be saved. “*Without faith it is impossible to please Him ...*” (Heb 11:6).

B. The accompanying signs – Mk 16:17-18, 20.

1. It is perhaps understandable that someone would at first be perplexed as to why Jesus' first statement is considered presently valid but this statement is not.

2. It must be realized that they apply to two completely different things. One involves the response of believers universally, for all time. Forever, all who will be saved will be so by the death of Jesus Christ, and their union with His body will be secured by baptism. This is the decree of Jesus, Himself, and His apostles.

3. But the miraculous signs were not designed – again by Jesus' own words – to be a permanent fixture of all preaching. Rather, they would verify the *original* declarations and other revelations given from heaven in the absence of completed, written Scriptures. The ongoing proclamation of heaven's message, *after* the completed body of revelation had been confirmed by “*signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will*” (Heb 2:4), does not need divine confirmation. In the same way, amendments to the constitution do not need re-ratification every time they are applied as law.

C. As Jesus said before His soul departed from His body, “*it is finished.*” He came to the earth and completed the will of God as it pertained to reclaiming souls lost in sin. It is an awe-inspiring story of God, the Creator, visiting His creation and giving all to save mankind. Such a story should never fall on deaf ears or calloused hearts. It is our hope that this study has rekindled each student's appreciation of the price God paid to offer us the hope of heaven.